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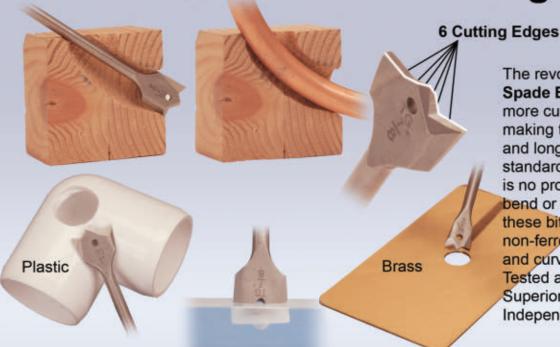


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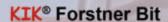
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Cover photo © 123rf.com/iriana88w



From The Editor-In-Chief

hile touring the 2017 International Builders' Show I was amazed to see the reach of today's smart technology throughout the modern home. With the latest advancements, virtually any aspect of the home that's built with electronics can be controlled with a smartphone or other wireless device.

For some reason I'm usually behind the times on the latest gadgetry, but *EHT*'s publisher Jeremy Hollingsworth is quick on the draw. His home is already equipped with the Amazon Echo home automation system. The central hub of the Echo wifi system uses a voice-control service to play music, answer questions, read audiobooks, report traffic and weather, and a lot more. To expand the reach of the system, Jeremy uses the Echo Dot wireless devices throughout his house. When he needs to restock paper towels, he speaks the order aloud—in any room that has a Bluetooth Dot—and the item is added to his electronic grocery list. Pretty convenient.

That's just the tip of the iceberg based on what I saw at the Builder's Show. Here's a rundown of some of the latest "smart" amenities available for your house:

The Nest Cam is an outdoor security camera that interfaces with your smartphone. Imagine you're away when a stranger hops your fence. You get a phone alert when the Nest Cam senses someone's in the backyard. You check your feed and see a person sneaking around. Using the mobile app, you speak to the burglar through the camera's built-in speaker, and he runs off. You also have video evidence.

With a doorbell cam, see who's at your door even when you're at work. Combine the doorbell cam with the Nest Cam, and you can view recorded video of house guests after they unlock the door or ring the doorbell

Maybe you'd be interested in a "learning" thermostat that programs itself, automatically saves energy when you're away, and can be controlled using your smartphone.

New Whirlpool kitchen appliances integrate with a mobile app and a "learning" thermostat to use features that can help them save energy. Avoid running the defrost cycle in your refrigerator during peak energy usage hours. Or delay your dishwasher from starting until you've left the house.

You can even control your lights, motorized window shades and more, whether at home or away, with the Caséta Wireless system from Lutron.

There's not much left that you can't control wirelessly, as long as your home is equipped with the right hardware and the software apps to network them. And there's bound to be more to come





EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Matt Weber mweber@latitude3.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Rob Robillard Larry Walton Kathy Ziprik Mark Clement

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Wesley Glassco

CIRCULATION
Jennifer Pentecost

PUBLISHER

Jeremy Hollingsworth jhollingsworth@latitude3.com

ADVERTISING SALES

Jason Holsomback jholsomback@latitude3.com

Nick Bishop nbishop@latitude3.com

ONLINE MEDIA ASSISTANT Sonia Buchanan

Soliia Buchanan

BUSINESS MANAGER Dusty Statham

> SUBSCRIPTIONS Customer Service 888-587-8911

> > PRESIDENT
> > Trent R. Boozer

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT Chad Gillikin

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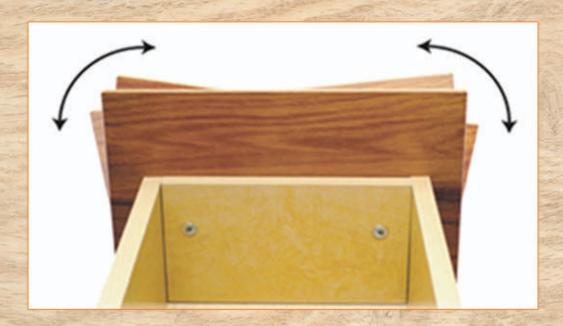
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• A neighbor suggested that I stabilize a leaning fence post with a steel wire. But how do I use a wire to make the repair?

• A Wire Tensioning Kit is a method of stabilizing a post by attaching the top of the unstable post to the bottom of a stable adjacent post (or boulder, etc.) using two anchors with a steel wire running between

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them. When the wire is tightened to remove its slack, the tension racks the leaning post into position against the fence rail. Tighten the wire until it pulls the leaning post plumb, and then secure the wire to both anchor points with appropriate fasteners.

• We recently installed • a new toilet, and it's already leaking from the tank into the bowl. What gives?

 This sounds like the symptom of a worn out flush-valve flapper. However, since you have a new toilet there might simply be a problem with the way the flapper is seated on the tank drain. The flapper has to seal around the drain hole completely. If the flapper's mounting ring is mounted too high on the toilet's overflow pipe, then the flapper will lift upward on one side and not seal correctly. If the mounting ring is mounted too low on the pipe, it can push up the opposite side of the flapper and cause a similar leak. Adjust the mounting ring up or down until the the flapper has complete contact around the drain to achieve a watertight seal.

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• When is the best time to harvest firewood?

• The best time to make firewood is between November and March, when the water content of trees is at • its lowest. Firewood needs to dry for two years after being chopped, so pile the logs in a way that air can

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circulate. Each log should be about a foot long. Cover the firewood with a waterproof tarp. If you only use it occasionally, you can burn just about any kind of wood. Softwood heats up faster due to its higher resin content, but you also have to add more logs to the fire more often when you burn softwood.

Hardwood, such as beech or oak, burns longer and is better suited for heavy use in a stove or fireplace.

• What advantage does • an expensive hole-saw set have over a cheaper set?

.....

 Beyond the different price points of various brand names, the biggest difference in hole saws will probably be the metal that they're made from. Carbon steel is the least expensive and works best for soft materials like wood. Bimetal works for cutting metal and hard plastic (or slowly cutting wood). Tungsten carbide is harder for cutting fiberglass and ripping through wood. The more expensive diamond-tipped hole saws are used for cutting glass and masonry. **EHT**

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New Ideas for Old Siding

Replacing Damaged Siding on a Historic House



By Clint C. Thomas, Esq. Photography By Sterling Thomas

t has been said that the lumber available today is not as dense or as solid as lumber that was harvested twenty or more years ago because it is now cut when it is still very young. Latex paint certainly is not as long lasting as the lead-based paint that was used by our grandfathers. If you put these two new things together on the exterior of a house it creates a recipe for a home repair problem.

I can testify to this fact from first-hand experience. My wife and I are blessed to own a Victorian home ca. 1880, that has the old-fashioned wooden siding commonly referred to as #105 weatherboard. As with many old houses, we use the back door as the primary door since it is adjacent to the driveway. The home has a small wooden deck, some people would call it a porch, directly off of the back door.

The downside to having this deck is that it causes some of the siding to rot. Rainwater from two different roofs fall on this area of the deck, and when it hits the surface it splashes back against the siding of the house. Also, the afternoon sun relentlessly beats on this side of the house, causing the paint to deteriorate faster than normal, which in turn allows the water to seep into any crack in the

lumber that it can find, eventually rotting it. In contrast to the siding, the deck is made out of pressure-treated lumber and withstands the rainwater.

This same problem occurs on the small shed that is adjacent to the house. It sits next to a cement patio, and as with the deck, water splashes off the patio back onto the siding of the shed. Over the years, this has caused the bottom three boards to get very spongy and begin to rot.

Another problem area is a narrow strip of siding that is adjacent to and directly under the roof of the side porch. Water cascades off of the main roof onto the porch roof and a large amount is then channeled over the end of the roof and invariably runs down this strip of siding.

The simple fix would be to add a couple of gutters and an eavestrough. However, since the house is located in a National Historic District and has never had those amenities, we are prohibited from installing them now as it would alter the home's original appearance and character. Also, this



Water exposure had caused wood rot on the original siding on this home in a National Historic District.

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would only stop water from falling off the roof, but it would not have any effect on rainwater that fell directly onto the deck.

The second alternative to fixing the problem would be to purchase

#105 weatherboard siding that is milled out of pressure-treated lumber. None of my local home improvement centers offer pressure-treated weatherboard. In fact,



We pried off the rotted siding and used its profile as a template to mill the replacement pieces.



For a stable work surface and smooth, consistent cutting, we milled the siding use a router mounted in a router table.

style of weatherboard siding any longer.

Therefore, in order to permanently fix this problem I decided to mill my own #105 weatherboard siding out of pieces of pressure-treated 1x6. In all. I needed approximately 34 linear feet of siding to repair the section next to the porch and another 30 linear feet for the repair to the side of a shed.

I purchased treated 1x6 boards in lengths of 8 feet, 10 feet and 16 feet for the repairs. I used the longer pieces on the wall next to the porch and on the shed next to the patio, and I used several scrap pieces to make the pieces that I needed for the repair adjacent to the side porch.





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MILLING THE SIDING

For this project I used a 3/4-in. Vertical Raised Panel Bit manufactured by Freud in my router. I had saved a piece of factory-milled, pine weatherboard from the last time that I had to make this same repair. I used this piece of scrap as a template for the new lumber that I was milling. A 3/4-in. raisedpanel bit cuts off too much wood to try and hold the router freehand, plus there is not enough room on the edge of a 3/4-in. thick piece of stock to securely rest a router. The large size of the router bit requires that it be used on a router table.

So, the first step in the milling process was to set up my router table with the raised-panel bit using the leftover scrap piece as a guide. It is very important to use

To make the cove cut in the siding, we used a 3/4" Vertical Raised Panel Router Bit manufactured by Freud.

The boards are stabilized against the fence and fed vertically through the router table.

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a feather-board or some other make-shift guide to help hold the stock in place as it passes through the router. The large cutting surface of the router bit combined with a long piece of lumber necessitates the need for some type of feather-board. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to make an accurate cut.

With the table set up, I was then able to run my first board

through to make the cove cut in what will be my new piece of siding.

Actually, I made several passes through the router to only remove small amounts of wood with each pass from the treated stock, because the 3/4-in. panel raising bit removes a lot of wood.

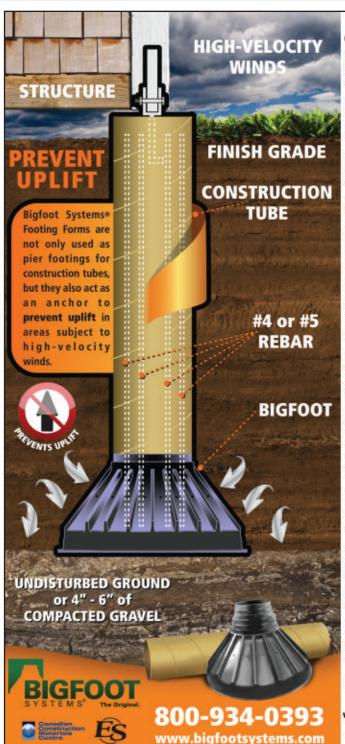


This photo shows the resulting cove cut at the top of the treated wood siding.



The notch at the bottom of the siding is made with a Freud Rabbeting Bit.

A word of caution is necessary here. Pressure-treated lumber is still wet when it is shipped to the retail stores. If it is too wet then the router will have a hard time cutting the new profile, and may end up peeling off long strips of wood in the process. Therefore, when selecting treated lumber for a project such as this, choose pieces that are only slightly damp and then place them in the direct sun for a couple of hours to further help dry them out. Be sure to turn the boards periodically so that both sides get exposed to the sunlight.



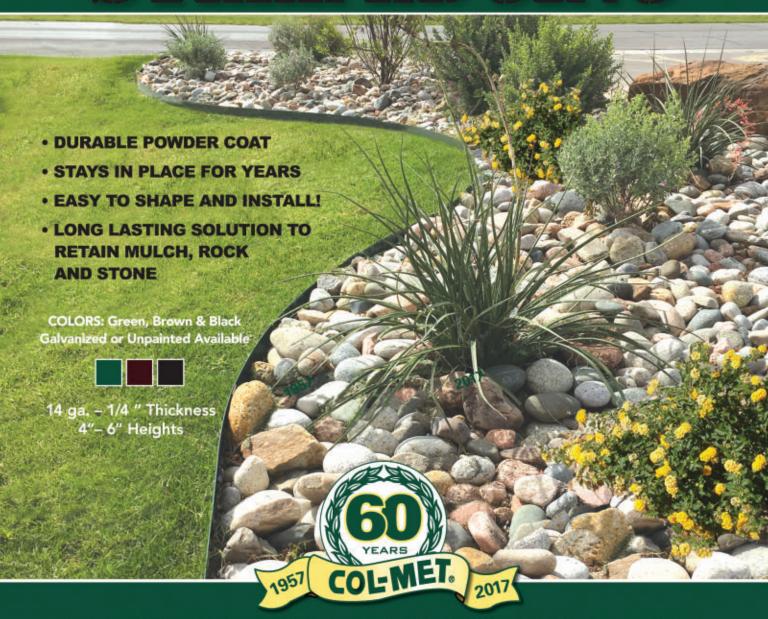
Tips for Installing Concrete Pier Footings

Here are some useful tips to ensure your footings are installed properly and the integrity of your project is maintained;

- You should always make sure that a qualified engineer has designed your footing forms and that they have been tested by an accredited organization.
- Select a footing form that can carry the weight of your new construction and has met the proper building codes.
- Select a footing form made of environmentally friendly, sturdy materials.
- Ensure you are placing the footing form on solid ground. The more solid the ground the less likely movement will occur.
- Install your footings 4-6 inches below the frost line to avoid potential movement. If you are in an area without frost, then the form should be back filled 2 feet to hold it in place when it is being filled with concrete.
- Should rebar be required pour concrete into the system first.
 Insert three or four number 4 or 5 rebar rods into the tube. To determine the length of rebar, measure the distance from the top of the tube to the air holes located on the Bigfoot Systems* Footing Form before you place the system in the excavation and backfill.
- Purchase the amount of concrete stated on the form label. You will use all of it.
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- For a marine application, such as constructing a wharf, pour the concrete into the footing and tube on shore and have an excavator set them in place in the water. The other option will entail using a diver and pumper truck.
- Footing forms should always be used when installing footings as they provide added stability, strength and safety to your new construction.
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Set up featherboards to apply pressure against the workpiece so it maintains an even, consistent feed across the router bit.

Also, be sure to remember to wear safety glasses when using any power tool, but it is absolutely imperative to wear them when working with this large of a router bit on treated lumber. The amount of wood that is being removed with each revolution of the router coupled with the fact that the wood is still wet from the factory milling often causes large bits of wood to fly off. Invariably, this debris always seems to get thrown onto the operator.

It may be necessary to make more than one finish pass through the router to achieve a smooth final cut. The large router bit has a tendency to make contours in the new cove cut. An additional pass or two through the router will smooth these out and eliminate any waves that were left by the first couples of cuts.

If you are milling more than one piece of siding, I highly recommend running all of the pieces through the router table before



Make a series of consecutive shallow passes across the router to avoid burn marks in the wood.



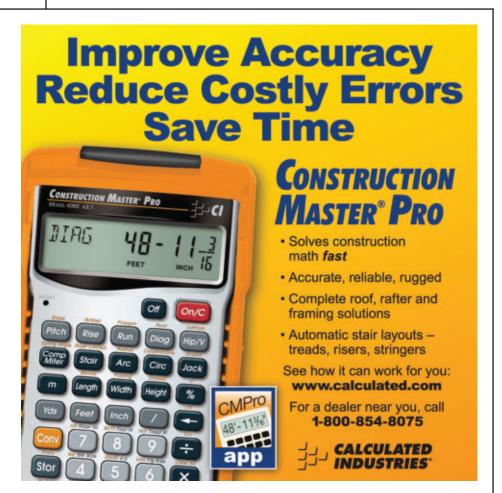
This photo shows the resulting milled profile, and how the siding interlocks on the house wall.

changing bits to make the rabbet cut on the bottom of the siding. Running all of the pieces through the router consecutively will guarantee a uniform cut and appearance on all of the pieces that are being milled.

Professionally milled molding is not as thick as a 3/4-in. stock. In fact, it only measures 5/8 inches in thickness. I could have planed my 1x6 stock down to 5/8 inch from its factory milled 3/4 inches, but I choose to leave it at 3/4 inch so there would be more wood available to resist the ravages of the rain and sun.

With the vertical cove cut milled, the final step was to cut a rabbet on the bottom, inside edge of each board. This can easily be done with a rabbet kit for a router.

Note: If you have a tongue-andgroove bit set and you don't want to purchase a new router bit, you can use the "tongue" bit to make the rabbet cut. To do this, leave





Remove all damaged siding down to the bare studs. Conditioned spaces will require require insulation, sheathing and house wrap.



The interlocking siding begins at the top.

both the tongue cutting blades on the bit and simply raise it up high enough so the upper most cutter will not come into contact with any of the wood. By doing this, the bottom tongue-cutting blade cuts the rabbet on the bottom edge of the stock while the second blade spins harmlessly in mid-air leaving a strip of wood between the two of them.

Just like with milling the cove cuts, it is a good idea to run all of the new siding through the rabbet process in a consecutive manner so they all have the same alignment. Weatherboard siding is designed to function by each piece overlapping the piece below it. The rabbet on one piece will overlap the cove cut on the piece immediately below it. The overlap is what keeps water from getting between the boards. This is why it is important for all of the boards to have a uniform alignment.

Milling #105 weatherboard siding out of pressure-treated lumber is a simple process and only requires a router and a couple of specialized bits that can later be used on other projects. I milled the 34 linear feet that I needed in less than three hours start to finish. Three hours of my time is a small investment for sid-

ing that will be rot-resistant for years to come (with proper priming and painting). If you own a home that as any kind of wooden siding, and especially an older home that has weatherboard siding, consider installing your own custom-milled treated siding on those couple of places that always seem to stay wet. **EHT**



Install with siding nails then finish with primer and exterior-grade paint.



Replace a Shower Diverter Valve



By Matt Weber

shower diverter valve switches the supply of water from the faucet to the shower head and back again. Repeated operation over time can wear out the valve or the rubber washers and result in drips and leaks.

Two handle faucets typically have one of two types of diverter valves. A gate-type valve is usually found in the bathtub spout, usually with a pull-down or pull-up type of valve handle. A rotating-type diverter valve, as shown in this article, is located between the bathtub spout and the showerhead. Here's how to pull one out and put in a new one.

STEP-BY-STEP REPAIR

First and foremost, shut off the water supply to the faucet before disassembling the handles.



Pry off the decorative cap of the valve handle with a screwdriver. (In some cases these caps are threaded.) Then unscrew the nut

to pull off the handle. If the handle refuses to budge, you can use a gear puller to remove it.



It might be necessary to remove the escutcheon if it interferes with the use of your deep-socket wrench. Escutcheons are often held with a retaining nut, but if not then the escutcheon is threaded over the valve stems. If this is the case, unscrew the entire escutcheon as one piece. If it won't release, check to see if it's caulked to the wall, and cut the caulk. A strap wrench might help encourage a stubborn one to turn.



To remove recessed valves like the one shown, you'll need Shower Valve Socket Wrench Set. A shower-valve set provides the superdeep wrenches needed to remove tub and shower valves. The wrenches are each double-sided and usually accommodate the 10 standard sizes of plumbing fasteners to make virtually any

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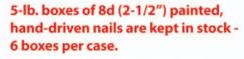
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Thread the Shower Valve Socket over the diverter valve stem and secure it tightly over the bonnet nut. Unscrew and remove. Pull the stem from the wall to expose the seat washer and screw.

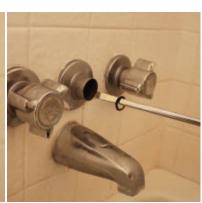
Inspect the inside of the pipe to make sure no O-rings or washers

have come off the old valve and remain inside the pipe. Fish them out and discard if you see any. They can interfere with operation of the valve if they stay in the pipe.

If the washer is the only part that has deteriorated, then remove the worn seat washer and replace with a new one,













coating it with heat-proof faucet grease. Make sure to use the correct size and shape of seat washer and press it firmly into the stem's retainer. If the diverter valve is in good shape, you're ready to reassemble the shower handles and test your faucet.

Otherwise, replace the diverter stem completely. You'll need to take the old stem to the plumbing supply store so you can be sure to get an exact replacement. The new diverter valve slips right into the pipes just like the old one that you pulled out. (Be sure to use the faucet grease.)

Reverse the removal procedure to finish the repair. Turn on the water supply and test for any leaks. **EHT**

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PRIVA FEI

By Matt Weber

rivacy fences not only limit how much of your property other people can see, they also limit how much you can see outside your property.

These were both important features to Jay and Jennifer, who moved into their new home only to learn their dogs didn't get along with the next-door neighbor's dogs. The neighbor's solution was to drape a bright blue tarp over a chain-link fence that separated both the dogs and the property. This presented a brand new problem for Jay and Jennifer: The tarp was an eyesore. They decided on a superior solution and built a wood privacy fence to enclose their backyard, and to conceal that big ugly tarp from view.

Here's how they did it.

PLANNING

When planning a fence, you have to consider its size, height, style, material and how all that ties into affordability. Fence materials are usually made from wood, metal or vinyl. Treated lumber is the most common and economical choice for wood fencing, although certain wood species like cedar and cypress have natural oils that protect against rot, insect infestation and chemical corrosion.

Jay and Jennifer decided to build a treated wood fence with a "double picket" design.

For a 6-ft. privacy fence, the support posts can be made from 8-ft. 4×4s, and the horizontal stringers (also called fence rails) can be made from 8-ft. 2×4 boards. The treated posts should be approved for ground contact.

DIY'ers can use concrete sold in ready-mix bags to set the posts. You can even pour in the mix dry, straight out of the bag into the post hole. Once the post base is buried, pour about a gallon of water per bag over the dry mix. We recommend using at least sixty pounds of concrete per fence post.

Tips and Tricks to **Build a Treated** Wood Fence







The first phase of building a fence is to lay out the fence with stakes and string and set the corner posts. A good rule of thumb is to dig a hole 1/3 the depth of the overall post height. A 6' tall post requires a 2' hole and an 8' 4×4 .

Down in Alabama we sink fence posts a minimum of 2 feet, but the deeper the post is, the sturdier it will be. Loose or unstable soils need more depth in order to support the fence. A good rule of thumb is the "One-Third Rule", which says to bury at least one-third of the post height for a wooden fence, so the minimum depth for a 6-ft. tall post is 2 feet. Taller fences need deeper posts.

However, different areas may require even deeper post depths. For building in cold climates, you should consider the frost line. Frost below a fence post will push up on it, causing it to move, tilt or possibly fall over. The colder the climate, the deeper the frost line will be. You should dig holes for fence posts at least 6 inches

deeper than the frost line. For this reason, many building departments have codes for minimum post depth. They may also require permits and specify construction methods. Check with your building

department for guidelines. Some neighborhoods may also have certain architectural guidelines or "covenants" that restrict design.

When spacing the posts, be sure not to spread them wider than the length of your fence rails (usually 6 to 8 ft. on center). The shorter the distance between posts, the stronger your fence will be. When measuring, keep in mind that the ends of the rails can be toe-nailed between the two opposing inside faces of the posts, or they can be face-nailed to the outside of the posts, with the rail-ends butting together in the middle (like we did with the fence shown in this article).

Once, you've determined the course of your fence and you know the planned location for your posts, make sure there are no underground obstructions. Before digging, you can dial 811 nationally to get underground utility lines, cables and pipes marked for free. Also, double-check that the location of your fence won't cross onto a neighbor's property.

POSTS

Pinpoint the location of each corner post first. Drive stakes into the corner-post locations and connect them along the fence route with string. Walk the perimeter







and spray-paint a large "X" to mark placement of each fence post.

Be prepared for a lot of digging to set the posts. A shovel, a trench spade and a clamshell digger will

get the job done, but if you have a lot of holes to dig, save time and labor by recruiting a helper and renting a two-man powered auger.

Before inserting the posts, drop





We recommend using at least 60 lbs. of ready-mix concrete per



Run a taut string between the corner posts and use it as a guide to line up the remaining fence posts.

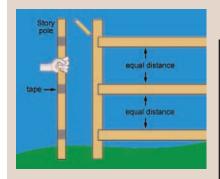
a bed of gravel into the very bottom of each hole to provide drainage for standing water beneath the wood post.

Set all the corner posts first. Have a helper hold the post upright while you use a hand level to make sure it is plumb on top of the gravel bed. A post level is also helpful, because it frees your hands by strapping around the post while placing level vials on two adjacent sides.

Once you've established that the post is plumb left to right and back to front, brace the post in place. If you have a helper, they can hold it in position while you add the

MAKE A STORY POLE

To prevent repetitive measurements, make a story pole from a scrap piece of wood. Mark the height of each fence rail on the pole with masking tape. Place the pole alongside each post and use the tape to determine each stringer location, marking it with a pencil.



premixed concrete. Otherwise, you'll need to nail boards that extend from the post to the ground to act as moveable braces, with the nails attaching them to the posts serving as their pivot points for adjustment. Plumb and square the post, adjust the braces to hold it plumb, and then add the concrete. Use a hand tamper to compact the ground around the bottom once they're surrounded by concrete, then recheck for plumb and adjust if necessary. Leave the braces in place while the concrete sets.

Once the corner posts are set, fasten a new string line between them to line-up the other posts.



Mark the fence rail locations on each post.





Keep the line on the outside face of the posts and secure it tightly. This string will guide placement for each post between the corners. Set the remaining posts in the same manner, making sure the outside faces of the posts are plumb and line up exactly with the string to keep the fence straight.

Allow all the posts to set for 24 hours. Once the concrete is hardened, cover the base of the posts with dirt and slope the earth away to divert water.

FRAMING

For a standard 6-ft. tall fence, we usually position the bottom rail 10 inches up from the ground. Space the other two rails evenly apart. You may need to alter placement, depending on the



We face-nailed the fence rails to the outside of the posts and butted them together.

height of your fence. The spacing between posts usually varies somewhat, requiring each rail section to be cut to length individually to fit onto the posts.



Keep a circular saw handy to cut each section of fence rails to fit exactly between the posts.

We recommend using a framing nail gun for attaching the rails. Fasten all connections with hot-dipped galvanized nails (3- to 3-1/2 inches long) with ringed



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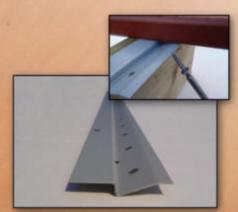
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shanks for extra holding power. Make sure your fasteners are approved for exterior use in chemically treated lumber.

If you plan to conceal your posts behind the fence boards, then use a reciprocating saw to cut off the tops all at the same height prior to installing the fence boards. If you plan to leave them exposed above the fence, you can cut the posts later.

INSTALLING FENCE BOARDS

Attach the fence boards securely against the rails. The spacing between the boards will be determined by your fence style of choice. On this fence, we decided to use the edge of a fence board to keep the gaps consistent.

Place the first board along the

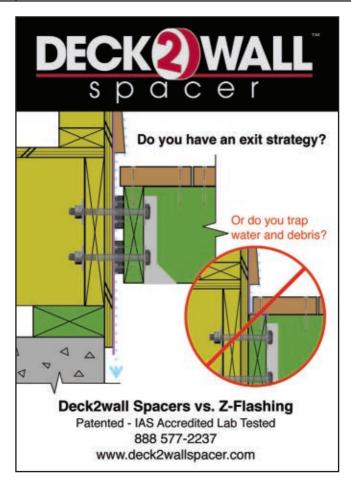
corner post and use a 4- or 6-ft. level to find plumb. Nail it home, using two nails per rail location. Place the spacing block next to the first board and position the second board against it. Drive in one nail at the top rail. Use that nail as

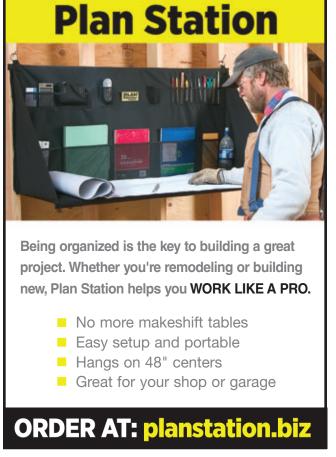
a pivot while you find plumb, then nail that board home as well. Follow suit down the rail, spacing each fence board with the block.

To make sure the tops of the fence boards lined up consistently, we leveled the ground between



We used the edge of a fence board as a spacing block.

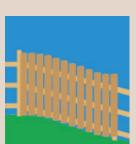




FENCE BOARD ALIGNMENT



For an easy-to-build fence on a flat yard, DIY'ers might consider using pre-assembled panels that install between posts. The panels are a system of rails and pre-attached fence boards. However, if your yard is sloped, then to keep the panel tops level you'll have to stagger the panel heights where they fasten to the posts. If the yard has a significant grade, the staggered panels will create gaps at the bottom of the fence, through which a family dog can escape (and unwanted critters can enter).



One alternative is to keep each set of fence boards in a straight line between two posts. To do this, attach a string line at the tops of the corresponding posts and use it as an installation guide for the height of the fence boards. Or, use a temporary 2x4 beneath the boards, resting the lower ends on it as you fasten them in place. Removing the 2x4 then provides a gap at the bottom of the fence to keep the wood out of standing water.



Another option is a privacy fence built to closely follow the grade of the yard, adjusting each individually for height as you install it. If doing this, it's still a good idea to install the boards an inch or two above the ground to avoid water leeching into the end grain.



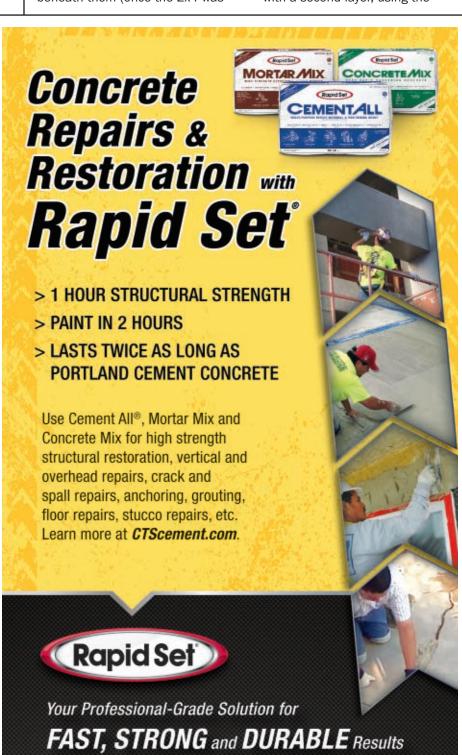




each pair of posts and laid a temporary 2x4 flat along the ground. By sitting the fence boards on the 2x4, the board tops install in a straight line, and the 1-1/2-in. gap beneath them (once the 2x4 was

removed) keeps the fence boards off the ground to reduce water leeching into the end grain.

On this particular fence, we covered the first layer of fence boards with a second layer, using the





We used a framing nailer with ring-shank nails to hang the first layer of fence boards.



During installation we sat the fence boards on a flat 2x4 to provide a gap beneath the end grain and to keep the tops of each section in a straight line.

same spacing pattern but staggering the seams to close all gaps in the fence. The second layer of boards adds strength and rigidity to the fence.

If you haven't chopped off the post tops, do so after completing the board installation. Jay and Jennifer opted to use copper post caps from SheetMetalCaps.com to decorate and protect the end grain of the posts. Post caps require at least an inch of available post material above the fence boards, so keep that in mind when making the cuts. If you're not using post caps, you



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can cut the tops at an angle to help shed rainwater. Otherwise, use a pencil to mark a level line at the cut height, and then use a speed-square to transfer that level line to all four sides of the post.

Use the pencil lines as a guide to make the cut with a reciprocating saw.

The caps then fit snugly over the post tops and attach with exteriorgrade wood screws.



We covered the first row of fence boards with a second row, staggering the joints to close the gaps.



Here's a closeup of the staggered joint pattern.



Each post top was cut level in preparation for a post cap.

The new wood fence should be protected with a waterproof stain/sealer. This step also provides the opportunity to apply your color tone of choice. Use a product from a reputable manufacturer to protect against damage from water, rot and UV rays. **EHT**

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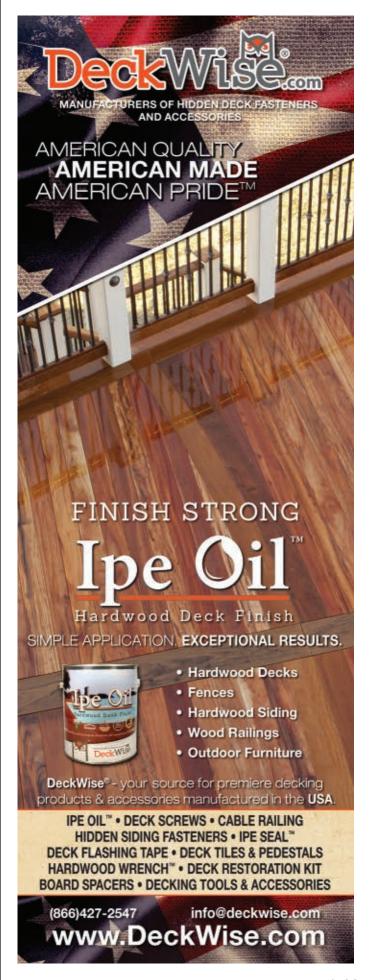
Post caps provide a decorative touch and protect the posts' end grain from water penetration.

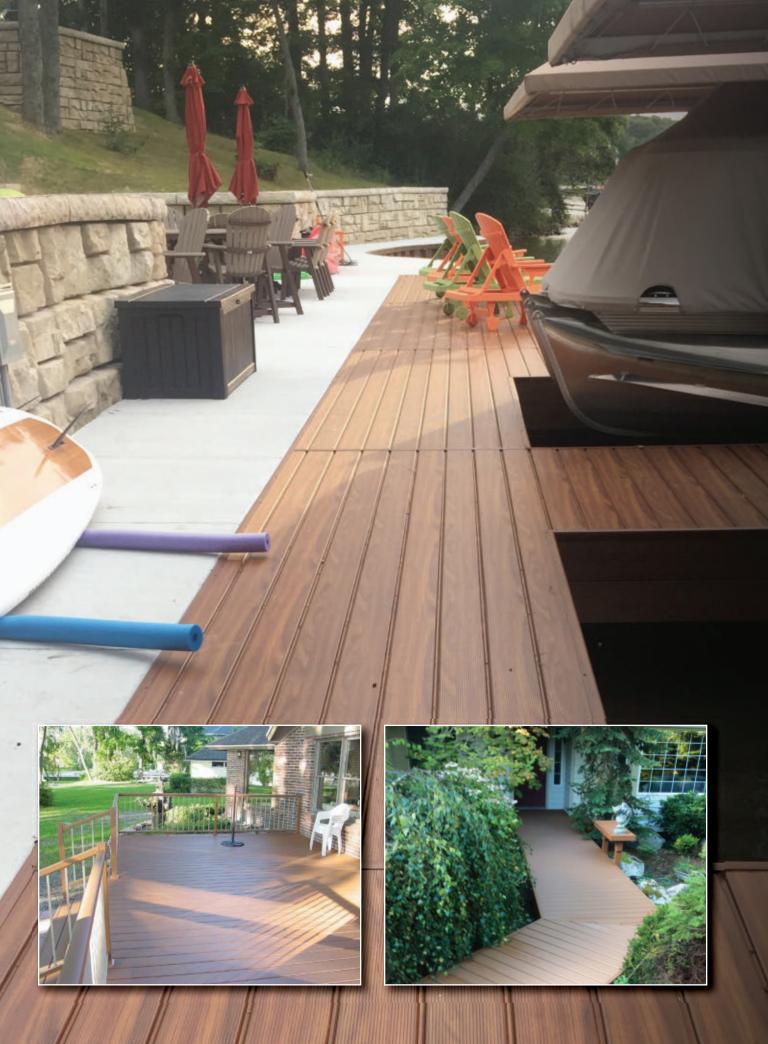


The copper post caps shown were provided by SheetMetalCaps.com. They friction-fit snugly over the post ends. You can also attach them with exterior-grade screws in a matching color.



Here's the finished fence ready for stain/sealer.





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FOR SPRINGTIME YARD CARE

nce your yard wakes up from the winter, you'll have a lot of outdoor work on your hands. Here are some new tools to help shape up your landscape for the growing season.

BLACK & DECKER 60V MAX EASYFEED STRING TRIMMER

For cordless power and control, the new 60V MAX trimmer/edger offers two-speed operation that lets you balance more power or longer runtime as needed. Easily and reliably feed the dual 0.080-in. trimmer line with the push of a button. Height and handle are adjustable, and it flips to an edger in seconds. Perform clean, fast cuts with the Power Drive high-torque transmission to give you cutting power at the string. Visit www.blackanddecker.com.





EARTHWAY SIDESPRED-CONTROL

The EarthWay SideSpred-Control is a new innovation that eliminates the need to use a side deflector, which can adversely affect your application rate to prevent material from being spread into flowerbeds, on sidewalks, or driveways. The SideSpred-Control stops the material before it comes out of the hopper and maintains the correct application rate while it is activated, giving you excellent

rolling base, constructed of 1-in. diameter powder-coated steel tubing, has four wide pneumatic tires that move easily through soil without sinking. The seat includes an under-seat poly tool tray and a rear storage basket to keep supplies and tools handy. In addition to planting, maintenance and harvesting, this rolling seat is useful for low-to-the-ground chores such as washing cars and painting. Visit www.leevallev.com.



RYOBI 18V ONE+ RECIPROCATING SAW

The New and Improved Ryobi 18V ONE+ Reciprocating Saw is delivers more power than the previous P514 unit as well as a 1-1/8-in. stroke length for more material removal per cut. This saw features an Anti-Vibe handle that reduces user fatigue during prolonged use. The adjustable, pivoting shoe allows depth-of-cut control and more efficient use of blade. The saw delivers 0-2,900 strokes per minute no-load speed for smooth/fast cutting, and a variable speed trigger offers easy starts and cut control. The tool-less open lock blade clamps for quick one-handed blade changes. Covered by a 3-year warranty, the new P516 works with any 18V ONE+ battery (sold separately) and is a part of the ONE+ System of over 50 tools that all work with the same 18V battery platform. Visit www.ryobitools.com.

results in seeding or spreading while controlling the spread pattern on the left side of the spreader. The SideSpred-Control is an EarthWay exclusive. Visit earthway.com

STEERABLE ROLLING SEAT WITH TOOL TRAY

If you've ever had to crouch for long periods in the garden, you'll appreciate the value of a rolling seat. This one has the added convenience of steering to maneuver around the garden. The comfortable metal tractor-style seat is adjustable from 17 to 20 inches high and swivels 360 degrees, so you can position your body comfortably while working. The



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TOOLS AND TIPS FOR SPRINGTIME YARD CARE

HUSQVARNA AUTOMOWER

With Husqvarna's robotic lawn mower, the grass gets mowed automatically, around the clock, and without your supervision. The grass cuttings are small enough that you won't need to rake the clippings, adding fertilization back to the soil. The Husqvarna Automower is able to maintain 1/2 acre lawns in any weather, with rough terrain and slopes up to 35 percent. When the mower meets an obstacle it stops and redirects itself. It also knows when it needs to be charged. With the convenient setting control panel, your robot mower allows you to set it and forget it. You can place the charging station practically anywhere on the lawn. When power is needed, the mower finds its way back to the charging station. The robotic mower is also equipped



with an attentive anti-theft system and built-in safety measures. The blade system provides for efficient operation and extremely low energy consumption, allowing the robotic mower to operate at a fraction of the cost of traditional lawnmowers. Three models are currently available. Visit www.husqvarna.com.

WORX TURBINEFUSION

The Worx TurbineFusion Blower/Mulcher/Bagger has a two-stage metal impeller system that breaks leaves and yard debris into fine mulch. Its 24-to-1 mulch ratio means if your neighbor was packing leaves by hand, he/she would fill 24 bags to just one with TurbineFusion. With powerful turbine jet engine technology and a









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patented all-in-one tube system, it blows, vacuums and mulches leaves and debris quickly and easily. Quickly convert this lightweight leaf blower to a yard vacuum by attaching the included leaf collection bag.

With air speeds up to 60 mph and an air volume up to 525 cfm, the TurbineFusion is the quickest way to clear your lawn from leaves and debris. Visit worx.com.





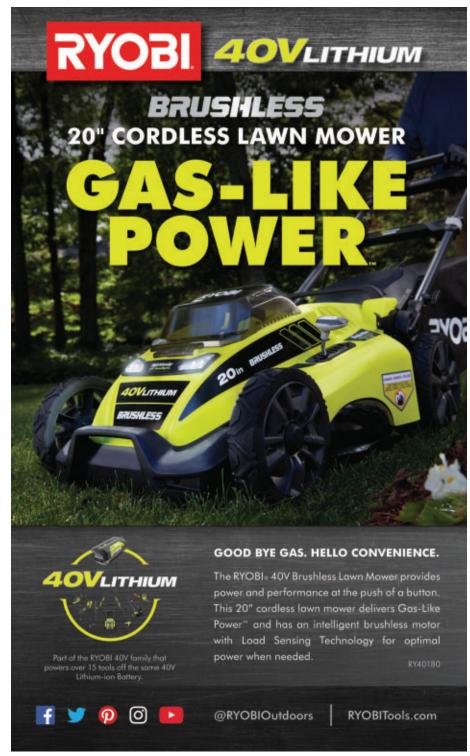
STIHL HT 56 C-E **POLE PRUNER**

Don't let overgrown branches loom over your property. Prune them with the redesigned Stihl HT 56 C-E pole pruner. It features a lightweight gearbox that enhances maneuverability and user comfort. It also features an inside (left-hand) guide bar and saw chain mounting system, providing a better view of cutting. Starting is nearly effortless thanks to Stihl Easy2Start technology-just give it a light pull and hear the engine come to life. The pruner also includes a unique, two-piece shaft design for easy storage and transport. Visit stihlusa.com.



WORX HYDROSHOT POWERED WATER NOZZLE

When it comes to washing the car, truck or SUV; hosing down the deck or patio; watering flowers and shrubs; or rinsing dusty patio furniture, the new WORX Hydroshot Powered Water Nozzle is up to the task and more. Powered by a 20V MaxLithium 2.0 Ah battery, this compact, lightweight (3.7 lbs.), cordless, powered water nozzle connects with a standard .625-in. fitting garden hose or can draw water from remote sources such as a bucket, pool or lake. Pick up your favorite garden hose and nozzle combination and multiply the water's force four times. The pump-driven, dual-system control nozzle features two operating settings: watering and power cleaning. It delivers water pressure ratings of 58 to 94 psi (watering) and 200 to 320 psi for power cleaning. Hydoshot's built-in pump is designed to help save water by only pumping out roughly 1/2 gallon-per-minute. Rotate the multihead nozzle to adjust spray patterns from 0°, 15°, 25° 40° or shower. Choose gentle shower; then rotate the head for targeted high-powered rinsing. Select the wider spray pattern to remove dirt or pollen from windows or rinse a boat's hull between normal wash cycles. Hydroshot also features a universal quick-connect end to accept other aftermarket pressure washer accessories. Visit worx.com.

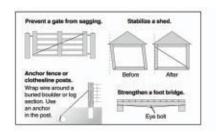




WIRE TENSIONING KIT

This system can be used to tension wire fences, anchor fence posts, stabilize garden sheds, strengthen foot bridges, prevent wooden gates from sagging or cross-brace the legs of a workbench, as just a few examples. The kit includes 10 aluminumbodied anchors with springloaded hardened steel jaws, 150 feet of 14-gauge hightension steel wire (HTSW), a tensioning device, and two drill bits: a 27/64×9-in. twist drill for

throughboring and a 5-in. piloted counterbore for seating the anchors below the wood surface. The tensioning device is made specifically for 14-gauge HTSW, but the anchors are compatible with 12-1/2 gauge HTSW as well and will withstand up to 1600 lbs. when used in the anchor. The 14-gauge HTSW will withstand up to 800 lbs. when used in the anchor. Unlike unhardened wire, HTSW is elastic in use and does not deform. Visit www.leevalley.com. **EHT**





TIPS FOR TREE-PLANTING SUCCESS

From small fruit-bearing species to really big ones with branches big enough for a treehouse, trees can add a lot to a home's landscape. Keep these professional pointers in mind when adding a new one.

SELECTION—When adding a tree to your yard, do a little research to select a type that is well suited to the home's landscape and the area where you live. Some trees provide more shade while others offer quick growth, a different color or more fragrance. Some trees are also best suited for certain soil conditions, a wet or dry climate, or warmer temperature ranges.



LOCATION—Most trees thrive in full sunlight, but many need shade. Plant the tree away from visible obstructions like power lines and underground hazards like pipes and wires. To reduce home maintenance, locate it far enough away from your home, garage or shed where it doesn't cast a permanent shade that leads to mildewed siding. Remove surrounding weeds and other plants that compete for nutrients and may prevent your tree from growing straight and tall. Allow plenty of space for the tree to grow for the next 10 to 30 years.

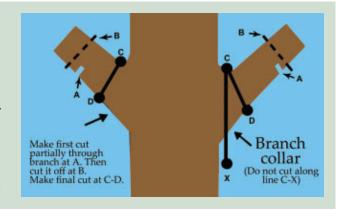
PLANTING—The spring growing season is an ideal time to plant a tree. The planting hole should be four to five times the width of the root ball. The tree should extend up from the ground roughly half an inch higher than the soil around it to shed water away from the trunk to prevent rot. Cover the planting hole with 1-3 inches of hardwood chips or leaf mulch but keep it 2-3 inches away from the trunk. The tree will need plenty of water the first few years as the roots get established.

TREE-PRUNING TIPS

Pruning is one of the least understood disciplines in arboriculture for a variety of reasons. It is important to realize that even accurate pruning may have some negative impacts. Pruning may be necessary, but it still inflicts a wound to a tree's armor. Even so, the results of a proper cut are usually far better than one never placed.

The first step in effective pruning is proper tree identification. Once the tree's genus is determined, knowledge about hardiness, growth response, best time of year to prune and more can be considered.

The most common reasons for pruning are: to increase personal safety, aesthetics, improve tree vitality, maintain







size, clear objects, improve fruit/blossom production, raise the crown and reduce liability. The purpose, along with other factors, will determine the type and size of cuts needed.

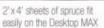
The boundary that separates a tree trunk from a branch is known as the branch collar. The collar seals the pruning cut. If the collar is compromised by an improper cut or other wound, there is an increased chance of decay. Therefore, pruning cuts should be made as close to the collar as possible without harming it.

ShopBot CNC SOLUTIONS

Making a Tiny Table for a Tiny House on the

ShopBot Desktop MAX







Sanded and all ready for staining (light walnut color)



Both Brian and his friend were thrilled with the result



Necessity being the mother of invention, Brian Owen recently helped solve the problem of furnishing a friend's backyard cabin with a table. His

friend described the specs dictated by the small home: "No deeper than a computer desk, long enough to seat four friends, but not so long that I can't get by to get to my bed; drawers for hiding things that my infant grandson shouldn't be grabbing; enough space to fit my wheelchair under the table."

"I recalled a table that I'd seen in a children's furniture store, a short table with two drop-leaf ends that could be folded up and tucked into a corner for easy storage. I took the drop-leaf idea and decided to add stability by substituting the normal pull out support with a swing out table leg."

The ShopBot Desktop MAX is ShopBot's answer to customers' requests for a larger version of the popular ShopBot

For more information about the ShopBot Desktop MAX, as well as our original ShopBot Desktop, visit our website.

Then call us to order your ShopBot tool!

Desktop. Its work area is twice that of the Desktop; this allows for entire parts and products to fit on the bed. The standard aluminum bed is removable, enabling end-machining; a vacuum hold-down bed is an option, too. Brian noted, "This is a powerful and precise CNC tool, and still works on standard household electrical power."



ShopBot Desktop MAX tool bed: 36" x 24"

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The angle at which a live limb is cut will also affect a tree's ability to seal. An improper cut will leave a dead, angular nub or "dog's ear" protruding from the trunk. Dog's ears may prevent sealing, which again increases the chance of harm to the tree. A best practice is to make the finishing cut as close to the branch collar as possible without damaging it.

The most common practice in pruning is to remove dead, diseased and dying limbs. Other than removing deadwood, removing conflicting limbs may be the most beneficial to a tree's survival. However, thinning cuts can damage some species of trees in certain environments. Removing too many interior limbs in a mature hardwood may stress the tree and result in a "lion's tailing" effect, where all of the interior foliage is stripped, leaving foliage only at the ends of the limbs. Another variable to consider is exposure to the sun. If a tree loses a large limb on the south side, late-day sun can raise the temperature of the fluids beneath a tree's surface, resulting in "sunscald" with cracking bark. In short, a live limb shouldn't be removed without careful consideration.

For more information on pruning techniques, refer to the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI)A300 Pruning Standards. Or contact the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) at 217-355-9411 (www.isa-arbor.com) or Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) at 603-314-5380 (www.natlarb.com) for additional resources.

Source: Mark Chisholm on behalf of STIHL Inc.

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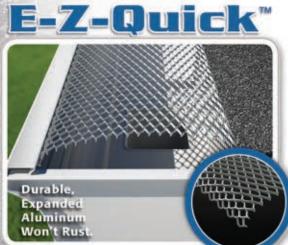
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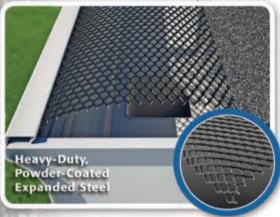


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Circulate fresh air and get rid of unwanted moisture.

rior to and even during a bathroom remodel, I often have conversations about tile and fixture layout, style and finish. But the conversation seldom leads to discussion of bathroom ventilation, issues like CFMs, minimizing ductwork and the placement of external heads and backdraft dampers.

In my Boston Globe column and on my ConcordCarpenter website, I often receive questions relative to ventilation and moisture in bathrooms. Unfortunately, there's plenty of misinformation about bathroom ventilation.

Some folks ask if it's okay to vent moist shower air into a roof soffit or unheated (but vented) attic. Others ask whether they should be concerned about their current "mile-long" plastic duct tubing.

Then there are those who complain of having a mystery stain on their ceiling. The

stain is the result of a fan pipe that was installed through an unheated attic where moisture built up from a pipe dip, froze, and months later melted, staining the plaster ceiling below. Mystery stain solved!

Not venting a shower or improper venting can result in high humidity in the bathroom. When bathroom humidity builds up, warm moisture-laden air moves toward cooler wall surfaces, where it condenses back into water.

Moist air can also work its way into a wall cavity and condense inside the wall. Both situations can result in mold, odors and sometimes structural damage.

Moisture will also peel off wallpaper or paint. Seeing or smelling mold and mildew is a good indicator that you have a high moisture problem.

So how do we remodel our bathrooms and still enjoy that hot, steamy shower and avoid mold problems?



SPIRAL STAIRS AND MODULAR STAIR CASE KITS

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The OAK 70.XTRA

The Oak 70.XTRA is an adjustable premier series spiral staircase that features solid Oak wooden stair treads and landing to complement and add style to any interior living space. Surrounding the full length of the staircase, the horizontal balusters and railing design is visually unique when compared to the traditional vertical baluster design of most stairs. The staircase can be easily installed by the homeowner in a single day using common household tools. The Oak 70.XTRA is available in 2 diameter sizes and is available in 2 choices of color...Hi-Gloss Black and Hi-Gloss White.

- Standard kit includes 12 oak wood stair treads, a landing, a complete handrail, and all necessary hardware and connectors.
- Diameters available include a 5 ft. 3 in. model and a 4 ft. 3 in. model.
- The height range for the standard kit is adjustable from 8 ft. 3 in. to 10 ft. 2 7/8 in. and with additional components, can be installed to a maximum height of 11 ft. 9 5/16 in.
- Powder coat finished painted in either Hi-Gloss Black or Hi-Gloss White.
- Can be installed in a clockwise or counterclockwise rotation.
- · Stair treads and landing are made of solid Oak wood with a natural stain and a polyurethane protective coating.
- Balcony rail kits are available in matching color and horizontal baluster and railing design.
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- Interior installation only.
- A complete installation guide is included in all kits and an installation video is available upon request.
- · Homeowner should consult with local building department concerning building codes prior to purchase.



FAN-TASTIC BATH VENTING TIPS



This loft ceiling will be home to the new bath fan on this project.

The only effective way to prevent mold is to attempt to keep indoor moisture levels low. A properly vented bathroom shower fan will remove moisture and decrease the humidity in your house.

CHOOSING THE BEST EXHAUST FAN

The most important feature in a bathroom shower fan is its ability to remove moisture not only as it's created but also while moisture



Inspect the framing to determine the best duct path and mounting position for the fan.

droplets are floating in the air prior to condensing on the walls and ceilings.

In order for a bathroom fan to do its job you need to focus on five main points:

- · Sizing the fan to the room
- Placing the fan in the best location to succeed
- Installing the fan properly
- · Mitigating fan noise
- Timer switch

SIZING THE FAN

Prior to purchasing your bathroom fan you'll need to size it to your room so it can adequately handle the airflow for that space. That means you need to match the fan CFMs to the size of your bathroom. Most people size the fan to the room dimensions correctly but fail to factor into their calculations the length of duct run and elbows.

Determining the minimum CFM of your bathroom is easy, simply multiply the room's width × length × height × 0.13.

Many fans will list the maximum duct run that is allowed. Remember to include the duct run length and any elbows in your calculations. Adding an elbow connector or an external vent hood with a backdraft preventer will add approximately 10 to 15 feet of duct length. You may need a higher CFM rated fan if your ductwork is long or complicated.

Establish a wiring path for the power supply and switch control.





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FAN-TASTIC BATH VENTING TIPS

You should also consider the ACH, the air exchange per hour, that is: an air flow rate sufficient to remove the air volume in a given room at a specified number of

times each hour. Your bathroom exhaust fan should be sized properly to completely change out the air in the bathroom at the rate of 11-15 changes in one hour.

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FAN LOCATION

Locate your bathroom fan to ensure maximum moist air extraction.

Steam rises, so the shower ceiling is always a good spot for a shower fan. If that location is not feasible then place the fan just outside the shower.

In cathedral ceilings sometimes a sofit built over the shower can accommodate the fan or a highmounted wall fan can be installed.

INSTALL THE FAN PROPERLY

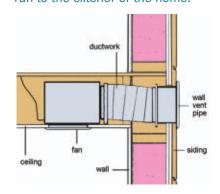
Bath fan ducting can negatively affect fan performance. Un-insulated, undersized, or droopy flex ducting and excessive length or excessive use of elbows all can negatively affect the fan's rated airflow.

In order to keep the fan effective, try to lay out your installation with minimal turns.

The best duct pipe to use is solid smooth aluminum. Solid duct pipe



Connect duct elbows to the fan as needed to establish a straight duct run to the exterior of the home.





Mark the center point of the duct on the exterior wall and drill a small hole completely through the wall to the outside. Thread a wire through the wall to mark this point on the outside.



The protruding wire pinpoints the duct exit hole.

results in better airflow because it has less air drag and is easier to keep in a straight run to avoid drooping.

When installing solid pipe, create a slight pitch toward the exterior of the building in case water condenses in the pipe. You want to avoid moisture draining back toward the fan.

Take steps to properly support your pipe run either from below, with blocking or from above, with plumbing strap or large, heavyduty cable ties (with screw holes in them). I use metal plumber's tape—it's a galvanized strapping with holes every 1/2 inch for screws.

Install the pipe with all seams facing up and seal these seams and all joints with aluminum tape (not duct tape). Keeping your pipe seams at the top will prevent moisture leakage in the house. Small

sheet metal screws are acceptable with bath vent pipe, but the aluminum tape works fine without them.

Pro Tip: Make sure you dry-fit and install the pipe to the exterior



FAN-TASTIC BATH VENTING TIPS

vent hood prior to installing screws or tape. You may want to attach the hood to the pipe from the exterior and then slide it into the house wall.

If the duct pipe will run through non-conditioned spaces (crawlspaces and attics), make sure to install an insulation sleeve over it to prevent the moist air from freezing inside the pipe.

A bathroom fan MUST be vented to the exterior of the building to avoid moisture-related issues. This is often completed with a wall, soffit or roof cap. When possible, I choose to vent my fans out an exterior wall through a backdraft-protected exterior hood.

Pro Tip: On installations with beveled clapboard or shingle siding I often cut the siding back





Use a hole saw to cut passage for the duct.





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FAN-TASTIC BATH VENTING TIPS

and install a PVC backerboard to the house. I flash this board and pre-drill a hole through it to allow the vent hood to sit flush to the board, thus preventing large gaps.



Attach the mounting plate for the vent hood. Then install the vent hood and seal it to the house exterior.

FAN NOISE

When selecting a vent fan, consider how much noise they make. Bathroom exhaust fans measure noise in sones.

Rather than a 4-6 sone bathroom fan, look for one that's close to or at a 1.5 sone rating—a much quieter fan. You may have to put up with some noise for a more powerful fan, depending on the fan's size and pipe run layout.

Most fan labels have Home Ventilating Institute (HVI) ratings so you can compare noise and energy efficiency. Choose the quietest, most energy-efficient fan that will do the job for you.

There are many quality brands: Nutone, Panasonic, Ventech, and Broan. I suggest choosing



The vent duct shown runs along the wall to a corner of the home.

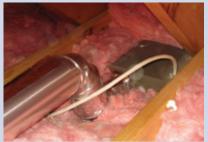
DUCT INSTALLATION TIPS



Seal all joints in the pipe, elbow and connection seams with aluminum tape (not standard duct tape).



When possible, use smooth, solid aluminum duct. Ribbed plastic duct can develop dips where moisture can condense and pool, and eventually cause odors or leak into the ceiling below. Over time the flexible plastic can also become brittle and crack, so the solid aluminum duct is a better quality material.



Smooth, solid aluminum duct has less air resistance than the ribbed plastic duct.



Install the duct with the seams facing upward and with a slight slope toward the exterior vent hood. In unconditioned attics or crawlspaces, insulate the duct.



Bathroom vent ducts must always terminate on the outside of the house.



Vent to the outside of the house using a backdraft-protected hood.

a fan with a ball-bearing motor for quality and longevity.

FAN CONTROLS

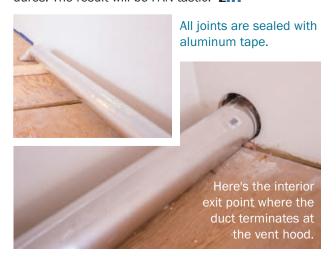
It's recommended that a bath fan run not only during but for 20 minutes after using the shower—and with the bathroom door closed.

Many people still use an on/off switch for their shower fan. There are two obvious problems with this type of switch. Either people turn the fan off after showering, which leaves a lot of moisture in the air, or they forget and leave the fan on, possibly for hours. I have two daughters who would sometimes leave the fan on all day until I found it running when I came home after work. That's a lot of heat or AC expelled from the house during the day! As a result I installed a fan timer that has a humidity sensor so it will turn on automatically if they forget or if the room's humidity is too high.

The best way to ensure that your bathroom fan has the time it needs to achieve proper air exchanges is through the use of a shower fan timer. Fan timers come in all styles, but I prefer the ones that are preset or allow you to set the fan at the time of installation. I have my fans set to 30 minutes, which covers a 10-minute shower and 20 minutes of run time. If the shower takes longer, I reset it prior to leaving the bathroom.

Choosing and installing the best fan for your location is an important part of your bathroom remodel. A quality bathroom fan, properly installed will remove moisture and odors from your bathroom and will improve your indoor air quality.

Remember to take the time to thoroughly understand your bathroom ventilation needs and to follow the manufacturer's instructions as well as these best practices for installation procedures. The result will be FAN-tastic!





Extend the Life of Your Water Heater



By Merle Henkenius

ow will you know when your water heater needs to be replaced? When its steel tank begins to leak. Conventional gas and electric water heaters have few external components, and none of them move, which makes these appliances quite durable. You may need to replace an ignitor or a temperature-andpressure (T&P) relief valve occasionally, or in the case of an electric heater, a heating element or thermostat. However, these components are inexpensive, and so simple that they make for easy change-outs. A leaky tank, on the other hand, often signals the bitter end.

Steel tanks are naturally susceptible to rust, and heat only exacerbates the problem. So why do most water heaters these days have steel tanks? Because they're familiar and cost a fraction of the other designs on the market. Plus, manufacturers have long known how to mitigate the rust issue.

The first line of defense is a porcelain tank lining, which is swirled in and baked on. The second is a sacrificial anode rod, usually made of magnesium. These are typically less than an inch thick and about 42 inches long. They're usually threaded into the top of the tank. The glass lining does most of the work, but it isn't perfect, and most applications leave many tiny pin holes. This is where the anode earns its keep.

Magnesium in this environment corrodes easier than iron, and as the anode corrodes, it sheds electrons, which are drawn to the pinholes in the glass. As long as the rod is in place, the tank won't corrode. It's a neat trick, but it has a shelf life—anode rods don't last forever. Manufacturers make 5-year anodes and 10-year anodes, hence the 6- and 12-year tank warranties. Without anodes, tanks can rust through in as little as a year, depending on local water conditions. Soft water, by the way, is more aggressive than hard water.

There's a real opportunity here for the frugal homeowner. If you replace your heater's anode when the tank warranty expires, or any time before the tank leaks, you could double the life of your heater for the price of a pizza with sodas. Home improvement centers and hardware stores sell replacement rods for \$20 to \$50. While not always easy, anode replacement is pretty simple. Look for the anode rod's hex nut in the top of the heater. If you don't see one, expect the anode to be part of the water inlet tube, which will require that you cut the water line connected to it. I'll assume a standalone rod, independent of the inlet tube.



The weakest link in a modern roof:

The vent stack gasket

The Problem:

The plumbing vent pipes that penetrate your roof are typically sealed with an old-fashioned rubber gasket to keep water from entering the home. These rubber gaskets deteriorate when exposed to the sun and high temperatures. Over time they get brittle and crack, losing their ability to protect the home from water intrusion.

While modern roof shingles often offer a lifetime warranty, these rubber gaskets usually deteriorate in as little as 3 to 5 years. As a result, water begins to flow into the home causing damage to ceilings, interior walls and carpet.



The Perma-Boot is a gasket-less, high performance pipe boot system designed to permanently repair or prevent the most common type of roof leak, the leak around the vent pipes that penetrate the roof.

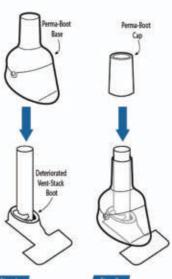
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SPOT LIGHT

Begin by shutting off the gas or electricity, then drain off a couple of gallons of water using the drain valve near the bottom of the heater. Be sure to open all overhead faucets to release any trapped water. Use a 1-1/16-inch socket and long bar to break the heater's grip in the old anode. This will be an iron-to-iron connection, so expect it to require some exertion. It's best to have a helper to grip the water lines just above the heater, so you don't end up rotating the heater as you break the connection.

If all else fails, heat the tank fitting with a propane torch and try again. Some of these connections are harder than others, but they're usually manageable. Thread the rod up and out of the heater. Expect the spent rod to be completely corroded.



Before installing the replacement rod, apply a light coating of pipe-joint compound to the first three threads, then tighten the rod in place.

You'll need a little joint compound to seat the rod, but don't overdo it. The anode will need direct electrolytic contact with the tank to work effectively, and too



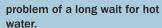
much compound can interfere with that connection. With the anode in place, turn the water back on and restore gas or electricity. While you're at it, test your heater's T&P valve. Lift the release lever until water flows, then let the valve snap shut. If little or no water escapes, or the valve continues to drip, replace it. A working T&P valve is an essential safety feature on every heater. As always, if you feel yourself getting in over your head, call a licensed plumber. **EHT**

Editor's Note: Merle Henkenius is a freelance writer and photographer who specializes in home improvement articles and books. He is a licensed master plumber, but has handson experience in nearly every phase of construction.

ADVANTAGES OF TANKLESS WATER HEATERS

Unlike tank-style heaters, tankless gas water heaters are more energy-efficient than conventional because they eliminate the need to continually heat a large supply of water. Also called on-demand water heaters, water enters the tankless water heater only when the hot water valve is opened, which triggers the heating coils or heat exchanger. The amount of energy consumed is proportional to the volume of hot water used. This energy-saving advantage is what makes tankless units today's most popular "green" hot water solution. Furthermore, no matter how many showerheads, and no matter how deep the whirlpool, homeowners will not run out of hot water if using a properly sized tankless heater.

The compact size of a tankless unit is another benefit. The bulk of the traditional tank-style units comes from the tank itself; so no tank, no bulk. About the size of a medicine cabinet, tankless water heaters can easily be wall-mounted indoors or outdoors, depending on the climate. This affords the ability to place a tankless water heater closer to the point of use, which solves the





Plus, tankless water heaters afford homeowners more control over water temperature. The latest tankless heaters often feature advanced microprocessor control that allows the exact water temperature to be set via a button or dial, including a digital display for Fahrenheit or Celsius. This ensures the water temperature will not deviate from the set point.



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Homeowners can maximize energy efficiency and take advantage of a 30 percent Federal tax credit with the new Velux Energy Performance Model skylight featuring automated energy performance. Launched at the 2017 International Builders' Show in Orlando, the Energy Performance Model combines an Energy Star-certified Velux fixed skylight with a factory-installed, double-pleated, solar-powered, black-out blind and a preprogrammed Intelligent Touch Remote Control in one box. When closed, the double



pleated blind boosts the overall energy performance of the skylight by 40 percent. The blinds are fully automated when the room is not in use, closing during warm summer days and cold winter nights to block light and insulate. And with a 30 percent federal tax credit, homeowners will receive an average of \$730 in Federal tax credit eligibility. Visit www.veluxusa.com or www.whyskylights.com.

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