

JLC Live Recap

by Greg DiBernardo

I have attended JLC Live New England in Providence, R.I., for at least the past seven years (JLC Live is owned by Hanley Wood, which also owns *PDB*). From the perspective of a deck builder, it's a show worth attending — it seems as if every third booth promotes deck-specific products, plus there are plenty of networking opportunities. Here are a few highlights from this year's show.

Cool New Products

New to the market, Perma-Deck (Cascades; 888/313-2440, cascadesreplast.com) got my attention for being legitimately green: It's manufactured from 100 percent recycled plastic. Available grooved in either 5/4x6 or 2x6, the boards are resistant to chemicals, oil, salt spray, mold, and mildew, the manufacturer claims. While I don't think the aesthetics compare to some of the competition, if you have a client looking to build a green deck, Perma-Deck would be a good product to explore. Pricing is still up in the air, but the preliminary street price is about \$2.65 per linear foot.

I also visited the Camo booth and got a hands-on demonstration of its new hidden fastening system (National Nail Corp.; 800/968-6245, camofasteners.com), which uses a jig to position and space deck boards while allowing the user to toe-screw through the boards' edges at a steep angle from both sides. The proprietary self-drilling trim-head screw works even in ipe. The fasteners are less expensive than most clips, but they're slower to use. And compared with pneumatic clip and screw systems, Camo is a lot slower. However, if you're

an occasional deck builder or have an ipe or other hardwood project coming up, it's worth looking into.

FastenMaster (800/518-3569, fastenmaster.com), the creator of the LedgerLok screw, was showing its new ThruLok bolt, a no-drill fastener that can be used nearly anywhere you would traditionally use a bolt. It drills in like a LedgerLok but protrudes out the other side of the materials being fastened, where a special nut threads onto it. You won't find a traditional lag screw on my jobs because we've completely switched to LedgerLoks, and now you won't find any carriage bolts because I've found ThruLoks. They are slightly more expensive than regular bolts, but time is money too. These install five times faster than bolts and don't require a trip out to the truck to fetch a drill with an auger bit.

Another booth that stopped me in my tracks was Denver Stainless Steel Cabinetry (888/441-0537, denver.com). While outdoor kitchens can look great from the outside, inside you may see metal studs or oozing mortar. Denver's stainless steel outdoor kitchen carcasses are similar to interior cabinets and are completely finished on the inside. The door panels can be powder-coated in a variety of colors so they look like wood. Denver also handles the kitchen design, which is a huge time-saver for me. Send the company the measurements of the space you have, and it'll spec and price everything.

Finally, simple is better when it comes to building, and as a deck builder who wants to add stone accents without having to bring in masons, I was happy to find Versetta Stone by Owens Corning

subsidiary Boral Stone Products (800/255-1727, masonry.owenscorning.com/versettastone). It's cultured stone that comes in panels with flanges, like vinyl siding. Instead of using wire mesh and mortar to bond cultured stone to a building paper-covered plywood substrate, you simply screw the panel flanges in place. This is perfect for deck accents like stone pillars, bench bottoms, or flower boxes. My carpenters can install these easily and quickly. I couldn't find any seams or joints between the installed panels despite looking hard for them.

Networking and More

New products are great, but one of the most important reasons to attend a trade show is to establish relationships with key people. Having a sales representative who knows you and picks up his or her cellphone when you call in a pinch is invaluable. I make it a point to have face-to-face contact with as many reps as possible at trade shows. Even the booths that don't have much to offer me in terms of new products are worth visiting to renew existing relationships.

NADRA was at JLC Live, too, and it sponsored an off-site networking dinner attended by about 50 members. Also, the next day, Glenn Mathewson gave the first of series of classes to prepare deck builders for earning NADRA's new Master Deck Builder certification.

All in all, JLC Live was fun and informative, and gave me a few more products to throw into my bag of tricks. ♦

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