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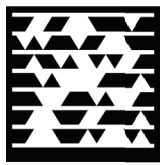
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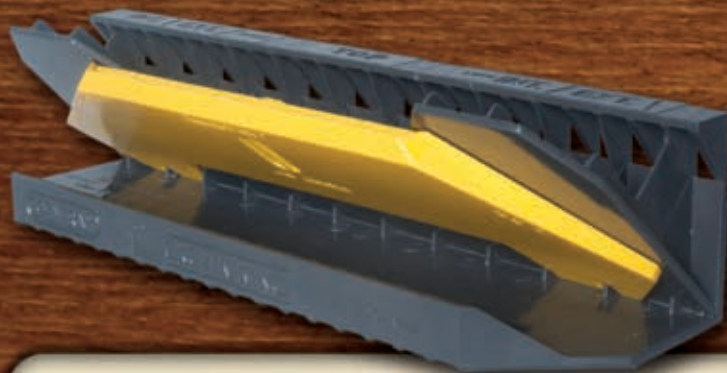
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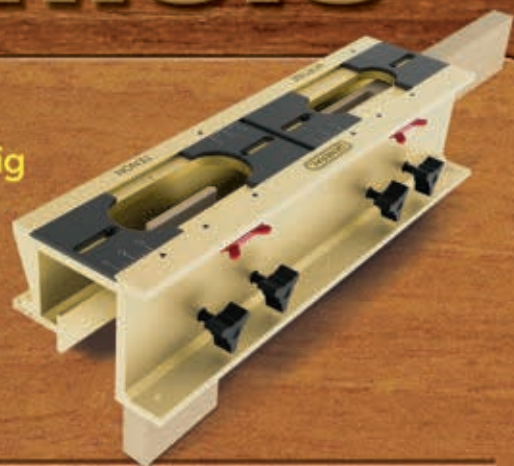
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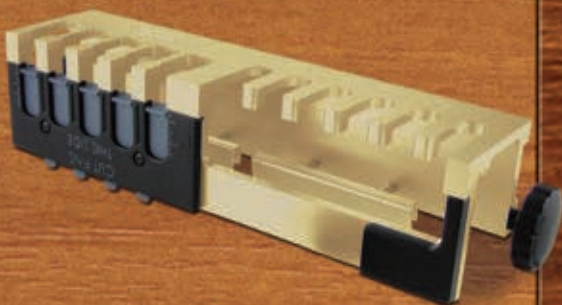
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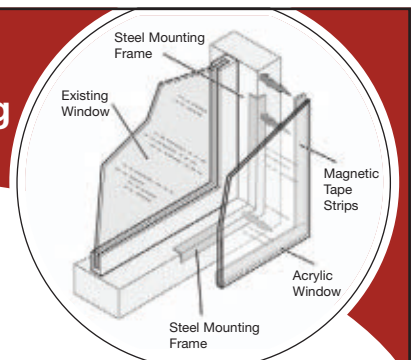
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Even the handiest of homeowners have a threshold where they decide it's smart to forgo doing the project themselves and instead call in a professional. Whether it's a matter of experience, equipment or just available time, recruiting a contractor often makes a lot of sense. But the task of securing the right person for the job can pose its own challenges.

To help grease the gears, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) advises homeowners of some "top tips" to prepare for a remodel:

Research your project. Taking time to research projects on the Internet and NARI.org will provide a good sense of what is involved such as price, scope of work, return on investment and new product or material options. Also, research property values in your neighborhood to make sure your project is in line with other homes in the area.

Use advanced search for professionals. The online world makes it easy to gather information about strangers. Ask friends, family and neighbors for referrals and then spend time researching that person online. Professional remodelers take their reputation seriously and hold credentials beyond licensing, such as certifications, memberships in trade associations and additional training. Look for examples of press coverage or involvement in industry presentations or events. Check online reviews and social media to see how they interact with past clients and peers.

Ask the right questions. Time and cost are important, but getting the right information requires the right questions. Ask your professional remodeler about his educational background, training, specialties or past issues with clients.

Set your budget. Deciding on a realistic budget and arranging finances to support your project are essential. This number needs to include everything—the project, products, contingencies, etc. Don't be afraid to share this with your remodeler. A true professional will be respectful of a client's budget and will create a plan around it, not over it.

Review contracts word-by-word. A remodeling contract protects you and your remodeler. Homeowners should review this carefully. Professional remodelers have done this before, and know what should go in a contract. Homeowners are not as familiar with remodeling and should ask about terms if they don't understand. Pay attention to details about change orders, payment, additional fees, timeline and responsibilities. If it's not in the contract, it doesn't exist.

Not all contractors are as scrupulous as one would hope, so it's very important to vet the remodelers who you invite into your home. For more helpful tips on hiring a professional, visit us at blog.extremehowto.com for the NARI's Top 10 Steps to Prepare for a Remodel.



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Q. I'm considering investing in a rental property, and the home inspector pointed out an attic ventilation problem, saying the attic may get hot in winter and lead to ice dams. How can heat lead to ice problems?

A. Ice dams can pose a real problem in colder climates and can usually be prevented with proper attic insulation and ventilation, as well as waterproof shingle underlayment on the roof deck. Insulation and ventilation keep the roof cool in the winter when you're heating your home. However, if these systems aren't functioning properly, then the accumulated heat in the roof can melt snow in the winter. The water from the melted snow runs to the eaves, where it then refreezes to form an ice dam because the eaves are not heated. As the ice builds up, the melting and refreezing water backs up the roof, working into nail holes and between seams in the shingles. As the dam melts the water can then leak into the house and damage the walls and ceilings.

Q. I'd like to cover my deck shade with clear polycarbonate panels. Do they handle snow loads in the winter?

A. Your local building codes should provide the details for design loads that you will have to follow for your deck cover. But generally speaking, both the structure as well as the polycarbonate sheet should be suitable for the extra weight of the snow. Keep in mind that a wide range of polycarbonate sheets are available and are engineered differently, some with multiple thin walls while others have a single thick wall. For example, Palram Americas, a leading manufacturer of polycarbonate sheets, recommends single-wall corrugated polycarbonate glazing for snow-bound areas. Another factor is the method of installation regarding sheet spacing, clamping and fastening. Consult with the manufacturer rep about your chosen product's specific snow-load recommendations.



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Q: When installing a tiled shower, should I use grout or caulk at the joint where the tile walls meet the tub?

A: For tiled showers, grout goes in the joints between tiles that are on the same plain (walls, horizontal shelves, etc.). However, waterproof caulk/sealant should be used in any expansion joints, such as the 90-degree angles where the tub meets the tile, because it is more flexible and helps to absorb movement. Make sure the caulk/sealant you use is formulated to resist mold and mildew.

Q: What is the best way to cut fiber-cement siding?

A: Because fiber-cement contains silica, which is considered a carcinogen, you should avoid breathing the dust that can be generated from cutting the material. The most preferred method is to cut with powered handheld shears, or to score and snap the siding. If you must use a high-speed power tool (circ saw, grinder, etc.), then you should work outside, preferably with a HEPA vacuum extraction and certainly with a dust mask. Make the cuts with a special fiber-cement blade, which has fewer teeth that generally create larger dust particles, thereby reducing the amount of smaller, breathable particles. **EHT**

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It's Not the Fall, It's the Sudden Stop

Respect Your Ladder when Working at Heights.



What goes up must come down, and safe ladder usage will ensure that you do so in an orderly fashion.
(photo © Werner Ladder Co.)

homeowners is that as soon as a downpour slackens up, they run for a ladder to check for roof damage. Not only does rain make the ladder rungs slippery, and working atop one may tempt fate as a human lightning rod, but homeowners often overestimate a ladder's stability in the face of straight-line winds that can topple them to the ground.

According to the American Ladder Institute (ALI), when climbing a ladder, it is safest to use Three Points-of-Contact because it minimizes the chances of slipping and falling from the ladder. At all times during ascent or descent, the climber should face the ladder and have two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, in contact with the ladder cleats and/or side rails. In this way, the climber will remain stable even if one limb slips during the climb.

When working, rather than reaching or leaning too far to one side, a good rule of thumb is to keep the center of your belt buckle between the ladder side rails (or within the width of the cleats). It's also smart to use towlines, a tool belt or an assistant to convey materials and so your hands stay free when climbing.

ALI also stresses the importance of proper footwear. Wear only slip-resistant shoes preferably with heels and heavy soles to prevent

By Matt Weber

If you want to see acrobatic feats of bravery from death-defying heights, just watch a roofing crew when there is no safety inspector around. Fall restraint ropes? What a nuisance. Safety harnesses? Those things chafe! A roof ridge becomes a balance beam, and ladders are treated as stilts or even vaults. I'm not condoning this behavior. It only takes a single misstep to end in tragedy, and that reckless confidence suddenly looks like a stupid idea. The trouble is that with years of experience many people get too comfortable working off the ground and lose respect for that stubborn force called gravity.

Never make that mistake. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) annually

reports that over 100,000 people are treated in hospital rooms and doctors' offices as a result of falls from ladders. Most of the injuries are cuts, bruises and fractures, but more than 300 annual fatalities occur from ladder-related injuries.

It should go without saying that a rickety ladder which sways or leans should be avoided. Are parts loose or missing? That's probably a red flag, too. And of course you should avoid ladder work if you're feeling tired or dizzy (or, let's be frank, hung over). However, even the most seasoned ladder veteran can overlook some simple safety issues that may pose a problem.

Ladder use in high winds or rainstorms should be avoided. A common mistake of storm-wary

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foot fatigue. Clean the soles to maximize traction and avoid leather soles since they're not considered sufficiently slip-resistant.

CHOOSING A LADDER

Ladders are built from one of three basic materials; wood, fiberglass and metal (aluminum). If you're working near a source of electricity, a metal ladder should be rejected since aluminum conducts electricity. Your body can complete an electrical circuit between the electrical power supply, the ladder, and then to the ground in the event that you contact a live wire. An electrical shock on a ladder can trigger a fall or cause your heart to stop. However, if there are no electrical power sources in your work area, then aluminum has a significant portability advantage: It's the lightest weight material when compared to fiberglass or wood.

Next, the proper ladder length is important. It is not safe to use a ladder that is too short or too long. It must be long enough that

Multipurpose ladders offer a versatile solution for handymen and homeowners alike. By articulating like an A-frame and also extending and collapsing as an extension ladder, a multipurpose ladder can serve as an A-frame ladder, an extension ladder or a 90-degree ladder (photo © Werner Ladder Co.)

An advertisement for the EarthWay S15 SPRAY-PRO. It features a person in jeans and a sweater pushing the sprayer on a lawn. The sprayer has a white tank and a red base with black wheels. The background shows a residential yard with trees and a fence.

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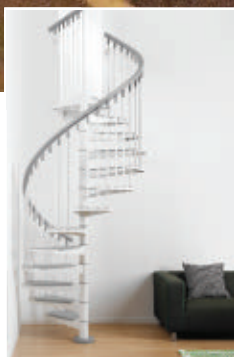
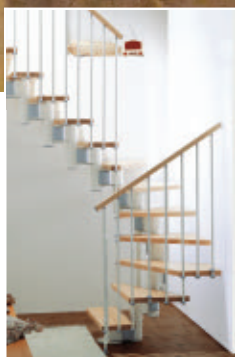
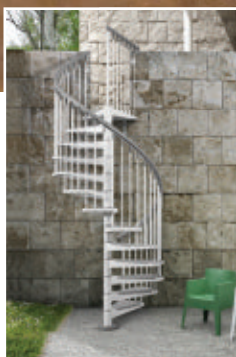


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the climber does not have to stand on the top rung or step. Standing on the top cap (or step below) of a stepladder increases the likelihood of losing your balance. Likewise, when using an extension ladder, the top three rungs are unsafe for climbing. On the other hand a straight ladder is too long, for example, if ceiling height prohibits the ladder from being set up at the proper angle (roughly 75 degrees). Likewise, an extension ladder is too long if the ladder extends more than 3 feet beyond the upper support point. In this case, the portion of the ladder that extends above the upper support point can act like a lever and cause the base of the ladder to move or slide out. Safety standards require a label on the ladder to indicate the highest standing level.

The ladder you select also must be the right size for both your body and the job at hand. In other words, the Duty Rating of the ladder must be greater than the total

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weight of not just the climber, but also their tools, supplies, and any other objects placed upon the ladder. Climbers often forget to account for the weight of their equipment, and if the total load outweighs the ladder's maximum capacity, the ladder could feasibly collapse.

There are five categories of Ladder Duty Ratings:

- Type IAA (Extra Heavy Duty) 375 pounds
- Type IA (Extra Heavy Duty) 300 pounds
- Type I (Heavy Duty) 250 pounds
- Type II (Medium Duty) 225 pounds
- Type III (Light Duty) 200 pounds

The Duty Rating of your ladder can be found on the specifications label. Safety standards require the sticker to be placed on the side of

Ladders come in all shapes and sizes, such as this wooden kitchen ladder from Putnam Rolling Ladders, which allows convenient access to overhead storage cabinets.



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Your work environment, including the physical size restrictions, is probably the most important factor in determining the type of

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A wide range of accessories are available to increase a ladder's versatility. The Werner Ladder Jacks mount onto the rungs to enable use of planks or stages between two ladders, providing a horizontal work platform.

and also extending and collapsing like an extension ladder, a multi-purpose ladder can serve as an A-frame ladder, an extension ladder or a 90-degree ladder (for getting close to walls). By adjusting the length of each side independently when in the A-frame mode, a multipurpose ladder can also provide access over uneven ground as well as staircases.

Another recent trend in ladder design is the addition of adjustable side rails. When resting a ladder on uneven, sloped terrain, workers in the past have had to dig a trench in the ground beneath a ladder rail on the high side of slope, so the ladder could be rest on an even foundation without leaning. To eliminate the digging, the adjustable rails on some newer extension ladders can extend independently on each side of

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the ladder to accommodate the uneven terrain.

In fact some ladders, such as the Little Giant SumoStance, take the adjustable-rail design

a step further. The use of adjustable outrigger supports that extend from the sides of the ladder create a wider base for superior lateral stability when



working at considerable heights.

Also, when selecting a ladder, take a look at the many accessories currently available. Ladder Stabilizers attach arm-like extensions to the top of the rails that protect the gutter, provide access to windows and add extra mounting stability. Attachable Work Platforms provide a handy storage surface for tools and materials, some of which even have magnetic plates to hold nails and screws. Extension Ladder Covers are designed to "snap" over the rail ends to prevent damage to siding, window trim and other support surfaces.

The right choice in ladders and accessories can provide a reliable off-the-ground setup for all manner of pro-grade and homeowner projects. Just remember that what goes up must come down, and safe ladder usage will ensure that you do so in an orderly fashion. **EHT**

Special thanks to the American Ladder Institute for help with this article. Visit www.americanladderinstitute.org.

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Ladder stabilizers are among the most useful accessories by helping to secure the ladder, protecting the house and allowing easy access to windows for cleaning and maintenance. (photo © Werner Ladder Co.)

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Natural Stone Landscape Edging

Using Rock from a Creek Bed to Enhance a Flagstone Home



By Matt Weber

In an effort to shape up the curb appeal of one of our project houses, we decided to line a small rock garden with natural stone edging to match the flagstone walls of the home. The old garden border was a combination of black plastic landscaping border and the most unconvincing faux “brick” I’d ever seen.

Most of the plastic brick had long ago disappeared, leaving only a sad little fragment sticking from the ground like a sore thumb. So my first move was to use a pair of Channellock’s to pull up the old edging.

I collected a selection of flat(-ish) flagstones from a creek bed. They

ranged in size roughly from 7 to 12 inches long. I was looking for a variety of browns, reds and grays to match the color scheme of the home’s existing flagstone. Choose stones of an approximate shape and size that will best fit the landscape plot, bearing in mind that at least half the stone will need to be buried below grade in order to keep the border sturdy. If you don’t have access to a creek bed, many home-improvement outlets and landscaping supply centers sell natural stone.

It’s best to have the dirt work of the garden plot completed before installing the edging, otherwise the gardening activity may loosen

or unearth the border stones. To prepare the garden plot, we had pulled weeds, covered the area with landscaping fabric and secured its perimeter with metal stakes. We then cut a few strategic slits in the fabric to plant shrubs and flowers and then covered the fabric with cedar mulch.

I cleaned all the mud and moss off what would be the exposed edge of the stones using a reciprocating saw equipped with a special wire-brush attachment (ReciproTools.com).

I laid the edging in a dry run next to the garden to determine stone placement for the best visual design. I then used a narrow-bladed weeding spade to dig a trench approximately 7 in. deep and 3 in. wide for the stones to be placed on edge. When digging I used a 2×4 board to guide the blade of the spade and protect the edge of the concrete driveway from damage. If you don’t have a weeding spade, a narrow hand trowel will do the job (just more slowly).



I ventured into the great outdoors to procure my landscape stone.

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I pulled away the old edging with a pair of Channellocks.

Prepare the garden bed before installing the edging. I pulled all weeds by the root, covered the bed with landscape fabric, staked it down with metal ties, and then covered it all with cedar mulch.



As expected, I was unable to find enough stones of perfect size and shape for my border, so I had to cut some to fit. To cut the stones I (mis-)used a 10-in. tile saw from Ridgid. This is the company's latest model wet saw (Model R4090), rated "best-in-class" and nicknamed The Beast—and The Beast made a meal of a nearly 3-in. thick slab of limestone, so I'd say it earns its name. In some

cases I had to cut large stones so I could bury the bottom section and have only 2 to 3 in. of the top half exposed above the soil. In other cases, I used the wet saw to shear off jagged edges so the top edge of the border would be blunt—a safety precaution since children often played near the rock garden.

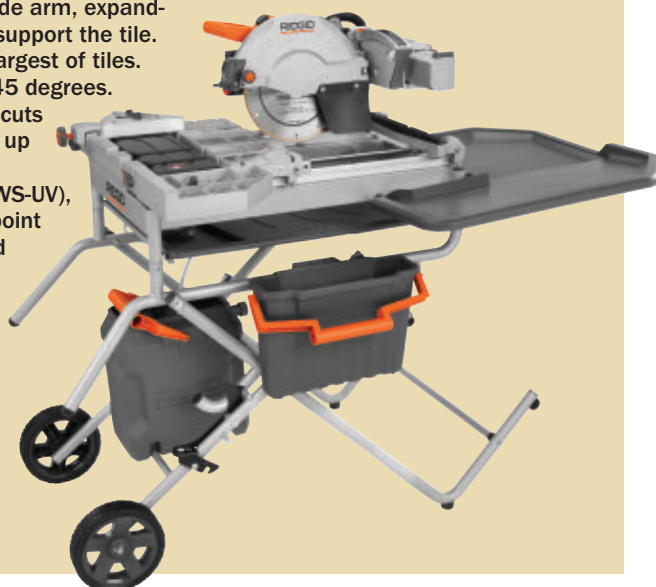
To set the stones, I drove them into the ground along the driveway with a rubber mallet and back-filled with topsoil, compacting it firmly at the base. For a sturdy installation, more than half of the stone should be buried below

RIDGID R4090 TILE SAW—"THE BEAST"

Ridgid's new "best-in-class" 10-in. tile saw (Model R4090) has been dubbed "The Beast", an appropriate nickname for this monster saw that should offer tile professionals everything they could want in a high-capacity cutting machine. It features a variable-speed motor to adjust for the material, such as glass and porcelain. It offers the largest cut capacity of any tile saw currently on the market (34-in. rip; 24-in. diagonal; 3-3/4-in. depth). The multi-position cutting head tracks left and right along a guide arm, expanding cut capacity and ensuring the best position for the table to support the tile. The sliding table expands along two guide bars to support the largest of tiles. The cutting head can be adjusted to any angle between 0 and 45 degrees. A removable table extension provides work support for straight cuts in tiles up to 34 in. (in front position) and diagonal cuts for tiles up to 24 in. (in rear position).

The whole system rests on Ridgid's Wet Saw Utility Vehicle (WS-UV), which is an integrated mobile stand that collapses with single-point release for easy portability on 8-in. semi-pneumatic wheels, and then sets up in seconds as a sturdy work platform.

Not only did The Beast slice through tile after tile without a hitch, but it cut natural stone up to 3 in. thick. With its remarkable work capacity, multiple features and exceptional quality of cut, and the EHT staff looks forward to using "The Beast" on many tile projects to come. Visit www.ridgid.com/thebeast.



I scrubbed the mud off the stones with a wire brush attachment from ReciproTools.



A trial run of stone helped to determine the pattern that looked best.



When digging the trench I used a 2x4 to guide the spade and protect the driveway's edge.



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grade. I tucked the landscaping fabric tightly against the stones to prevent weeds from sprouting.

Once all the stones were in place, I filled the joints around the stones with sand to tamp down the topsoil and help reduce mud during rain showers.

I had to cut some of the stones to size and shape.



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While working near the home's flagstone wall, I took the opportunity to patch up some cracks using Sashco's Slab concrete crack repair caulk. This is probably the best caulk-type concrete repair product that I've found. It combines superior adhesion and elasticity for awesome durability. The caulk is gray to match aging concrete and has a high-bodied granular texture, so the repair actually looks like a cementitious product once it dries. Slab's water-based formula is easy to apply and clean up—and most importantly, it stays where you put it. Visit www.sashco.com.



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The Ridgid R4090 tile saw slices through natural stone up to 3" thick.

I cut away the exposed sharp edges as a safety measure.

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The end result was a marked improvement over the plastic debris that had been lining the garden, and the natural stone worked well as a sensible accessory for the flagstone home. **EHT**



Set the stones with a rubber mallet.



More than half the stone should rest below grade. Backfill around the stones and pack the soil firmly.



Finally, I packed the joints with sand to help prevent garden soil washing onto the driveway when it rained.

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RAIN READY

*Building a
Patio Cover for
Wet Weather*

By Larry Walton, Photos by Tim Walton

It rains a lot where I live in Oregon, and for the most part we carry on with sporting events, yard work, hikes and graduation ceremonies in the rain. However, we don't mind a little shelter from the rain when relaxing on a patio. We do not, however, want that shelter to interfere with the bit of sun we get between July and October.

That's the story behind this patio cover project. Handle the rain while maintaining an open air feel. The plan: Install polycarbonate corrugated sheets high enough to allow for unobstructed views, for plenty of light and for air movement.

Simply attaching to the vertical surface of the wall or even to the fascia board would not be nearly high enough to accomplish these goals. That's why we looked to SkyLift for hardware that would enable us to securely mount the patio cover structure well above the rain gutter level and slope it for rain runoff without obstructing the view at the lower portion. (Skylifthardware.com)

SkyLift accomplishes this by providing a vertical riser with a flat plate that penetrates the roof

and attaches to the top plate of the exterior wall. The top of the riser accepts a saddle designed to support a beam, which supports the house end of the patio cover. A corresponding beam set on posts supports the other end of the patio cover framing.

There are several advantages to the SkyLift design. First, it attaches to the wall framing without interfering with the roof support system. Second, it seals with a standard pipe jack flashing just like the vent pipes you see on most roofs. Third, it provides a way to set the roof beam into place one end at a time. Fourth, it holds the beam securely while allowing lateral adjustments to get the structure square before lag-bolting the beam in place.

Here's how we built our patio cover, which is now ready for our summer rain.

First we selected a polycarbonate corrugated roofing material that let in light but also provided UV protection. We saw that the sheets were about 12 ft. long and laid up to 24 in. wide (after overlap). We figured a 12-by-12-ft. cover would

RAIN READY



be about right for the space so we picked up six sheets along with the supporting corrugated moldings.



After carefully exploring for irrigation pipes, we determined locations for two 4x4 posts just outside of the patio slab. We dug the post holes 8 ft. apart and made each 2 ft. deep.



We dropped the 4x4 posts into the ground and drove stakes so two 2x4 braces per post could be set with one parallel to the house and the other perpendicular to the house.



We mixed up a batch of Sakrete to set the posts.



We used our 4x4 posts to estimate locations for our two SkyLift roof riser brackets. We removed two pieces of composition shingle (one above the other) at each location for the SkyLift hardware.



We drilled two 1-in. holes through the roof sheeting (one for

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RAIN READY

a flashlight, the other for an eyeball). We used a 2-ft. section of arrow shaft to move the insulation so we could see where we were.

We used a torpedo level to make sure our arrow shaft was

straight up and down. At our first location we could see that we were just inside the top plate, so we planned our opening just down the hill accordingly. We had no objects interfering with our hardware.

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The base of the SkyLift hardware was the template to mark the opening.



We used our Porter Cable cordless jigsaw to cut out the opening.



We used two ratchet extensions and a socket on our impact driver to lag the SkyLift base to the top plate. We centered the base plate

(inside to outside) on the wall's top plate. The left to right positioning as you look at the house is not that critical because the beams are cantilevered on the hardware.



We slipped a standard pipe jack flashing over the riser column with the top tucked under the roofing above it and the bottom overlapping the lower roofing material.



We replaced the composition shingles that were removed earlier, notching for the pipe jack flashing as needed. We were careful to use roofing tacks only in areas that were not exposed to the weather.



After laying out our roofing material on the lawn using the corrugated molding strips along one edge, we saw that

the sheets would be about 145-5/8 inches in both directions. We decided our rafters should be 143-by-143-in. to allow for overhang and a trim strip along the outside edge. We left our 4x6 beams at full length and cut a little chamfer out of the bottom corner of each for looks.



We found that leaving the saddle on the SkyLift riser unbolted allowed one guy to place the end of a beam in the saddle and

climb a ladder with the other end. The saddle spins to follow the beam. Nice feature.



We used a straight rafter to level across from the roof hardware to a 4x4 post. After allowing for 18 in. of fall for water runoff, we marked and cut off one 4x4 post. We leveled over to the other post to mark and cut it to height. We set our one 4x6 beam on the posts and secured by toenailing screws into the posts.

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RAIN READY

We positioned one rafter with our preferred overhang and used a level to mark the vertical line for a bird's mouth joint at the outside beam. We used a 3/4" strip on top of the beam to mark the

horizontal line. We decided not to cut bird's mouth joints for the house beam for a couple of reasons, the primary being that the beams were not exactly parallel.



We used a jigsaw to cut out the bird's mouth notch in each outside rafter. A cardboard template made a great tool to lay out the notches for the remaining rafters.



We cut the rafters to 140 in. long. With a header across both ends of the rafter tails, this netted the 143 inches we needed for the frame.

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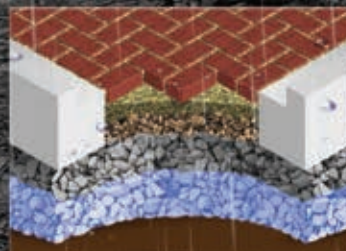
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RAIN READY



After setting the outside beam, we placed the two outside rafters on our 143-in. layout and toe-nailed them to the beams. We then squared the structure by measuring diagonally and shifting the roof beam side to side in the the SkyLift saddles to get the diagonal measurements to match.



The SkyLift saddle attaches to the riser with the supplied nut and bolt.

The SkyLift saddle fastens to the roof beam using the supplied lag screws. An interesting SkyLift design is that the holes on one side of the saddle are offset from the other side, which prevents the lag screws from colliding in the middle.

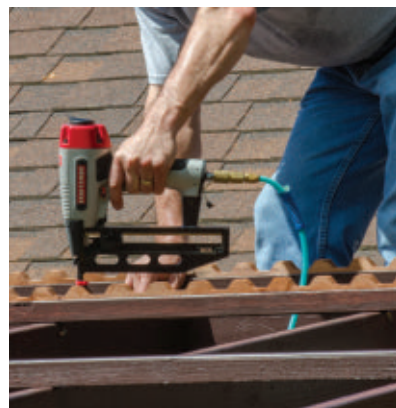


After setting the remainder of the rafters on the 24-in. layout, we made 24-in. layout marks down the two outside rafters and snapped chalk lines to set the 2x2 purlins, which run on top of and perpendicular to the rafters.

We nailed corrugated molding on top of the 2x2s, watching the peaks and valleys at the rafters to make sure they were lined up.

We loaded all six sheets of the polycarbonate roofing onto our structure, working from one end to the other.

After lining up the sheets with a consistent 1-in. overhang, we predrilled and fastened each with screws equipped with washers and rubber gaskets along the lower edge of the roof.



PRE-PAINTED

We pre-painted all of the framing lumber with primer and two top coats before we installed it on this project. Be sure to paint the end grain as well, which helps to protect the wood from moisture.





We spanned over at least three purlins at a time with plywood to distribute weight so we could screw off the remainder of the sheets. We spaced fasteners at 1-ft. intervals across and 2 ft. up and down, being sure to include the overlaps which fasten down the edges.



We attached the 4x6 beams to the 4x4 posts with custom made 1/8-in. steel straps cut at 3-by-9 inches.



It didn't take long for our Oregon climate to bring us a rain shower to test our roof. No leaks—thanks to SkyLift's bright idea of using pipe jack flashing.

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The Big Green Egg XXL is the largest capacity high-performance ceramic grill in production today. Although the Egg is currently offered in five popular and versatile sizes, the introduction of the prototype “EGGzilla” several years ago made the company aware of demand for an even larger model. The XXL is large enough to roast a whole hog, 20 racks of ribs or 40 burgers. The stainless steel cooking grid measures 29.25 inches in diameter for a whopping 672 sq. in. of cooking area. Like all grills in the Big Green Egg family, the XXL can handle virtually any cooking need, from cooking low and slow for hours to flash searing at ultra high temperatures. Its patented components and state-of-the-art ceramic technologies provide the best cooking results and will not deteriorate over time. Another notable feature of the XXL is the new patent-pending hinge design that allows easy one-handed operation of opening or closing the distinctive green dome. The XXL will be made available as a Limited Edition in 2013 at selected dealers around the world. Big Green Egg XXL will be available in full distribution in 2014. Learn more at www.biggreenegg.com.



TWILIGHT MODERN FIREPLACE

At this year's International Builders' Show (IBS) in January, the Heat & Glo Twilight Modern indoor/outdoor gas fireplace received top honors from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) as the winner of the Best of Show Award in the Outdoor Living category. The Twilight Modern is a two-sided gas fireplace that combines two megatrends; contemporary design and outdoor living. The see-through design provides impressive fireside views from both inside and outside the home, doubling the ambience and enjoyment from one fireplace. It features sleek contemporary styling with flames that rise through modern media and reflect on a black porcelain firebox. Because it's a closed system, the Twilight Modern provides a safe environment for enjoying fires within an arm's length on outdoor patios, decks or terraces. The Twilight Modern uses Direct Vent technology and innovative engineering to deliver a unique fire-side experience—and a powerful 38,000 BTUs. The unit splits the exterior wall of a home and can be installed flush with the inside or outside wall. It's rated as a fireplace and exterior window and requires no additional flue or vertical venting, simplifying installation. Learn more at www.HeatnGlo.com.



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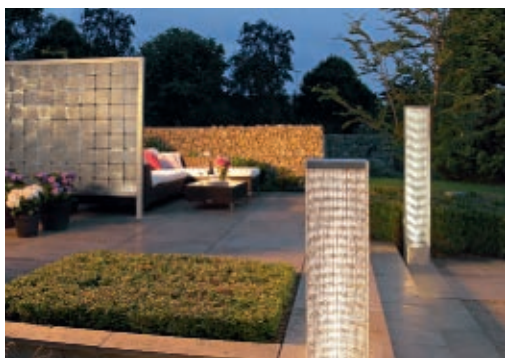


EARLY BLOOMER GREENHOUSE

Green thumb homeowners can now grow your own locally produced organic food all year. The Early Bloomer Greenhouse is a durable and affordable starter greenhouse kit for anyone who wants to enjoy year-round growing. Measuring 8 ft. wide and 8 ft. long, the Early Bloomer Greenhouse offers plenty of room to grow everything from heirloom tomatoes to salad greens, and it fits nicely in even small yards. The center height of 6 ft., 3 in. is ideal for tall plants or even small fruit trees. The greenhouse features a Solexx brand corrugated plastic covering that diffuses light to create ideal inside growing conditions and prevent leaf burn. The covering also provides the highest insulation available in hobby greenhouses. The extremely strong base along with the Solexx corrugated plastic greenhouse covering makes the Early Bloomer Greenhouse sturdy enough to withstand powerful winds—unlike many small greenhouses. Learn more at www.greenhousecatalog.com.

RAGUHNER LIGHT COLUMNS

Raguhner light columns from W.S. Tyler are sources of outdoor light—but also objects of design in their own right. During the day they are contemporary decorative sculptures, while at night they provide soft indirect light, creating a pleasant ambience. Light reflection on the body of the semi-transparent structure, which is made from high-quality stainless steel architectural mesh, creates Moiré pattern effects that vary depending on the viewing angle. The stainless steel base has an integrated light source, which is suitable for installation in gravel, patios, terraces and most other landscapes. Learn more at www.weavingideas.com.



ROBOREEL WATER HOSE REEL

Great Stuff Inc. offers the innovative new RoboReel Water Hose Reel to provide a level of convenience and safety never seen before in a hose reel. Designed to eliminate frustrating kinks and replace manual winding hose reels that tangle hoses and break after a couple of months. The RoboReel Water offers One-Touch Retraction, in which it winds your hose neatly and automatically at the touch of a button on the unit, or on the remote at the end of the hose. It rewinds the hose utilizing a back-and-forth motion, preventing kinks. The One-Touch Water feature starts the flow of water as the RoboReel's valve and remote can manage all on/off water functions. The RoboReel also rotates 360 degrees continuously so you can water any area within a 200-280 ft. diameter, depending on which hose size you choose. With



its durable motor and rugged UV-, chemical-, and impact-resistant polycarbonate shell, RoboReel can withstand heavy weathering and exposure to the elements. Great Stuff stands behind their product with a four-year or 4,000 wind warranty. Learn more at www.roboreel.com. **EHT**

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FOAM FACTS

By Matt Weber

SPF is quickly gaining ground as a high-demand insulating material. Here's why.

An increasingly popular method of home insulation is Spray Polyurethane Foam, commonly called Spray Foam or SPF. Although pioneering work on polyurethanes was conducted as far back as 1937 in Germany, it was not until the early 1970's that 2-pound/cu. ft. closed-cell foams were used in the U.S. for perimeter wall insulation. In the mid 1990's, 1/2-pound/cu. ft. open-cell foams were brought into the market for interior wall insulation as seen in many of today's new homes.

Spray Foam is a spray-applied insulating foam plastic that is installed as a liquid and then expands many times its original size. As home insulation, the concept is similar to living inside a sealed Styro Foam cooler. The foam can be adjusted to have many different physical properties depending on its intended use. For example, the same basic raw materials that can make insulation foam semi-rigid and soft to the touch also creates high-density roofing foam that withstands foot traffic and water.

FOAMFACTS



Specialized equipment is used to apply the SprayFoam, and proper training is important in order to get the best results.

As an insulating material SPF can provide high levels of R-value, while providing air barriers and moisture control in buildings. For roofing, spray polyurethane foam insulates and eliminates thermal bridging through fasteners or gaps in decking.

Spray foam is available in two versions; low-density/open-cell SPF and medium-density/closed-cell SPF. The low-density/open-cell SPF refers to a generic Spray foam

that weighs between 0.4 to 0.6 lbs. per cubic foot when fully cured. It is spray-applied as a liquid and expands about 100-150 times its original volume to form a semi-rigid/flexible, non-structural SPF insulation. The low-density SPF has an R-value around 3.5 per inch.

Medium-density/closed-cell SPF used in interior applications refers to spray foam that weighs between 1.5 to 2 lbs. per cu. ft. when fully cured. It is also sprayed as a liquid onto a substrate and expands about 35 to 50 times its original volume to form a rigid, structural

Spray foam is available in two versions, low-density and medium-density. The product is a spray-applied insulating foam plastic that is installed as a liquid and then expands many times its original size.



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FOAMFACTS

SPF insulation with a compressive strength between 15 to 25 PSI. The SPF has an aged R-value of around 6.0 per inch.

BENEFITS OF SPF

Spray foam offers a number of benefits for residential construction. SPF is durable, maintains its physical properties over time (won't sag), and for the "green" thinking consumer it contributes little to the waste stream. Plus, depending on the formula and project, a single product can take the place of three or four other products, including insulation, air barriers, sealants, vapor retarders and weather barriers.

"While there is a higher upfront cost for the installation of the foam, SPF can really cut down on energy bills in the long run,"



Special training, extensive safety gear and expensive equipment are required for a whole-house application.

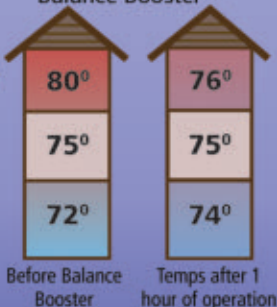
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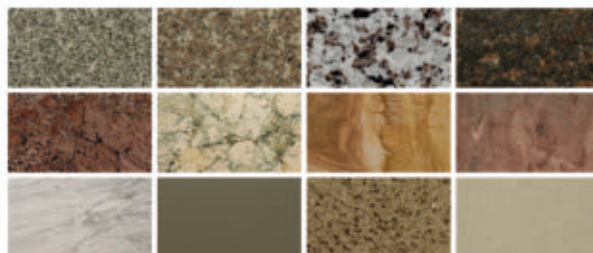


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THE MANY USES FOR SPRAY FOAM—FROM OUR HOMES TO OUR TROOPS



Tiger Foam SPF has a wide array of uses, even for the U.S. military overseas.

"The product is very versatile," says Jamie Rawlinson, technical director at Tiger Foam, which has one of the highest R-values in the SPF industry with a rating of R-7 per inch. "It's ideal for use as residential or commercial insulation, but a lot of people have used it for boats, wine cellars, and coolers for food storage as well."

The Tiger Foam product is supplied in two versions: a fast rise fire-rated formulation for new construction, and a slow rise formulation for retrofitting interior space. Plus, it is sometimes used as a component in multi-product insulating systems. "You can actually use foam in conjunction with other insulation materials," says Rawlinson. "Our product has an air sealant factor, so people might use it for that purpose and then add rock wool or fiberglass or whatever else they might want. So if you have areas that might only get an R-11 with fiberglass, using it together with Tiger Foam takes them to an R-18." Tiger Foam can also be used for insulating exposed pipes; for roofing systems and crawlspaces; to fill interior voids on concrete; and for use as an asbestos encapsulant.



Tiger Foam has even supported our troops overseas. "We shipped a ton of product over to Afghanistan and Iraq for insulating tents so they could run air conditioning to the tent to help the soldiers cool down," explains Rawlinson. "One of the most important things for a lot of end users is the fact that this is a very portable product. It can be used just about anywhere, where the big professional rigs cannot."

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FOAMFACTS

says Ron Brown of Thermetix, a professional installer of SPF systems throughout Alabama. Although the initial cost of installation could be 3 to 4

times the cost of installing standard fiberglass batts, in as few as five years the homeowner can recoup their investment and enjoy lowered utility bills throughout the

life of the house. SPF also has no food value to attract insects or rodents.

"Spray foam is also helpful for people who suffer from allergies," says Brown, explaining that the seamless, continuous layer of insulation provides superb air quality and reduces pathogen growth.

Furthermore, according to the Spray Polyurethane Foam Alliance (www.sprayfoam.org), closed-cell SPF adds structural strength by "gluing" a building together, thereby making it more resistant to racking events, such as hurricanes and high winds. SPF also reduces noise from outside by air-sealing the building.

DIY OR HIRE A CONTRACTOR?

The specialized equipment to apply SPF is a complicated system that is generally transported by truck or trailer. The equipment requires special training, is very expensive and is typically owned or leased by the contractor (and unavailable for consumer rental). A whole-house application is a contractor job that is typically performed during new home construction.



An installer uses a long reciprocating blade to cut the expanded SPF flush with the wall studs.



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- Used in residential, business and commercial applications, and are helpful in historic preservation where replacement of existing windows are not an option.



Using a strong frame and a clear high strength film glazing, they are lightweight, durable and will not shatter. Window Inserts are long lasting with minimal maintenance.



Find EnergySavr Window inserts at
www.WindowInserts.com



However, for room additions and small-scale renovations, a serious do-it-yourselfer should explore the products offered by companies such as RHH Foam Systems or TigerFoam, which offer DIY kits that are both portable and disposable. For instance, the Versi-Foam kits from RHH are available in a variety of sizes and types, including open-cell, closed-cell, high-density and slow-rise foam insulation for a wide range of applications. You can find options for do-it-yourself SPF kits at www.rhhfoamsystems.com and www.tigerfoam.com.

For more information on spray polyurethane foam insulation, including the latest technological developments, visit the SFPA at www.sprayfoam.org.



The Versi-Foam kits from RHH Foam Systems are available in a variety of sizes and types, including open-cell, closed-cell, high-density and slow-rise foam insulation for a wide range of applications.



DIY kits for applying SPF insulation are available for renovations and room additions.

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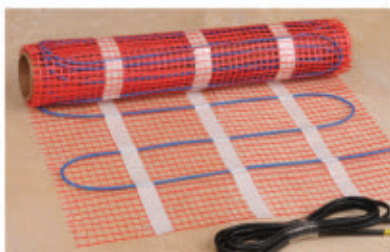
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spots. Using a strong frame and a clear, high-strength film glazing, the EnergySavr inserts are lightweight, durable, will not shatter, and require minimal maintenance. They're also quick and easy to measure, order and install. The inserts slide easily into the interior window sill, frame or trim open-

ing of your existing windows. They install firmly in place by a compression fit for a clean, non-intrusive appearance. No extra hardware or tools are needed. Learn more at www.WindowInserts.com.

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Keeping Water Where You Want It

Liquid Waterproofing and Vapor Barriers for Tile Showers



By Rob Robillard

When remodeling a shower, most people are more concerned with the aesthetic aspects—tile color, fixture selection, glass door style—and pay little attention to construction methods. They assume that the contractor will do things right. However, a lack of waterproofing measures is clearly evident in the many showers I remodel every year. Some contractors waterproof correctly, but most don't.

When folks get excited about choices in aesthetics, they often overlook how the contractor deals with water infiltration as well as the other hidden details needed to

ensure a long-lasting and quality job.

Over the past 20 years the tile industry has shown great advances in waterproofing tile-related products, especially with methods of constructing tile showers. Paint-on liquid waterproofing products now enable contractors and DIY'ers to waterproof a shower easily and efficiently. These paint-on systems, when combined with a copper shower pan and proper substrates, all work as a system to keep water in the shower and out of the wall cavity.

LIQUID WATERPROOFING

In my neck of the woods there are several liquid-based, "paint

on" waterproofing products available. Some of the more popular brands are Laticrete Hydro Ban, Custom RedGard and MAPEI AquaDefense.

My local tile store sells Hydro Ban, which comes in a gallon bucket and is applied with a paint roller or brush. Hydro Ban can be used over cement board, fiber-cement board, concrete, mud work, and other areas where you would be installing tile. It's a two-coat system and costs nearly \$100 a gallon, with 5-gal. containers being better priced.

Hydro Ban is a thin, load-bearing waterproofing/crack-isolation membrane that does not require the use of fabric in the shower wall field, coves or corners. The product is a single-component, self-curing liquid rubber polymer that forms a flexible, seamless waterproofing membrane and bonds directly to a wide variety of substrates. It also has an anti-fracture protection of up to 1/8 in. over shrinkage and other non-structural cracks.

WHERE TO USE IT

Liquid waterproofing should be applied to all surfaces in the shower area that meet water or moisture. I basically paint all of the surfaces that will receive tile in the shower, including horizontal areas exposed to moisture such as shower benches, shelving, half-walls, niches and especially the shower floor.

When installing horizontal surfaces in a shower such as shelves, half walls and niches, ensure that these surfaces all have a slight

pitch to the drain in addition to applying waterproofing. These surfaces are extremely susceptible to leakage, and the pitch ensures positive drainage while the liquid waterproofing prevents moisture from getting past the tile and grout.

Liquid waterproofing is an outstanding redundancy barrier to the tile installation and allows you to skip the plastic sheeting behind your substrate. (Note: I still recommend installing a vapor barrier behind the substrate, and if you plan on installing a steam generator, you will definitely need a vapor barrier.)

APPLICATION

Most of us hate reading instructions, but I highly suggest that you follow the manufacturer's instructions for the brand and type of waterproofing that you are using. With some waterproofing, the companies will want you to use a special fabric, along with the liquid, over the whole surface. Some will require the fabric to be used in all corners, while some don't require it at all.



The substrate should be tile backer board and recommended corrosion-resistant fasteners (typically 1-5/8" minimum).



Prior to installing the shower pan I cover the subfloor with Ice and Water Shield to protect the copper from the wood. I also wrap 4 to 6" up the walls to protect the pan sides.

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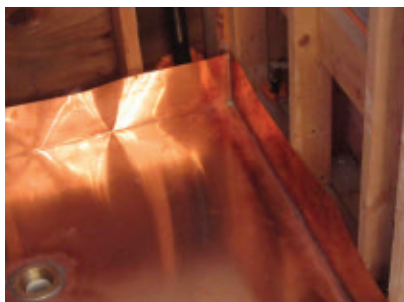
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There are all types of shower pans from acrylic to galvanized, rubberized membrane and copper.



A local sheet-metal company fabricates the copper pan.

You also need to pay attention to how many coats of the product are required and how thick those coats should be applied. Some products require three coats and some only two. (Hydro Ban is a two-coat system.)

Other manufacturers want their proprietary product to be applied to 30 mils thick when wet, and some only 20 mils. A wet film gauge comes in handy for measuring this if you choose that route.

SHOWER/BATH REQUIREMENTS

You will need to insulate all exterior walls, and consider installing pipe insulation to prevent the water pipes from sweating.

The substrate should be tile backer-board and recommended corrosion-resistant fasteners (typically 1-5/8-in. minimum). You will also need:

- Alkali-resistant mesh tape
- Copper, galvanized, membrane or other appropriate shower pan

- Thinset mortar
- Waterproofing material, enough for two coats
- 3-in. throwaway brush for cutting in edges and corners
- Paint roller / tray

THE SHOWER PAN

A well-constructed shower starts with a shower pan. There are all types of shower pans from acrylic to galvanized, rubberized membrane and copper. I use a local sheet-metal fabricating company to create the pan.

I prefer to use copper pans and a pitched mud job for the floor in all showers that receive tile. Prior to installing the shower pan I cover the subfloor with Ice and Water Shield to separate and protect the copper from the wood. I also wrap 4 to 6 inches up the walls to protect the pan sides.



Complete the shower enclosure substrate from top to bottom.



To create a shower floor from scratch, I use what is commonly called "dry pack mortar" or "deck mud", which contains three ingredients; Portland cement, sand and water. The mortar bed is pitched toward the drain.

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WATERPROOFING MEMBRANES VS. VAPOR BARRIERS:

Water vapor . . . What's that?

Water vapor is water in a gas form. In a shower situation you recognize it as steam. Steam stays in a gas form until it cools down or hits a barrier such as a shower door, tile, ceiling or a mirror.

Water vapor that gets behind walls or travels up through light fixtures or HVAC grilles into an attic will turn back into water when it cools off. Over time, this will present itself as unhealthy mold and rot.

One very important feature to any shower is a ventilation fan with a timer switch. This ventilation fan should be sized according to the size of the bathroom and installed to vent to the outside of the house. There is a right and wrong way to vent a bathroom, and care should be taken when choosing a CFM fan size as well as to make sure you are venting all moist air outdoors.

Waterproofing does not stop water vapor. This can be a tough concept to grasp. Waterproofing seals a surface so water doesn't pass through it but it does not always stop water vapor from passing through. Waterproofing a shower stops water in liquid form, and vapor barriers stop water in gas (steam) form.

In the case of water vapor you will want to consider installing a vapor barrier. Basically, any material rated at less than 1 perm is considered a vapor barrier/retarder. A perm rating is a standard measure of the water-vapor permeability of a material. The higher the number, the more readily water vapor can diffuse through the material.

Examples of different wall coating products and their perm ratings:

- 6-mil plastic: 0.3 perms
- 15-lb. tar paper: 5 perms
- Laticrete Hydroban liquid waterproofing: 1.247 perms (2 coats, each 15-22 mils thick)
- Schluter Kerdi Waterproofing fabric: 0.75 perms
- Schluter Kerdi-board 1/2": 0.48 perms
- Noble Wall Seal sheet membrane: 0.22 perms

It's essential to take into account all forms of moisture when constructing a shower. For example, if you're planning a steam shower, waterproofing alone is not enough and you need a vapor barrier.

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Apply mesh tape to all corners and seams and then apply a coat of modified latex thinset mortar over them.



Note the mesh tape in the corner which strengthens the joints and helps bond to the thinset.



For the project I used the Hydro Ban waterproofing product from Laticrete.

MUD FLOOR OR DECK MUD

To create a shower floor from scratch, I recommend using what is commonly referred to as "dry pack mortar" or "deck mud". Deck mud contains three ingredients: regular Portland cement, sand and water. That's it. A properly mixed and installed deck mud will create a shower floor that will last for years and years.

The ratio is very important to achieve the correct consistency and stability. You want 5 parts sand to 1 part cement. You want just enough water to dampen the mixture.

The easiest and most convenient way to get your mixture correct is to buy the Sand and Topping premixed bags which come already mixed at a 3:1 ratio. For a 60-lb. bag you need only add 30 lbs. of sand to get to the proper ratio.

DRAINS AND WALL PENETRATIONS

On mud floors the concrete covers all areas. Allow for a minimum 1/4-in. space between drains, pipes, lights or other penetrations and surrounding ceramic tile, stone or brick. To fill that gap, use a waterproof sealant and foam backer-rod to seal the space. Do not use grout, joint filler or thinset mortar as it will not last with expansion and contraction movements around the pipe.

APPLYING THE WATERPROOFER

Apply mesh tape to all corners and seams and then apply a coat of modified latex thinset mortar over them. The mesh tape strengthens the joints and bonds to the thinset.

Allow the thinset to dry completely.

Apply the liquid waterproofing material with a 1/2- or 3/4-in. nap roller or brush. Thoroughly brush

the corners to ensure complete coverage. Coat the walls completely. Then, coat floor to keep water out of the copper pan.

As I mentioned earlier I use the Hydro Ban product, and the first coat dries in 45 minutes. The second coat can be added after the first dries. One gallon covers 50 square feet for two coats.

APPLYING TILE

Once the waterproofing membrane has dried to the touch, ceramic tile, stone or brick may be installed with thinset.



Apply the liquid waterproofer with a brush or nap roller (1/2" or 3/4").



Thoroughly brush the corners to ensure complete coverage.



You can start at the top and work along the perimeter.



Complete the field of the wall. Hydro Ban is a two-coat product, and the second can be applied after the first is completely dry.

Allow the waterproofing membrane to cure for two hours at 70°F (21°C) and 50-percent relative humidity before covering with

concrete, thick bed mortar, etc.

Note: Do not use solvent-based adhesives directly on membrane, as it will dissolve the coating.

KEEPING WATER IN THE SHOWER

In the future, whenever you remodel a shower, make sure to take a few extra steps to waterproof your shower.

If you use a paint-on system, you can do 100 sq. ft. yourself for \$150 worth of materials and two hours of your time.

If you're paying a contractor, expect to pay \$150 plus a minimum of four hours of their time to purchase the materials, coordination into the project schedule, labor expense, overhead and profit. **EHT**

Editor's Note: Robert Robillard is editor of *A Concord Carpenter*. Visit www.aconcordcarpenter.com.



After the waterproofing is completed, the shower is ready for tile installation.

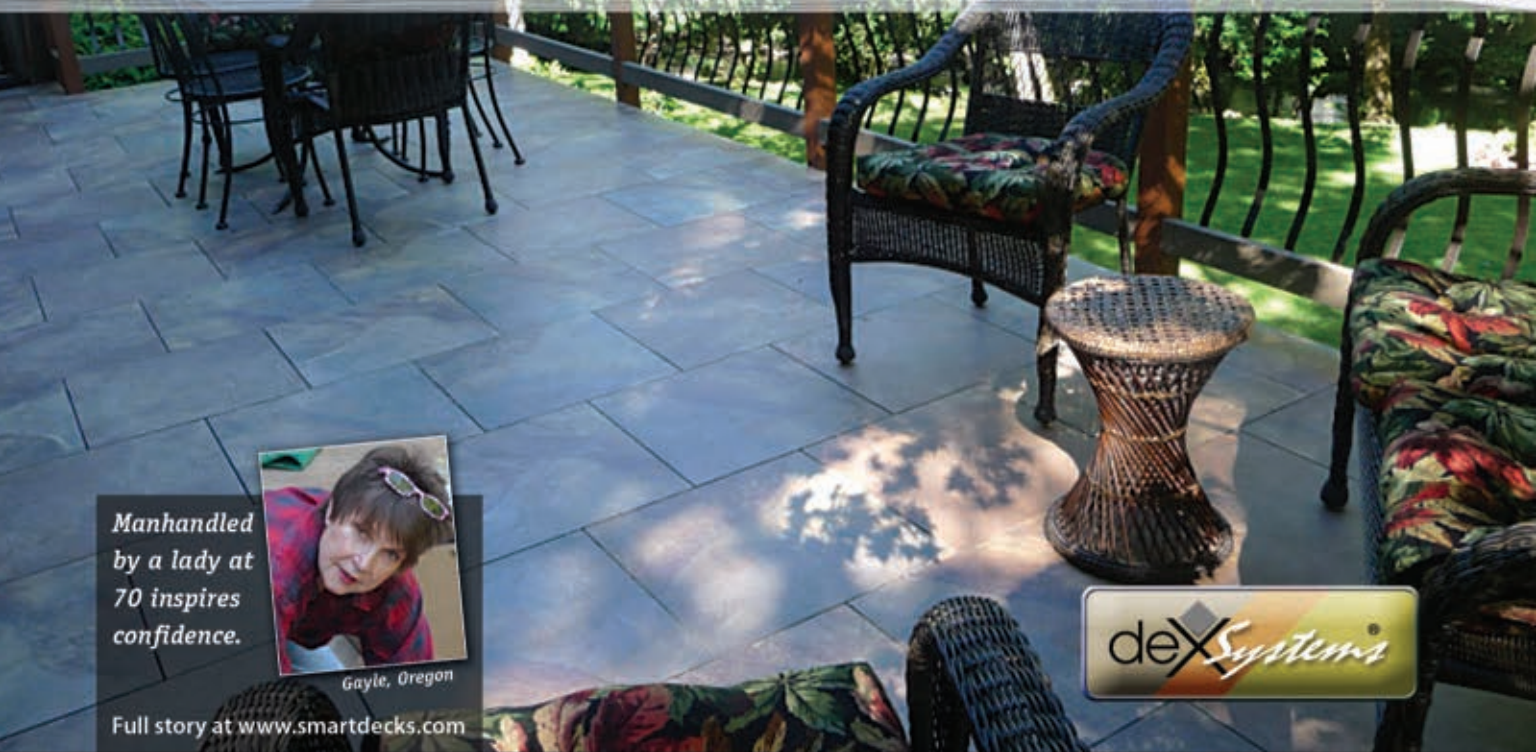
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