

Foundation Cover-up

by Clayton DeKorne

The Journal's pick of curious, interesting and useful products.



Polyskirt

To prevent the degradation of exterior foundation insulation from backhoes, ultraviolet radiation, and kids' bikes, rigid foam should be covered above grade.

Two products, Polyskirt (Plymouth Foam Products) and Retro-Tek (Retro Technologies), provide alternatives to real stucco or pressure-treated plywood.

Polyskirt is a rigid foam insulation panel covered with a plastic laminate. The plastic - polyolefin - can be cut with a utility knife and reportedly expands less than vinyl. Based on a sample we saw, the panels seem strong enough to withstand a modest bump from a lawnmower but a fast baseball would probably break the surface. In freezing temperatures, it seems even more brittle. Joints between panels are covered by a plastic I-channel (a noticeable improvement to T-moldings used with other coverings). Corners are made by bending the laminate on panels with V-notches already cut in the foam. Two-by-four-foot fully faced panels and a 4x8-foot panels covered lengthwise with 12 to 24 inches of laminate are available. The insulation is either 1-inch extruded polystyrene or 1 1/8-inch, high-density expanded polystyrene. Both are rated at R-5. Thicker 2- and 2 1/4-inch panels will be available soon in response to changing energy codes. For more information, contact Plymouth Foam Products, P.O. Box 407, Plymouth, WI 53073; 414/893-0535.

Retro-Tek comes in two ways: as a brush-on cement coating or a prefab panel with an acrylic polymer covering. The brush-on coating is surprisingly flexible but relies on a good bond to the foam surface for durability. It is sold in five-gallon containers to be applied with a stiff brush. White and light gray are standard colors but it can be tinted to match other colors.

The prefab panels seem like the most durable solution. These have a thick pebble finish that is embedded in acrylic-modified portland cement. The bond with the foam seems very



Retro-Tek

strong and the surface's resistance to impact, abrasion, and weather seems high. The panels are installed in a J-channel along the top edge and secured to the foundation with adhesive or mechanical fasteners. Corners must be mitered. Full-surfaced panels are available in standard brown or tan or a variety of composite stone colors, such as Black Obsidian and Milky Quartz. Four-by-eight-foot and 2x8-foot panels are available in 1-, 1 1/2-, and 2-inch expanded polystyrene. For more information, contact Retro Technologies, Inc., 328 Raemisch Road, Waunakee, WI 53597; 608/849-9000.

Musical Landscape



You might consider planting a few speakers between the shrubs on your next job. Omnispeakers are outdoor loudspeakers made of green plastic that can be installed in the ground. The standard model features an 8-inch, 8-Ohm speaker, a 2-inch Piezo electric tweeter, and is rated at 100 watts peak power. If it floods, you just take off the cap, scoop out the water, and let the cone dry out. The manufacturer does admit, however, to replacing a few that have melted in the direct sun in Phoenix, Arizona. But they reportedly stay operable down to -30-F. For more information, contact Portland Instrument Corporation, 1101A Air Way, Glendale, CA 91201; 800/999-5260 or 818/500-0137 (in Calif.)

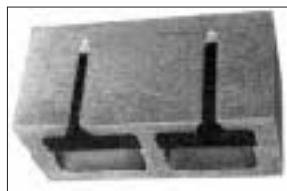
Personal Ready-Mix



Small load charges, out-of-region transportation fees, and crew downtime may make a Continental U-Crete concrete mixer and hauler a feasible alternative to buying ready-mix. These

1 1/2- and 2-yard mixers can be towed by a pick-up truck. They feature eight urethane-tipped paddles, a hydraulic pump, an integral water supply for clean-up and add water (the water tanks don't actually hold enough water to mix the concrete), a tilting tank, electric start, and a 14- or 16-hp Kohler engine to power the hydraulics and turn the mixing shaft. You'll have to mix a lot of small batches to justify the cost, however. These units retail for \$14,000 and \$17,000 each. For more information, contact Continental, Rte. 5, Box 178, Alexandria, MN 56308; 800/328-2047 or 800/572-7002 (in Minn.).

Structural Sound-Proofing



Conventional concrete block walls have a fairly high density and will block noise to some extent. But because they are dense they do not absorb much sound and produce a lot of echo. Soundblox are sound-absorbing structural masonry units. They make use of a highly engineered core configuration with a fibrous filler and a metal septum to filter and absorb sounds. Different configurations are specified for different noise frequencies. Soundblox can be provided by most concrete block manufacturers that use molds provided by the Proudfoot Company. The molds supplement conventional forms, so the blocks have standard exterior dimensions. The cost of these units is much higher than standard blocks so they are used mostly in industrial applications for noise screens. But they have also been used in school gymnasiums, retail malls, and office buildings to temper echoes and background noise. For more information, contact the Proudfoot Company, Inc., P.O. Box 338, Botsford, CT 06404; 203/459-0031.

Radon Mitigation Mat

Sub-slab ventilation is a highly effective method of removing the threat of radon from homes. When a gravel bed under the slab is not practical, Enkavent can be used as an "air blanket" beneath a slab. Enkavent is a tough, three-dimensional, nylon



matrix with a filter fabric on one side. It was originally developed as a foundation drainage material. But because it is resistant to compression, a slab can be poured right over it. Its open construction allows air to move freely beneath the slab so a vent pipe can be used to depressurize this area and draw soil gases away. For more information, contact Akzo Industrial Systems Company, P.O. Box 7249, Asheville, NC 28802; 704/258-5050.

Paving Stone Edging



Paving stone works well for patios and walkways. But on a driveway or parking lot, the weight of vehicles tends to break the surface up over time, beginning at the edges. Pave Edge might help to keep the edge intact and the stones together. It is available in one-piece rigid lengths for straight paving runs or two-piece flexible lengths for curves, serpentine, and other radius runs. This PVC edging is nailed in (that's right) to a well-compacted aggregate surface with 10- or 12-inch spikes. Sections are joined to each other with PVC pipe. If the technology sounds dubious, a glance through any paving industry publication might convince you that this technology has become the accepted standard for most commercial and residential applications. The manufacturer's technical bulletins provide clear information about subsoil choices, installation, and backfilling. For more information, contact Pave Tech, Inc., P.O. Box 31126, Bloomington, MN 55431; 612/881-5773.

Correction: In the January 1990 For What It's Worth column, *The Journal* accidentally swapped portions of the product descriptions for Kenco Safety Products and Megamark Products Company. The correct address for Kenco Safety Products is: 70 Rock City Road, Woodstock, NY 12498; 800/341-4103, or 914/679-5246 (in N.Y.). The correct address for the Super Binder is: Megamark Products Company, 231 Kennedy Drive, Malden, MA 02148; 301/828-6464.