

READERS' TIPS

Best techniques from the field

Clean Augered Footing Holes

by Rich Blumer

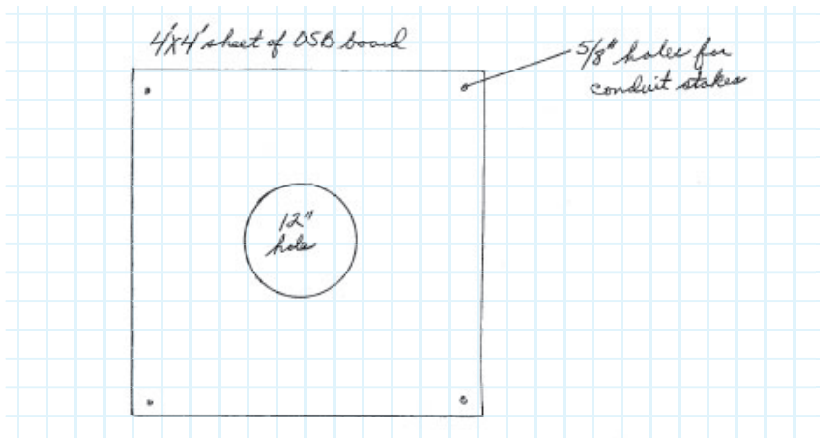
When I started my deck building business 26 years ago, the part of the process I dreaded was digging footing holes. The actual digging wasn't the problem — with our stone-free soils, most footing holes where I work in Illinois can be augered. The problem was the mess created underfoot. The code depth for footing holes here is 42 inches. Most of the time the dirt or clay at that depth comes out wet. Then it gets stepped on and smashed into the surrounding grass, making it very difficult to gather up and shovel into a wheelbarrow.

A year or so into the business, I came up with a solution. I purchased a 4-foot by 4-foot sheet of $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch OSB, and in its center, cut a round hole with a diameter 2 inches larger than the auger I was using. Two inches from each corner,

I drilled a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch hole. Then I coated the OSB with a water repellent to protect it from the elements.

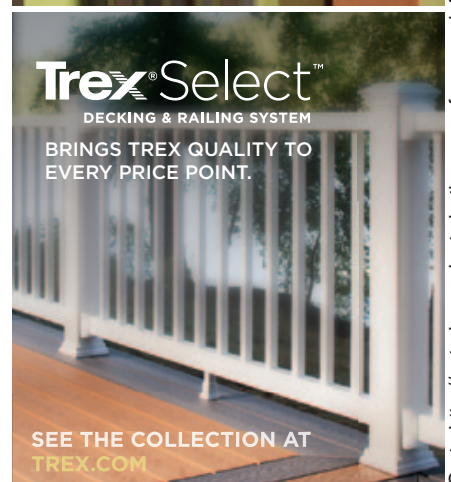
Now when I dig a hole, I center the OSB over the hole location and secure it at each corner with stakes made from $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces of EMT conduit 24 inches long. This prevents the OSB from drifting off-center during the digging. As the dirt is augered out, wet or dry, it gathers on top of the OSB, and is easy to shovel up and into a wheelbarrow. Additionally, the OSB provides a flat and stable base to work from, and when it's removed, the area around the hole is clean and free of any muddy build-up. What an improvement! ♦

Rich Blumer owns BREM Construction in Streamwood, Ill.



Tips

We want your best deck-building tips. We're partnering with DeWalt to give away a power tool each issue to the reader who sends the best tip to aengel@hanleywood.com. The prize for the January/February 2013 issue is a 20-volt impact-driver kit. So, write up those tips. Don't sweat the grammar or the spelling — that's what editors get paid for. Take a photo (your camera's best setting, please), or send a sketch on the back of a napkin.



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