

Instant Dump Truck

by Charles Wardell



Pittsburgh-area inventor Graham Hodgetts had to replace much of the gravel in his 1,000-foot-long driveway every summer after the spring rains. He preferred using his pickup to hiring a dump truck, but he was tired of having to shovel and spread the gravel by hand. So he invented *The Loadhandler*, a conveyor system for pickups that looks like a souped-up window shade with a hand crank. It consists of a roller mechanism wound with a high-strength woven-polyethylene drag sheet, a pair of mounting brackets, and some adjustable straps. You simply slip the brackets onto the tailgate of your pickup (no tools are needed), tighten the straps, pull the sheet across the truck bed, and load the truck. When it's time to unload, attach the crank handle to one side of the roller and turn the crank. The sheet winds onto the roller and the load falls to the ground. If the marketing video is representative of what this product can do, it should be a winner. The video shows a single worker spreading a 1½-ton load of gravel in less than a minute by cranking with one hand while a driver slowly moves the truck forward. Prices are \$179.95 for a 2,000-pound-capacity model with plastic bearings, and \$249.95 for the 3,000-pound-capacity model with steel bearings.

Contact: Loadhandler Inc., 400 W. 15th St., Suite 700, Austin, TX 78701; 800/580-0791.

Easy-Read Thermostat

Honeywell's *Easy-to-See Thermostat* was designed for people with limited vision, but it will be appreciated by anyone who has had to bend over and squint at those tiny temperature gradations on a standard thermostat. The *Easy-to-See* is an ordinary round thermostat with an oversized cover ring that's imprinted with large, raised numbers. The numbers are easily recognized by touch or sight. A raised knob with a ratchet mechanism makes a slight click every two degrees, and a strong click



every ten degrees. These improvements make it easy for a half-asleep homeowner to make quick adjustments in the dark. The thermostat can also be ordered with the *Easy-to-Use Accessory* — a large circular ring with a serrated edge — that makes adjusting the dial easier for people with arthritis or other conditions that limit their ability to grasp and turn a conventional dial.

Contact: Honeywell, Inc., Home and Building Control, Honeywell Plaza, P.O. Box 524, Minneapolis, MN 55440; 800/345-6770, ext. 7175.

No-Itch Wall Batts

Last year, Owens-Corning released an attic insulation called *PinkPlus R-25* that was designed to protect users from contact with the fiberglass. It is an ordinary attic batt wrapped in



perforated polyethylene. (The perforations prevent moisture from building up inside the poly.) The product must have been successful, because the company just introduced a similar batt for walls. *PinkPlus R-13* still keeps that itchy fiberglass away from your skin, but since it's designed for walls, the wrapping is different. Instead of a plastic bag, the new batts have kraft paper with a nailing flange on the front (the side that faces the conditioned space), and 4-mil perforated plastic on the back and sides.

Contact: Owens-Corning, Fiberglas Tower, Toledo, OH 43659; 800/438-7465.

Quick Shingle Guide



Most carpenters install cedar shingles by aligning the lower edge of each course on a 1x straightedge that's tacked along a chalk line snapped on the wall — a step that must be repeated for every course. But the *Shingle Sure* shingling jig simplifies the process. The

Shingle Sure consists of a pair of clamping brackets — vertical bars with U-shaped bases that tuck under the bottom of the shingles — and a pair of 4-foot-long support bars (for a total length of 8 feet) that act as the straightedge for the next course. After getting the first couple of courses straight using conventional methods, you can simply set the height of the support bar to the course reveal — it's adjustable from 2 to 10 inches — and move it up as you go. The Shingle Sure is made from lightweight extruded aluminum, making it weather-resistant, durable, and easy for one person to handle. It costs \$172.50; additional clamps and bars are sold separately.

Contact: Envision Products, 42 Ramshorn Rd., Charlton, MA 01507; 508/248-4309.

Electronic Deadbolt



With the *Inner Key Digital Deadbolt*, you'll never have to loan your keys, hide them beneath a doormat, or fumble for them in the dark. Although the deadbolt can be opened with a standard key, it doesn't need one. Instead it can be opened with a three- or four-digit personal code that's chosen by the user and that can be changed in a matter of minutes. The lock's exterior cylinder (the part that protrudes from the face of the door) is divided into two sections — a code ring and a "revolver." You enter the code by turning the code ring to the left and the right, like a standard com-

bination lock. You can then rotate the revolver to unlock the bolt. (Without the correct code, the revolver spins freely to prevent forced entry.)

According to the manufacturer, the LED that displays the code numbers is bright enough to be read in bright sunlight.

The deadbolt also lets you choose an alternate code to let repair people or others into the house when you want to. A switch on the inside of the deadbolt turns the alternate code on and off. (The LED also displays the status of the alternate code.) The deadbolt includes a security alarm that sounds inside and outside if someone tampers with the lock, and a three-year lithium battery warns you three months in advance that it needs to be replaced. The Inner Key fits into a standard 2¹/₈-inch bore hole and comes with an adjustable 2³/₈- or 2³/₄-inch backset. Suggested retail price is \$139.

Contact: InteLock Technologies, P.O. Box 9018, Pleasanton, CA 94566; 800/562-5875.

Pretaped Dropcloth



Taping a polyethylene dropcloth in place can be frustrating. *Pre-Taped Plastic Dropcloths* make it easier by mating a .5-mil-thick polyethylene dropcloth to painter's tape. Since the tape is permanently attached, you're spared the hassle of fumbling with two separate materials.

Contact: Daubert Coated Products, Inc., Consumer Products Division, One Westbrook Corporate Center, Suite 1000, Westchester, IL 60154; 800/634-1303. ■