

PRODUCTS

by Scott Gibson

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1. Easy Fire Pit

Here's a masonry project for those with little prior masonry experience. An Entertainer Fire Pit can be assembled in about an hour, according to General Shale. Kits—which include 60 masonry landscaping stones, a metal fireplace insert and cover, construction adhesive, and a rubber mallet—can be delivered by General Shale directly and moved to the assembly area by forklift. When finished, the fire pit is 41 inches in diameter and 18 inches high. The company recommends siting it on a level spot away from combustible materials. You'll need to excavate 4 inches of soil from an area 48 inches in diameter; then tamp down the area or cover it with a layer of crushed stone before you set the first course of block. There are four courses in all, held together with construction adhesive. We found it online for \$390. General Shale, generalshale.com

2. Making Holes

Klein Tools has expanded its line of hole-making tools to include bi-metal hole saws, double-fluted step drill bits, and wood-boring bits. The tools are designed for a variety of materials—steel, wood, drywall, plastic, and tile. The bi-metal hole saws can cut steel and stainless steel as well as more-forgiving materials. Multiple slots make it easier to pry out the round blank after the hole is cut, and thick back plates allow heavy use, according to Klein. Sizes range from $\frac{7}{8}$ inch to $6\frac{3}{8}$ inches. The double-fluted step bits, which have a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch hex shank and a graduated series of steps, come in several sizes; the #15, for example, has a range of $\frac{7}{8}$ inch to $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches. The new wood-boring bits have a low-torque design that reduces wrist fatigue, Klein says. Sizes range from $\frac{7}{8}$ inch to $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Klein has also upgraded existing products such as carbide hole cutters, ship-auger bits, and flex drill bits. Klein Tools, kleintools.com

3. Deck First Aid

Restore 10X Advanced Resurfacer, an enhanced version of the older Restore 10X, is named for how thick it is—10 times the thickness of regular paint. In fact, Rust-Oleum says it can fill gaps of up to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. It's designed to resurface severely worn decks (made from most composite-decking brands as well as from wood) and concrete patios and to provide a UV and water-resistant barrier. Manufacturer recommendations call for two coats, which can be walked on 48 hours after application. The company also sells Restore 4X for moderately weathered decks and Restore 2X for lightly weathered surfaces. Restore 10X Advanced retails for \$25 a gallon (good for 40 square feet) or \$85 for a 3.75-gallon bucket (160 square feet). The water-based finish can be tinted. Rust-Oleum, rustoleum.com

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4. Longer Deck Screws

Starborn offers a longer version of its Deckfast Metal screw for attaching nominal 2-inch PVC, composite, or hardwood to steel and aluminum deck framing. The original 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch Deckfast Metal fasteners, the first color-matched screws on the market according to the manufacturer, are used for attaching nominal 1-inch material to framing. The new 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch screws should come in handy for fastening thicker material—from 1 inch to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick—to metal framing up to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick in commercial applications, such as boardwalks and marinas. Starborn says the screw is the only one of its kind on the market, and is the only one approved for attaching nominal 2-inch material to Trex Elevations steel framing. Available in 10 colors, screws are made with grade 410 stainless steel protected by zinc plating and an epoxy coating. Starborn, starbornindustries.com

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5. Get in the Groove

The better hidden fasteners fit, the more effectively they can resist lateral movement and the less likely they are to loosen up over time. Mantis Deck Clips are made in three different series to accommodate different common groove heights, allowing deck builders to choose the one that best matches a specific type of decking. Another feature of Mantis clips is that they elevate decking slightly above the joists, introducing a small gap between the framing and the bottom of the deck boards. Joists can then dry out because there's no trapped water, reducing the risk of mold. Within each series, there are three different types of clips: starter clips and finish clips—which conceal fasteners on the first and last courses, respectively—and clips for use in the field. The coated steel clips are suitable for contact with ACQ and other treated lumber. A box with enough clips (including five each of starter and finish clips) and screws to secure 50 square feet of decking costs about \$65. A 450-count bucket, enough for 250 square feet of decking, costs about \$260 online. Start and finish clips are not included in buckets and can be purchased separately in packs of 25. Collated fasteners will be available early this year, Senco says. Senco Brands, senco.com

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6. Beefy Aluminum Railing

Durarail's Park Rail gives deck builders the option of installing a continuous aluminum top rail up to 20 feet long. The rail's plus-sized profile—3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and 2 inches high—is designed to resemble the familiar dimensions of a 2x4 rail while offering the low maintenance and durability of powder-coated aluminum, according to Durarail. It's available in nine standard colors and as many as 180 custom colors as well as 22 faux-wood-grain finishes. Park Rail Top Rail is manufactured by Excell Railing Systems Ltd. Durarail, duradek.com ♦