

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

Plastic Decking

by Charles Wardell



After conquering the plumbing and siding businesses, it was probably only a matter of time before PVC plastic starting showing up on the rest of the house. That time has come.

The latest battleground is the deck business, where a new Canadian product known as *PVC Lumber* is being hawked as a maintenance-free alternative to treated wood decking. The 1x5 1/2-inch plastic planks come with nonskid surfacing and are available in white or driftwood gray. They're manufactured with the same UV-stabilized resin that's used in vinyl windows and siding.

PVC Lumber can be installed either as an interlocking system or with 3/8-inch gaps, like standard deck boards. The plastic boards come in 8-, 10-, 12-, and 16-foot lengths and are cut with a standard circular saw with a carbide-tipped blade. They're screwed directly to a wood-framed deck, with the screws enclosed in a covered raceway.

PVC Lumber isn't cheap. Materials for a 10x10 deck cost around \$650 — twice as much as a good grade of treated decking, and on a par with redwood or cedar. But the manufacturer is relying on maintenance rather than cost to sell the stuff. Once you screw it down, you can essentially forget about it.

Contact: PVC Lumber, P.O. Box 1584, Champlain, NY 12919; 800/724-5928.

Brick Veneer for Non-Masons

Brick veneer just got a lot different. *Thermo Brick* siding panels are 48x16-inch panels with a 1 1/8-inch-thick core of fire-retardant rigid polyurethane insulation, a 1/2-inch-thick brick face, and a 3/8-inch exterior plywood backing. They carry an insulating value of R-8.

The manufacturer claims that the panels can be installed by almost anyone. They interlock at the ends, are fitted with tongue-and-groove profiles on the top and bottom, and require no caulking or sealing, except at cut ends. They're fastened directly to steel or wood studs with drywall screws or self-tapping screws, and can be cut with masonry or diamond-tip sawblades. They weigh less than



5.7 pounds per square foot. The company is in the process of setting up a U.S. distribution network. You can order the panels direct in the meantime, but shipping charges may limit their cost-effectiveness to larger jobs.

Contact: Thermo Brick International Inc., Quarry Road, P.O. Box 967, Pembroke, ON K8A 7M5, Canada; 613/735-6849.

Portable Dust Wall



Dust is a remodeler's constant companion, and keeping it out of adjacent living spaces can be a challenge. That's where the

Curtain Wall Dust Catcher comes in. The *Curtain Wall* consists of a painter's drop cloth screwed to a folding aluminum frame that's friction-fit between floor and ceiling. A standard unit is 12 feet long, adjusts up to 9 feet high, weighs 13 pounds, and sells for \$149. The company also makes custom sizes. For an extra \$10, you can get a set of five tension rods designed to secure the edges of the cloth to the wall.

Contact: The Curtain Wall Co., 246 Welfare Ave., Warwick, RI 02888; 800/424-8251.

Beaded Plywood



Porch ceilings have traditionally been covered with beaded-edge, tongue-and-groove pine boards, but now there's a faster and less expensive alternative. *Ply Bead* is a 4x8, exterior-grade plywood panel with decorative beads routed along its face. When painted, it's meant to look like beaded pine. *Ply Bead* comes in 11/32 and 19/32 thicknesses, and is available through most building suppliers.

Contact: Georgia-Pacific, 133 Peachtree St. NE, P.O. Box 105605, Atlanta, GA 30348; 404/521-4728.

New Engineered Wood Products

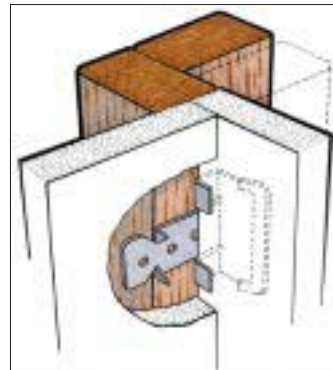
With lumber prices heading skyward and lumber quality in a fiery nosedive, engineered wood has been sprouting everywhere. The newest product, called *Timberstrand*, is made from compressed aspen chips and is comparable in strength and price to dimension lumber. So far it's being marketed for only two uses: as a 1 1/4-inch-thick *Rim Board* in depths that match its manufacturer's wood I-joists, and as a *Light-Duty Header* in 4x6, 4x8, 4x10, and 4x12



dimensions. But the manufacturer expects code approval for more uses in the next few months, so look for additional products later this year.

Contact: Trus Joist MacMillan, 9777 West Chinden Blvd., Boise, ID 83714; 208/375-4450.

Clip, Don't Nail



Drywall clips let you build fully insulated two-stud corners, but they help prevent the familiar corner cracks that appear as the framing dries out. The problem is that they must be installed as the drywall goes up, a process that slows down installation and causes much grumbling among drywall contractors working by the foot.

A new twist in drywall clips might help the situation. The *No-Nail* clip is easier to install than its competitors because it doesn't require nails. Built-in spurs grip the back of the first sheet, while the second just slips into a waiting slot. *No-Nail* clips can also be bent to conform to the oblique angle where a wall meets a cathedral ceiling. The clips come sized for 1/2-inch or 5/8-inch drywall and are available from drywall distributors. You can order them in boxes of 300 (\$31.50).

Contact: Cymax Systems Inc., 5370 Chestnut Ridge Rd., Orchard Park, NY 14127; 716/662-7877. ■