

Tools of the Trade

Weigh In! Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at jlctools@zondahome.com.

Vampire Tools Scissors and Screw Extractor Pliers

by JAKE LEWANDOWSKI

For several weeks, I've been using Vampire Tools' Super Combo Scissors and Brute Screw Extractor pliers to see how well they worked on the job. Vampire sells a variety of specialty shears and pliers for different applications. My first impression was that the tools seem well-made and geared toward professionals at a competitive price point.

Super Combo Scissors

We use scissors frequently for site protection, specifically for cutting finish floor guard for hardwood floors, rosin paper, Ram Board, heavy-duty 4- and 6-mil plastic, and light painters' plastic. We also use scissors for cutting rope like 550 paracord. We tested the Super Combo Scissors (VT-011) on all those materials.

Several features separate these scissors from most construction-grade scissors I have found at big box stores. The 4-in-1 multifunction tool has a flat blade for smooth cutting of cloth and paper and a lower, serrated blade to hold the material without slipping; a wire cutter close to the handle for copper or steel wire; and a built-in safety box opener for cartons.

One feature we had mixed feelings about was the serrated blade. On one hand, it cut through heavy rope and 550 paracord easily and excelled at any chopping activity.

On the flip side, when using the scissors to slice or push through 6-mil plastic, we had to be aware of how open the blades were. Because of this, some of the guys found using the scissors awkward for setting dust barrier walls. I liked the heavy-duty plastic sheath that came with the scissors came; it would be even better if it had a belt clip.

Brute 6.25-Inch Screw Extractor Pliers

After having the Brute Screw Extractor Pliers (VT-002-6) in my bag for a number of weeks, I can say I like them. They're smaller than lineman's pliers and similar to needle-nose pliers in size and feel, but with a clipped nose. Among other stand-out features, the black oxide coating seems extremely durable, and the thermoplastic rubber grips have a slight give and feel more slip-resistant than those on other pliers I've used. For pliers of this size, they have aggressive teeth, which, according to Vampire Tools, can bite onto stripped fasteners. I had limited success when I tried this.

My final take is that both tools are a solid value, and I am confident they'll perform as needed. I would struggle to find a better pair of scissors (\$30) and pliers (\$36) at these prices.

Jake Lewandowski is a construction manager with Chicago-based Great Lakes Builders.



The author and his crew found Vampire Tools' Super Combo Scissors—priced at \$30—to be useful for many tasks on site (1). The Brute Screw Extractor pliers proved to be well made. They cost \$36 (2). You can find the full lineup at vampiretools.com.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: JAKE LEWANDOWSKI

Brunt Perkins Boot

by JOHN CARROLL

In my long career as a hands-on builder, I have spent more hours than I care to think about working on my knees. My 75-year-old knees have held up well, but I can't say the same about my work boots. The toes of my boots have always been the problem. They have quickly worn through as I've worked on hard, abrasive surfaces such as roofs, concrete slabs, and masonry paving.

The Brunt Perkins boot has solved this problem for me by adding a robust rubber toe cap in this vulnerable spot. After a year of use, the toes show no sign of wear. The rest of the boots, including the soles, have proven to be durable too (see photo, below).

Like all work boots, the Perkins comp toe work boot is built more for durability and safety than comfort. I didn't expect them to feel like track shoes or hiking boots, but I found them tolerably comfortable right out of the box. They have an OSHA-accepted safety toe, which is made of a composite rather than steel. They are also water-resistant. These are excellent work boots that are built to last. Unlike other high-quality work boots, they come with a moderate price tag of \$160. All in all, a very good deal. bruntworkwear.com

John Carroll, author of Working Alone, is a builder who lives and works in Durham, N.C.



BOOTS: MATT NAVEY; CHALK: ARON JONES

Tajima Compact Chalk Line

by ARON JONES

As a carpenter, I appreciate it when a company does something that improves my day. This time, it was Tajima. I've been a fan of its chalk lines for a few decades. They are durable and reliable, and the new Chalk-Rite Compact is everything I would expect. It has the same rugged, jobsite-ready construction Tajima is known for: compact, heavy-duty aluminum case, collapsible metal handle, wear-resistant metal tip on the cap, and smooth-running five-gear winding mechanism. Plus, all those features now fit in a smaller package.

Tajima trimmed the fat without sacrificing performance. The new tool's slim body easily fits in small bags or pouches and clips to a belt, making it an exceptional line for anyone who does renovations or remodeling. How often do you need more than 50 feet of chalk line on a bathroom or kitchen renovation? With its smaller footprint and lighter weight, the Chalk-Rite Compact (CR701SFR) has secured a spot in my toolbox. It costs \$50 at tajimatool.com.

Aron Jones is co-founder and site supervisor of Big Dog Construction on Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick. Follow him on Instagram at @bigdogconstruction.gm.



The Chalk-Rite Compact chalk line performs as well as its larger cousins from Tajima without taking up as much space (1). It is compatible with the company's clip-n-hold system for secure storage and convenience (2).