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According to a new poll from Alarm.com of 1,000 millennial dads and 1,000 baby-boomer dads, the millennial dads are less capable than their own dads regarding everyday DIY fixes. When it comes to emergency “handiness” scenarios, millennial dads fall short in almost every category. Only 63 percent of millennials knew how to change a car wheel on the side of the road. A mere 54 percent knew how to reset a tripped circuit breaker. Only 63 percent of millennial dads knew how to jump-start a dead car battery, and only 65 percent knew how to unblock a toilet or a sink. The baby-boomer respondents scored significantly higher across the board.

Ouch. I’m not here to rip on all millennials, but roughly 37 percent of the dads need a kick in the pants. The tasks mentioned above aren’t particularly challenging. They’re common occurrences of everyday life. My own dad made sure I knew how to address each of those scenarios when I was a teenager, much less a new father. To be wholly unprepared for such a situation suggests something worse than a lack of DIY skills—it demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of how a grownup should negotiate the real world. I feel sorry for any child whose father doesn’t know how to handle a flat tire. Hopefully, they never get stranded roadside miles from civilization.

I should note that this research only reflects poorly on the skills of men, because moms weren’t included in the poll. Hopefully, the millennial women are picking up the slack.

I don’t understand the downward trend in skillsets. It seems to me that someone’s age is irrelevant to what they can accomplish. Developing some rudimentary DIY skills to clear life’s little hurdles is something everyone should do. The Boy Scouts even made it their motto: *Be prepared*. It’s not a measure of masculinity or even high intelligence, but it is a sign of being a “capable” individual. Regardless of how society evolves, the world will always need capable people, because those are the folks the incapable people call to get them out of a jam.

Whether someone is young or old, male or female, and despite their race, religion or ethnicity, each person can decide for themselves what type of person they are. I choose to be capable, and so should the world’s dads.



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Q: What's the difference between Potting Soil and Topsoil at the garden center?

A: Potting soil primarily consists of perlite, aged compost, peat and vermiculite, and might not actually contain any real soil. It's typically used for gardening in pots or containers to help plants retain nutrients.

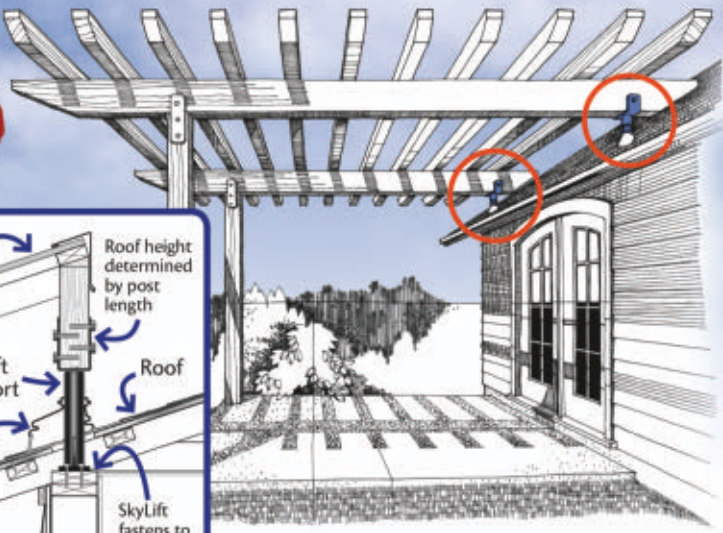
Potting soil also helps reduce compaction, which can prevent plants from filtering out carbon dioxide and other toxic gasses that can kill the roots. It's best used in containers because when combined with an outdoor garden, it can cause the garden soil dry out because it can drain too well.

Topsoil is taken from the top of a field, so it has a wider range of materials and is best combined with existing garden soil. Avoid using topsoil for containers because it can sometimes be too moist for containers and cause root rot.

Q: My neighbor says I need kickout flashing on my roof. What would this accomplish?

A: A great volume of water can pour down a sloped roof, and one of the most critical flashing details occurs where a roof intersects a sidewall. The roof must be flashed with step flashing. Where the roof terminates, an angled piece of kickout flashing is used to deflect water and prevent it from dumping behind the siding at the end of the roof intersection. The flashing should be a min. of 4 in. high and 4 in. wide with an angle between 100° and 110° to maximize water deflection.

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Q: How are 4x8 fiber-cement siding panels installed onto a house?

A: In general, the fiber-cement panels are installed vertically with framing provided at all vertical and horizontal edges. The vertical panel edges must be joined over a stud. A water-resistive barrier is required over the house sheathing. The panels are fastened with corrosion-resistant siding nails driven 3/8-in. from the panel edges (and 2 inches away from the corners). The vertical edges can be butted together, covered with battens or caulked. All horizontal joints require Z-flashing. The exposed nail heads should be caulked/sealed, and the factory-primed panels need to be coated with an exterior-grade latex paint.

Q: What is the best way to add color to a concrete project?

A: If you haven't yet constructed the project, companies such as Quikrete offer Liquid Cement Color, which is a coloring agent that is mixed with water and then added to dry concrete mix. Available in Red, Brown, Buff, Charcoal and Terra Cotta, these concrete pigments will add permanent integral color throughout a concrete project. If the project is already constructed, you can use a Penetrating Concrete Stain, which is opaque in appearance and provides deep, rich matte color highlighted by the natural variations in the concrete surface. Ideal for garage floors, driveways, sidewalks and patios, penetrating stains will not peel and are available in colors such as charcoal, gray, walnut brown, burnt orange. The widest array of color choices will come from painting the project, but painting is not recommended for any areas exposed to foot traffic or regular wear. To paint concrete, you'll need a masonry sealer, concrete primer (block primer), and elastomeric masonry paint. **EHT**

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Deck Construction Update

Code Changes are Coming



Professional deck-builders and DIY'ers alike should take note of a few upcoming changes to deck-building codes. Representatives from NADRA (North American Deck & Railing Association) recently attended the International Code Council Committee Action Hearing for the creation of the 2021 International Residential Code and posted a blog about the updates discussed at the hearing. Here are the highlights in a nutshell, according to Glenn Mathewson, MCP – NADRA Technical Advisor.

GUARD POSTS

RB185—The most collaborated proposal was related to guard post installation. The update prohibits



Simpson Strong-Tie offers the DTT2 Holdown metal bracket, which help to fasten 4x4 guard posts to both the deck's rim board and adjacent deck framing, meeting the proposed code requirements.

the notching of 4×4 posts and includes code language requiring a post to be secured into the adjacent framing of the deck, not just the single rim board. However, no specific hardware was specified, keeping the code generic and flexible. The proposal was approved.

DECK FOUNDATIONS

RB187—According to NADRA, this was a fairly simple proposal to make better sense of various deck foundation types, minimum depths and frost-depth exceptions. One clarification made was that decks attached to non-frost-protected structures, such as detached garages or sheds, will not have to themselves be frost protected.

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SPOT LIGHT

BEAM SPANS

RB190—This proposal makes beam design for decks much more flexible. The current table in the IRC for sizing beams is based on the span of the joist supported by

the beam, but it assumes those joists are at their maximum allowable cantilever beyond the beam. For decks with flush beams and no cantilevered joists, the maximum beam span is incredibly



Whereas a beam without cantilevered joists was being limited to a maximum 7 ft. 4 in. span, the new code modification allows it to span 9 feet if the joists terminate flush with the beam.

conservative. NADRA proposed a footnote modification method that will allow the table to be more flexible and alter the values based on the lesser amount of cantilever. The example used in the proposal showed how a beam without cantilevered joists was still being limited to a maximum 7 foot 4 inches, but with the new footnote modification would actually be able to span 9 feet. The committee agreed that this was a much-needed flexibility to the table and approved the proposal.

JOIST SPACING

RB 191—This is a proposal that deck builders may not be thrilled about. The maximum joist spacing of different thicknesses of wood decking assumes each board is spanning at least two joist bays, bearing on three joists. The code change maintains the maximum joists spacing for decking supported on at least three joists, but reduces the maximum spacing for decking supported by only two joists. For these short lengths, the maximum joist spacing will be approximately half. **EHT**

To learn more about deck code updates and the evolving state of the deck-building industry, visit NADRA.org.

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Pressure-treated pine has been a deck builder's go-to product for decades. With its natural beauty, affordability, strength properties and versatility, it's a tried and true solution that brings outdoor living dreams to life. And while following building codes is always a must, there are many opportunities to flex your creative muscles to make each project unique.

One of the easiest ways to show a little creative flair is in the railing. Rather than simply settling for vertical balusters or turned spindles, have some fun and explore distinct designs that complement the home's architectural style. When using YellaWood brand treated 2x2s or 2x4s, there are a wealth of options to explore, all of which will ultimately provide finishing touches to the deck. Chippendale, Southern Cross and countless other options are easy to create and make a huge impact when it comes to curb appeal.

Since homeowners are often looking to expand beyond the confines of their home, it's important to solve for a way to organize outdoor living into focused rooms. A clearly defined outdoor kitchen may be the first thing homeowners are looking for. But planning and building can't end there. Consider how to extend the space and increase functionality with things like seating space for eating, or exterior storage or increased privacy through screens, lattices or custom built, hanging decorative panels. When you design through the lens of how the treated



pine can be transformative and create several outputs rather than just one, you'll build a happy customer for life.

As you work through the finishing touches of a deck project, consider including a pergola. Continuing to be extremely popular, they create shaded areas that can be enjoyed throughout the year. Plus, they don't have to be stand-alone structures. Instead, you can incorporate complementary designs across the deck to tie everything together.

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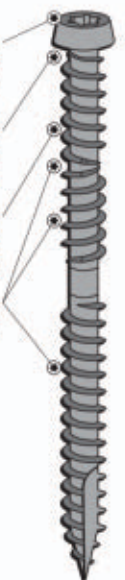
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REMODELING SHOW / DECKEXPO PREVIEW

The Remodeling Show co-located with DeckExpo bring together thousands of remodeling and residential construction professionals from all over the country to connect, learn, and elevate their craft. This year's convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, November 6-8. Experience a vibrant expo hall filled with the latest products and services from over 200 building product manufacturers, an in-depth educational conference program with business and jobsite training, and fun networking events with industry professionals. Here's a preview of what you can expect to see at the show.

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Sure Drive USA manufactures a wide variety of deck fastening solutions. The company's hidden deck fastener line includes The Mantis Clip for easy installation of grooved boards. The RCS pneumatic tool with E-Z Slide attachment is made by Senco to install the Mantis Clips using

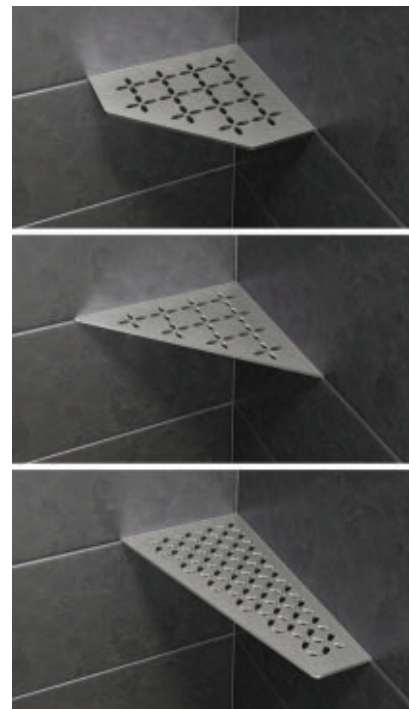
Ballistic Nail Screws to fasten grooved decking up to 75 percent faster than conventional methods. Mantis clips can also be installed using standard hand-drive screws. The company's Deck Pack contains enough clips and screws to install 250 square feet of decking (also available in a 50 sq.-ft. box). The Mantis Clip is recommended by top decking manufacturers such as MoistureShield, Trex, Latitudes,



ChoiceDek, Modernview and more. Made in the USA, the Mantis Clip is available in four profiles to precisely fit specific boards. Unlike other clips on the market, the Mantis is built with a base that promotes airflow to protect the deck structure. Visit www.suredrive.com or stop by booth 357 to see how to receive a free Eliminator installation tool with a purchase of Mantis hidden deck clips.

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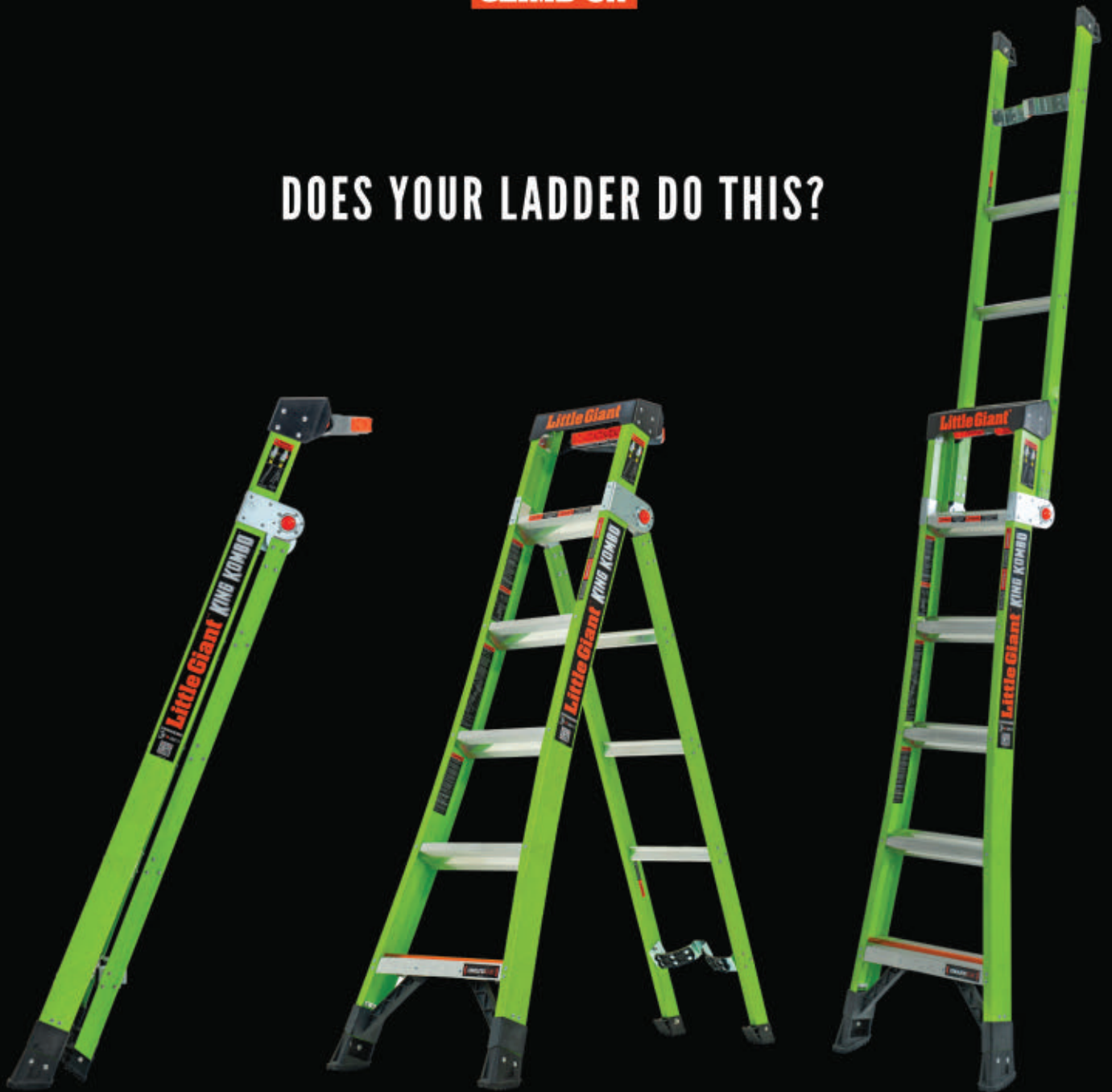


5/32-in. thick stainless steel, the sturdy shelves require no special tools for installation. They fit neatly between rows of tile and do not require any materials or fasteners to penetrate the waterproofing membrane on the walls. The end result is a sleek, clean finish and a shelf that will easily hold shower accessories. Five different shapes and sizes are available. Visit www.schluter.com or booth 1025.

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Derby Building Products' TandoStone, the number one brand of composite stone, features realistic design, proprietary technology, easy installation, moisture resistance, and an expansive color pallet. TandoStone's new TruGrit technology offers a unique matte texture that gives each panel a realistic low-gloss appearance and the rough, gritty feel of real stone. It takes TandoStone to a new level of realism in looks and texture. Impervious to moisture, TandoStone is perfect for ground-level installations in any climate and complements a wide range of siding materials for on-trend mixed material looks. Without the need for special tools or heavy equipment, it's also safer and easier to install as an accent on taller walls. TandoStone is available in two styles: Stacked Stone which features a dry-stack profile without grout lines between the stones and Creek Ledgestone which emulates the rugged look of hand-picked stone with grout. Visit www.tandobp.com or booth 751.

ROYAL BUILDING PRODUCTS

Royal Building Products is a leading manufacturer and distributor of high-quality exterior cladding, trim, moulding and decking that deliver long-lasting, low-maintenance curb appeal through high-performing, sustainable, energy-saving products. A category leader in innovation, Royal is recognized for brand introductions like Celect Cellular Composite Exteriors, Zuri Premium Decking, CraneBoard Solid CoRe

Siding, Royal S4S and SurEdge trim and home design tool innovations like Dream Designer, HomePlay and HomePlay Prime. Visit www.royalbuildingproducts.com or booth 405.

ENVIRONMENTAL STONEWORKS

Earlier this year, Environmental Stoneworks, the only manufacturer and installer of stone veneer in the country, completed its largest product launch in company history. Among the introductions are Barn Wood, featuring stunning



wood-carved looking profiles molded from antebellum Virginia tobacco barns, combining a rustic feel with contemporary charm. The Ripiano offering gives a fresh new look to ledgestone through the incorporation of smaller, thinner



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pieces into stair-stepped modular panels designed to hide seams. And Grezzo, a new universal stone with clear cut lines for a contemporary look, allows builders, designers, and architects the opportunity to develop unique patterns with stone veneer. Visit www.estoneworks.com or booth 921.

U2 FASTENERS

U2 Fasteners offers eight innovative product lines covering all essential screw types for residential construction. With a strong focus on customer service, U2 Fasteners offers 55 sku's in 316 Marine Grade Stainless Steel Construction, Universal and Fine screws. Grade 316 is the standard molybdenum-bearing grade of stainless steel, and the higher nickel and molybdenum content in this grade gives it better overall corrosion-resistant properties, especially with regard to pitting and crevice corrosion. In addition, Alloy 316 provides excellent tensile, creep and stress-rupture strengths at elevated temperatures. All U2



Fasteners are tested with the wet factor. The company has released its IAPMO (ER 454) evaluation to become one of few fastener companies that are evaluated and comply with the International Building Code and Residential Building Code for corrosion resistance (AC233) and structural strength (AC257). Plus, U2 Fasteners' coating was one of the first, if not the only one,

which has passed to the 2015 requirements with ground contact at 0.6pcf ACQ-treated lumber (ER 454). U2 fasteners is also the first fastener company to offer "chromium 6-free" coating, which reduces the risk of end users to develop skin cancer through constant contact with fasteners' with surface coating. Visit www.u2fasteners.com or booth 625.

WILD HOG RAILING

Wild Hog Railing is a new product originating from big and bulky welded hog panels, but these smaller size panels are perfect for any railing application. With a 6-gauge welded 4-by-4-in. mesh pattern, Wild Hog Railing allows for great visibility while being extremely durable. Wild Hog Products are 100-percent designed, manufactured, coated and packaged in the USA. Visit www.WildHogRailing.com or booth 645.



MAZE NAILS

Made in the USA, Maze STORM-GUARD double hot-dipped galvanized nails meet the ASTM A 153 specification for hot-dip galvanizing and are made from recycled steel. Using Maze nails qualifies for LEED



points. Maze is the largest manufacturer of specialty nails for siding, decking, fencing, post frame building, roofing and many other applications. Visit www.mazenails.com or booth 757.

CAMO DECK FASTENERS

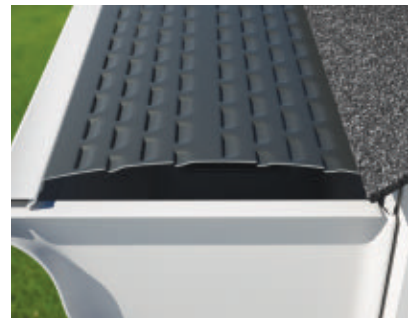
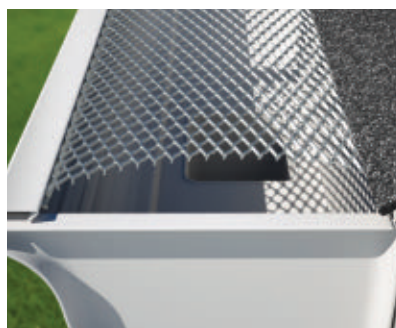
From the deck boards to the substructure, trim and beyond, Camo provides easy and affordable fastening options with the Camo Hidden Deck Fastening System and Camo Exterior Screws (in composite or stainless steel).



The new Camo Drive collated stand-up tool won the the 2019 Best of IBS Awards' Best Outdoor Living Product at this year's International Builders Show (IBS) in Las Vegas. Engineered with insights from decking pros, the Camo Drive tool was designed for installation speeds up to 5X faster than current methods. This ergonomic deck-board installation tool gets contractors off their knees in a standing, comfortable position. It easily attaches to the contractor's own drill, compatible with three end attachments that face-fasten, edge-fasten with Camo's proprietary Edge Screws, or installs the new Camo EdgeClips for grooved boards of any decking material. These new clips cut grooved deck-board installation time by more than half when paired with the Never-Miss Guide that's included in every pail. Visit www.camofasteners.com/drive or booth 819.

E-Z GUTTER

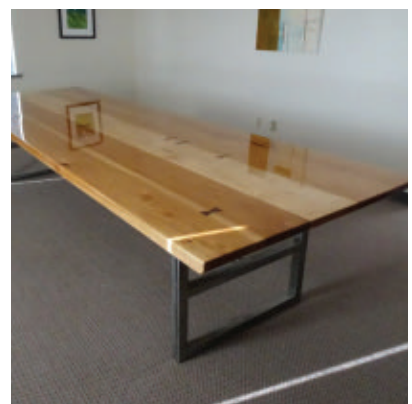
For residential roofs, E-Z Gutter offers hard-working gutter guards to keep the clogs away. The gutter guards are a snap to install without the need to use screws. They're designed to stay put during rough weather but snap out easily for maintenance. The E-Z-Quick product is made of heavy-duty expanded aluminum, so it won't rot or rust. The E-Z-Quick's tight mesh is engineered to keep debris out while letting rainwater



rush through. The E-Z-Shield product is heavy-duty aluminum painted black to blend into the roofline and heat fast to melt ice and snow. The E-Z-Shield's reverse louvers allow maximum water penetrations but keeps out debris. Visit www.e-zgutter.com or booth 820.

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DSI RAILING

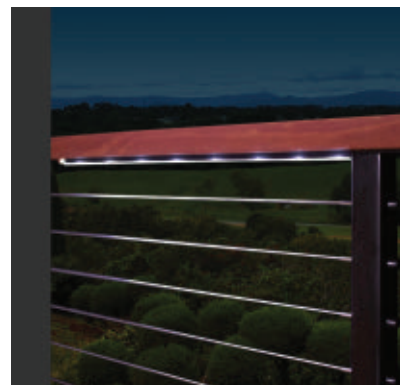
DSI, Inc., a leading supplier of railing products in the U.S., now offers the Westbury ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliant aluminum handrails through lumberyards and distributors. Featuring the superior durability of aluminum railing,

these versatile components and accessories provide a perfect safety solution for ramps, stairways, decks and a variety of other applications. Westbury aluminum ADA handrails are designed for use in residential and commercial projects and are offered in a variety of lengths and accessories that

allow for customized handrails. These railing products are compatible with new or existing railing systems. Available in standard or custom colors, Westbury ADA railings are powder-coated to provide low maintenance and long-term durability. The components are lightweight and engineered for easy installation. Visit diggerspecialties.com or booth 841.

ATLANTIS RAIL

Atlantis Rail has expanded their line of Micro Star LED lights to include an LED light bar. This product fits neatly under a flat handrail and is compatible with Atlantis Rail's railing systems, including the Spectrum and NOVA II cable railing systems. The Micro



Star LED Light Bar is a creative lighting alternative with a variety of interior or exterior lighting applications, featuring a flexible LED light strip of natural white LED lights set into a powder-coated aluminum channel with a clear plastic lens. The light bar is available in lengths of 18, 30 and 42 inches, and with channel color options of black, bronze, metallic silver and white. Each kit comes with the lens, LED strip, aluminum channel and fasteners. Male/female screw connectors make installation quick and easy. Visit www.atlantisrail.com or booth 759. **EHT**

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DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION

A Big Project for the Ambitious DIY'er

By Matthew Weber

Installing a stair handrail can be a challenging undertaking. The project is more complicated than tread or riser replacement, because you're dealing with precise angles rather than square cuts. The rail system must be securely supported by newels that are solidly fastened to the framing of the floor or wall. The rail must also adhere to strict code guidelines meant to ensure people's safety.

If you plan to tackle this project as a DIY'er, I can't recommend strongly enough the need to carefully plan every aspect of the project before you order supplies. The cherry

stair rail shown in this project appears courtesy of L.J. Smith Stair Systems, which provides detailed step-by-step instructions for installing the components. The company also provides a handy checklist of required parts and supplies to make sure you include all the necessary components and fasteners.

Check with your stair parts supplier for any special tools or accessories that will make the project go smoother. For example, to make installation of the stair balusters easier, we used L.J. Smith's IronPro system. The IronPro system eliminates the need to bore angled

holes into a rail to house the balusters, relying instead on small screws and adjustable fittings. The system reduces the likelihood of error and installs much quicker than typical installation methods—highly recommended for a DIY'er.

When planning your handrail, give a call to your local municipality to check the building codes in your area, which are very specific for stair construction. In the town where I live, the minimum height for a stair rail is 34 inches and the maximum height is 38 inches (measured from the top of the tread nose up to the top of the

DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION

rail). The balusters must be spaced no more than 4 inches apart.

When planning for the stair rail, we found it helpful to make a diagram of the proposed rail design, complete with specific measurements, to make sure all the parts would assemble correctly on site.

And, of course, style is major concern. The overall design can incorporate a rail that mounts over the newel posts or terminates post-to-post against the sides. Will your balusters rest on open treads or mount onto a kneewall? Whereas our project used iron balusters, there is also the option of wood balusters that vary in shape, style and species. Newels vary in design from simple box designs to larger ornamental

pieces with decorative trim. Handrails also vary in size and shape, and you want all the associated stair components to fit against each other in an attractive and proportional manner.

Stair rail construction is a complicated endeavor, so the best way to plan it is slowly and carefully, with attention to every site-specific detail that might affect its installation.

Rather than rehash L.J. Smith's detailed installation manual, this article will focus on how we applied those instructions to this specific job. Be prepared for each stair project to differ somewhat regarding on-site challenges.

REMOVE THE OLD RAIL

First step in handrail replacement is removal of the old system,

which we took out when we replaced the treads. To do this, we used a recip saw to cut the handrail free against each newel. This enabled us to lift the handrail off the stair, and the balusters remained attached to its underside, enabling us to remove all of them at once.

Next, the old newels were removed by prying the trim boards from around the 4x4s and cutting the posts flush with the floor.



We used a reciprocating saw to cut the old rail off the existing newel.



The balusters remained attached to the rail, and the whole assembly was lifted out as a single piece.

DETERMINE NEWEL PLACEMENT

As a general rule for an open-tread stair, the balustrade centerline between newels should be $1/2$ of the baluster square inward from the face of the stringer. (On a kneewall stair, the balustrade should be centered on the kneewall.)

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DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION



Carefully measure the newel for placement and label all connection points with painter's tape.



Building codes have specific guidelines for stair construction, including rail height and baluster spacing.



The position of the newels required us to cut notches in the post base.

For our staircase, the location of the old newels determined placement of the new ones (to hide the old post stumps).

At the top of the staircase, the landing newel connects to a guardrail which terminates at a half-newel that is mounted to the

wall. A half-newel is just what it sounds like—a matching newel post that is cut in half lengthwise at the factory to mount flush against a flat wall.

NEWEL INSTALLATION

While the old newel locations

worked fine for our stair design, they did require notching the newel bases to fit over the treads, which presented an extra hurdle during installation. For the upper newel (also called the “landing newel”), some dissimilar trimwork on each side of the post meant

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Use a jigsaw to avoid over-cutting when making the notch in a newel.



The hollow newel base will install over a mounting block and filler blocking.



Fasten the blocking to the floor with screws and construction glue, then apply the adhesive to all points of contact with the newel.

the notch had to be made deeper on one side of the newel than the other. Take careful measurements and be prepared for such inconveniences during your own installation.

The newels from L.J. Smith are constructed from 1x solid cherry

and built with a hollow center that fastens over a wooden mounting block. Before fastening in place, we dry-fit the newel, measured carefully, made necessary adjustments, then marked all the important rail-connection locations on the newel using painter's tape.

Marking the posts provides a handy visual guide for assembly and helps to organize the job so you don't forget any crucial steps or misalign the components.

You'll need to dry-fit both the starting newel and landing newel at the same time to ensure the



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DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION



The newel is anchored over the blocking with a couple of countersunk lag screws.



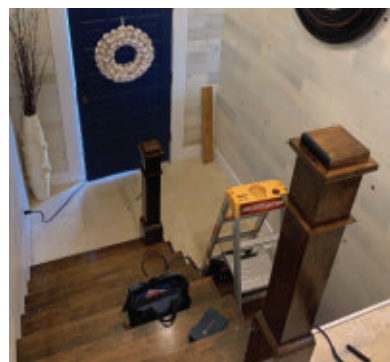
The landing newel will connect the stair rail to the upper guard rail.

handrail mounts against each newel at a matching elevation from the stairs.

When you're satisfied with final placement of a newel, apply construction adhesive to the wooden mounting block and fasten it with

four washer-head screws down into the floor framing. Fill any hollow voids at the newel base with solid blocking and nail or glue into place. For final assembly, apply adhesive at all points of contact between the mounting block, the

filler blocking, and the interior of the newel. The newels are then anchored into the blocking or floor/stair framing using two 1/2-in. lag screws through the front of the base. For a belt-and-suspenders approach, drive finish



Position both newels to ensure a consistent rail height over all the stair treads. The newels should align so the rail connects at the centerline of each post.


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nails through the sides of the newel into the blocking.

DETERMINE BALUSTER SPACING

Before you ever order your stair parts, you'll need to have determined the maximum baluster spacing and how many balusters are required per tread. The first baluster of each tread should be 1/2 baluster square back from the face of the riser. Divide the run of the tread (distance from riser to riser) by the required number of balusters per tread to find the center-to-center distance for the other balusters.

For example, if the run is 10 inches and the maximum spacing required by code is 4 inches; 10 divided by 4 equals 2-1/2 spaces required per tread. Round this up to 3 spaces. Thus, 3 balusters per tread are required. A 10-in. run divided by 3 balusters equals 3.333 in. (3-11/32 in.) center-to-center.

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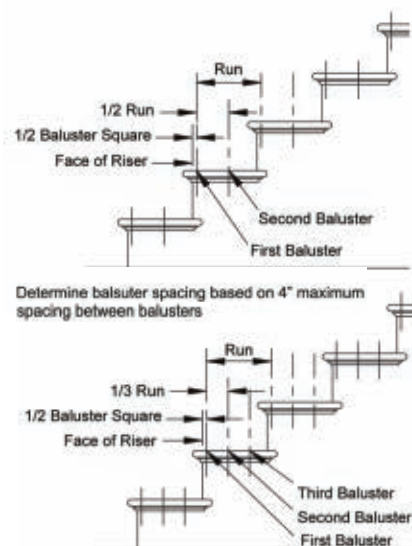


DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION

It's okay for the balusters to be spaced closer than 4 inches but not further apart.

When determining baluster placement, don't forget to consider the shape of your newel posts.

For example, the trim around the bottoms of our newel posts made them 1-1/2-in. wider than the tops of the posts—so we took measurements between the tops. If you forget this discrepancy, then a balus-



*Determine the center-to-center baluster spacing and mark their positions on the stair treads.
Illustration © L.J. Smith Stairs Inc.*

ter spaced 4 inches away from the bottom of the newel might be spaced 4-3/4-in. away from the top of a newel, which would be a code violation.

On the post-to-post staircase shown, the total run of the balustrade is the horizontal distance between the two opposing newel faces. We used the calculations above to determine the proper center-to-center baluster spacing for the total run, then marked these locations on the stair treads. We then turned our attention to the handrail, with plans to return to the balusters later.

RAIL INSTALLATION

To determine the miter angles of the handrail, we placed a scrap 1x2 board atop the stair treads and clamped it alongside the newel posts, marking the intersecting angle with a pencil. The board was cut along the miters to serve as a template for the rail. We placed the 1x2 flush between the newels at the rail-connection points to double-check the fit of

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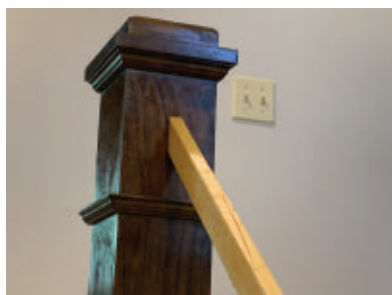


To determine the miter angles of the rail, we placed a 1x2 board over the treads and clamped its ends against the newels.



We marked the angle where the board intersects the face of the newel.

the miter angles. (If the newels have any trim attached, make sure the rail will not interfere with the trim at either post.) Make any necessary adjustments to the angles and elevation, and ensure the final position achieves a consistent rail height above all the treads. Remember to account for the thickness of the handrail, in case your rail differs in size from your template board.



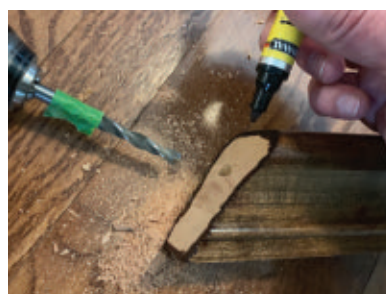
After cutting the board to serve as a template for the rail, we positioned it flush between posts and made final adjustments.



The miter angles are transferred to the stair rail and then cut on a miter saw.

Once you're satisfied with the angles and position of the 1x2 template, transfer the measurements to the handrail and make the cuts on a miter saw. There is a definite top and bottom side to handrail, so don't mix them up.

The rails mount to the newels by drilling an access hole through the newel for a lag screw. The lag screw (with washer) is inserted



The rail-connection screw threads into a pilot hole drilled into the end of the rail. Pro tip—Apply wood stain along the edges of the cut to help conceal the joint during assembly.

through the newel and exits through a second smaller hole on the opposite side where it threads into a predrilled pilot hole on the end of the rail. Use a socket with an extension to tighten the lag screw. The newel holes are covered with matching wood plugs.

Pro Tip: Always visually inspect the clearances of your mounting hardware before driving screws in



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DIY STAIR RAIL INSTALLATION



The lag screws that connect the rail are driven from inside the newel post. Always double-check the size of the hardware before final assembly. This lag screw would have pierced through the top of the handrail if we hadn't discovered it was too long. A few extra washers added beneath the screw head prevented this from happening.

place. Before fastening, I realized the lag screws I had ordered were too long. If I had driven them in without discovering this, I'd have blown the screw tip out the top of the handrail. To prevent over-driving, I added extra washers beneath the head of the lag screw.



Use a socket wrench with an extension to cinch down the rail-connection screw.



A Bosch crossbeam laser helped to make sure the baluster locations along the treads would align plumb and centered beneath the handrail.

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Tool Tip: Lasers can make life easier. When positioning the handrail, I used the Bosch GLL2-40 crossbeam laser to project a laser line the along the baluster locations marks. The plumb laser line extended up to the underside of the handrail, providing a visual indication of where the balusters should intersect the rail. The laser line helped us guide any minor adjustments to the rail position, ensuring consistent alignment in all directions.

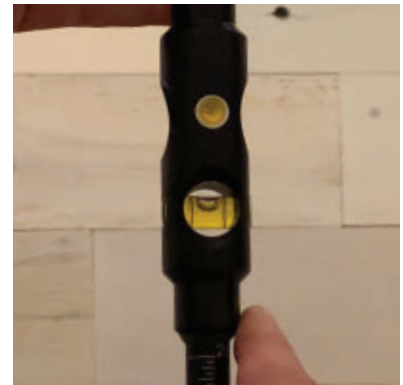
INSTALLING THE BALUSTERS

Attention DIY'ers—when it comes to plumbing the balusters along a sloped handrail, L.J. Smith offers a handy tool called the Telescoping Baluster Marking Tool. It's equipped with a bubble level,



rule and a 1/2x5/8-in. extension which extends from 28 to 42. To use, place the tool's bottom pin in the marked baluster location on the tread. Extend the telescoping shaft up to the underside of the

L.J. Smith's Telescoping Baluster Marking Tool makes it easy to mark the baluster locations beneath the stair rail.



Position the marking tool at the lower baluster location, center and plumb it using the bubble vial, then trigger the spring-loaded head to punch a divot at the upper baluster position.

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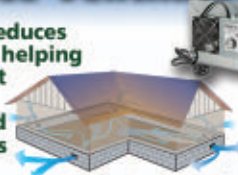
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SAFETY GATE

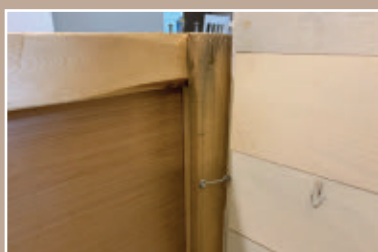
I have three young kids, and by removing the guardrail from the upper stair landing, I created a major safety hazard during this remodel. My solution was to fashion a simple wood gate that closed off the entire landing during construction.



I threw this thing together using a sheet of luaun plus some scrap 1x3 boards and 1x4 leftover from a disassembled shipping pallet. The connections are all made with pan-head screws.



I mounted hinges on one end of the gate and screwed them to the wall.



The other end of the gate gets a hook-and-eye latch, which I located low enough on the stair side that my two youngest kids couldn't reach it.



Here's the temporary gate in place atop the stair landing.

rail, center it beneath the rail, then plumb the tool using the bubble vial. When satisfied with placement, pull down the spring-loaded head and release. A nail punch will drive into the handrail and create a divot for fastening the baluster. Repeat for each baluster as an easy way to mark placement and ensure plumb.

As mentioned earlier, when it came to installing the balusters I "cheated" by using L.J. Smith's IronPro System—and I'm glad I did. The IronPro system allows you to screw on adjustable, pivoting collars at the top and bottom of the baluster locations to house the iron balusters. The adjustable nature of the system reduces the likelihood of placement error and makes fitting the balusters much faster and easier than traditional countersunk installation methods.

To use the IronPro System,



To install the IronPro System, first screw the threaded discs onto each lower baluster location.



Screw the pivoting ball adaptor to the baluster's corresponding location beneath the rail.



After cutting the baluster to length, slide the base collar over the baluster shaft, and insert the upper tip of the baluster into the ball adaptor.



Tilt the baluster down over the mounting plate, slide the base collar down over the threaded disc, then screw it firmly in place.



Tighten a couple of set screws, and the baluster is installed.

first screw down the threaded metal discs at each baluster location. Next, screw the pivoting ball adaptor to the baluster's corresponding location beneath the rail. Cut the metal baluster to length on a chop saw. Slide



We used L.J. Smith's flush-mount fastener to anchor the guard rail to the half newel.



The flush-mount kit conceals the fastener, and all the other fastener holes in the rail system can be repaired with matching wood plugs.



The finished project is a thing of beauty.

the base collar over the baluster shaft, and insert the upper tip of the baluster into the ball adaptor. Tilt the baluster down over the mounting plate, slide the base collar down over the threaded disc, then screw it firmly in place. Tighten a couple of set screws, and baluster installation is complete.

Repeat for all balusters.

VICTORY LAP

That's the basics of this stair-rail project. We installed the guard-rail at the upper landing against the half newel using L.J. Smith's Flush Mount Hardware, which conceals the fastener. The upper landing also got a lower shoe rail to conceal an unsightly floor/trim transition along the edge. We also installed a secondary rail along the lower stair flight using wall-mount brackets.

After the rail system is installed, you should expect a lot of touchup work, such as adding wood plugs, filling nail holes with putty, caulking joints, etc. But all the time, work and attention to detail will be worth it, once you show off your new stair rail installation to friends and neighbors. **EHT**

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A photograph of a wooden deck with a stone fireplace and a window looking out onto a lake. The deck is made of light-colored wood and has a dark brown railing. The fireplace is made of rough-hewn stone and has a wooden door. The window is framed in dark wood and looks out onto a lake with trees in the background. The text "Last-Deck" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, italicized font.

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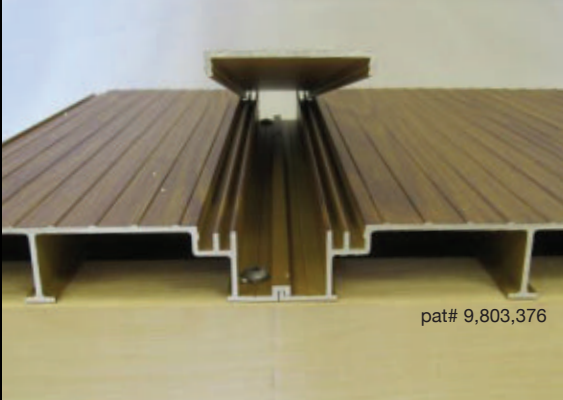
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BRICK UP A MAN CAVE

By Luke Guinn

“**W**hat happens in the man cave stays in the man cave.” It’s a common phrase cited about a man’s personal space within his home—typically a room separate from the main living areas, such as in a basement, attic, garage or office. Featuring masculine-driven design choices with little or no feminine input, a man cave provides a place to hang out with male buddies to watch sports or movies, play pool, poker or video games, or indulge in jam sessions with fellow rock star wannabes.

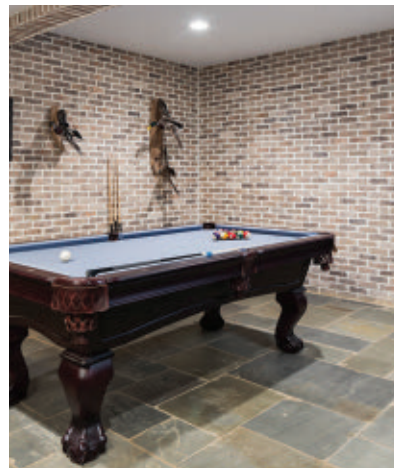
However, “what happens in the man cave stays in the man cave” doesn’t have to mean the design is limited to an old couch, recliner and mini-fridge in an unfinished attic room framed in wood studs, or a sterile garage or basement space surrounded by cinderblock walls. Nor does it mean the only significant piece of décor in the room is a 65-inch state-of-the-art TV for gaming. Man caves often feature sports memorabilia, trophies, posters and other collectibles, setting them completely apart from the overall décor of the rest of the house. In fact, much time and attention are frequently given to the room’s theme—from a sports bar to home theater, hunting lodge or casino cave—and the décor and furnishings to carry out that theme. Many man caves also feature soundproofed walls, smart technology and full kitchens.

BRICK UP A MAN CAVE

The conversion of an existing space in the home into a man cave is one of the most common DIY renovation projects today, and one of the most popular materials used in man cave design is brick.

Since most homes don't come with a ready-made wall of exposed brick, DIY'ers can easily create the look themselves with thin brick.

Made from natural materials,



thin brick is real, kiln-fired clay brick cut thin. This cost-efficient product provides exceptional strength, durability and protection, thermal mass and sustainability, and is user-friendly for both large and small remodeling projects. It's easy to maintain and retains its good looks for decades, and because thin brick is so light-weight, there is no need to worry about reinforcing the walls or sub-floor of your space. Thin brick goes easily into any space and can be installed quickly without footings or ledges. It adheres to concrete, plywood, paneling, dry-wall—even metal. Additionally, it serves as a bold design element for any room, adding a wide variety of warmth, texture and eye-catching patterns. Thin brick may also be painted for a more

A large advertisement for Mayhew Tools SureForce Bar Clamps. The background shows a workshop with a worker using a clamp on a wooden structure. The Mayhew Tools logo is prominently displayed at the top left. The product name 'SureForce Bar Clamps' is written in large, bold, red letters. Below it, a tagline reads 'Get the job done right with the help of Mayhew Tools' high-performance SureForce Bar Clamps!'. Further down, the phrase 'MORE FORCE LESS EFFORT' is written in large, bold, white letters. To the right of this, a list of features is provided: 'Clamp with precision', 'Secure grip on any surface', 'Fully sealed threads', and 'Made in Spain'. At the bottom, a red banner contains the website 'www.mayhew.com', the phone number '1-800-872-0037', and the email 'customerservice@mayhew.com'.

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9850eht 6/19

contemporary, less timeworn look.

Here's how you can create an eye-catching thin brick accent wall in your man cave.

MEASURE

Before purchasing your thin brick product and materials, calculate the square footage of the wall where you want to install the

brick. Check the coverage chart on your product packaging to see how many square feet one box of thin brick will cover. These charts typically offer multiple grout size options, giving you the opportunity to choose how wide your grout lines should be. Additionally, some brick manufacturers offer online calculators (generalshale.com/calculators/brick) to help you estimate



the cost of materials, with the exception of grout, mortar and any additional tools you may need to purchase.

WALL PREPARATION

Make sure the wall is smooth and clean, removing all dust and debris to enable the adhesive to properly bond. It's important that you maintain a consistent wall level as much as possible by sanding away unwanted glue or residue ridges and tapping nails flush with the surface of the wall. Use a level and a chalk line to create a temporary line across the bottom of the wall. This will help you keep the bricks straight and level as you adhere them to the wall. A straight piece of wood will also serve as a temporary ledger.

CUTTING THIN BRICKS

You will need to cut bricks for the left- and right-hand sides of your wall, creating half pieces that will begin your second row of bricks. Completing this step prior to installation will save you time during the process so you can avoid having to repeatedly stop to cut more bricks.

INSTALLING THIN BRICKS

Begin the installation process by applying a full or half piece of thin brick in the bottom left-hand corner of the wall. Spread the mortar on the back of the brick with a notched trowel and place it on the wall, pressing slightly. Continue upward with a half-cut piece of thin brick (if you began with a full-sized piece) using the same application technique. Create even rows with the thin brick in a "half running bond" pattern, offsetting the thin bricks so that they overlap by half the width of the brick. This design is the most common layout for brick





masonry walls because it creates a strong structure and requires minimal cutting. Plastic spacers can assist with keeping the grout lines even. Work your way up the wall, row by row, brick by brick, until you have completed the installation.

GROUTING AND SEALING THIN BRICKS

Allow the thin brick to dry for 24 to 48 hours before you begin to apply grout between joints. If you prefer thick grout lines, use a trowel to scoop grout into the lines. For smaller grout lines, use a grout float to fill the lines. Both methods leave excess grout on top of the bricks, which can be removed with a damp sponge. Once the grout has dried overnight, you can seal

the brick and grout to keep the porous materials from soaking up spills and staining.

There are three general methods of applying sealers to thin brick surfaces. The first (and most common) method is using a roller brush and paint roller tray; second is with a paint brush and bucket; and third is with a professional sprayer. Homeowners and do-it-yourself enthusiasts have the option of selecting two types of sealers—penetrating and film-forming. Penetrating sealers soak into the brick, leaving most of the surface texture and original coloring intact. Film-forming sealers, such as acrylic or polyurethane, create a slick, shiny coating over the top of the brick, making the brick appear darker in color. It is

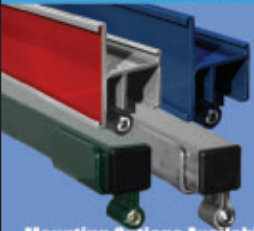


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BRICK UP A MAN CAVE

recommended that you apply two coats of sealant.

Before applying the sealant, cover any carpeting or other flooring materials in the accent wall area of your man cave to avoid

having the brick sealer bleed onto those areas. Painter's tape is also recommended to protect any molding or walls that do not need to be touched with the sealant. Next, scrub the wall

surface with a warm water and vinegar solution (1-part vinegar to 15 parts water), using a brush or sponge, then rinse with clear water. Allow the brick to dry completely before applying sealant.

If you wish to achieve a rustic aesthetic, you can also leave the brick unfinished so it maintains its rough, textured surface. However, because brick is made of clay and is grouted with cementitious mortar, brick walls are highly susceptible to stains unless they are properly sealed.



THIN BRICK ACCENT WALL MAINTENANCE

If you decide on a brick accent wall for your man cave, you can preserve its beauty and prolong its lifespan by removing dirt and debris from the surface with a wet microfiber mop dipped in a solution of vinegar and warm water on a quarterly basis. Stains in the mortar or grout of your brick wall can be removed by working a phosphoric acid cleaner and water into the seams with a brush as they arise.

It is recommended that you reseal your brick wall every one to three years, on average. First, remove any dirt or debris with the water-vinegar solution, then apply a commercial brick stripper to remove the original sealant. Apply fresh sealer to the thin brick and grout with a foam brush. **EHT**

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MAN-CAVE CREATION

“Man Cave”, “Manspace”, “Manland” and “Mantuary” are just a few names for the desired retreat men designate in homes across America. Men can rule these areas as “their space” without offending the women of the home and their sense of design. Often these spaces are sacrificed basements, garages, attics or outbuildings on the property. The space we have in our home is limited and lacks “extra” square footage. The man of the house absolutely deserves a space of his own but do we have to sacrifice the garage housing our cars, the storage space in our attics and basement or the utility space outbuildings provide? The answer is NO! There is another option that is sweeping the nation.....shipping containers converted to man caves. This container conversion trend is not only for “Manspaces.” “She Sheds” are a desired space for family women used for gardening, hobbies, and crafting workshops. Another much needed living space has been a result of Multigenerational households increasing in numbers, needing an in-law-suite.

Shipping containers can provide an additional 172 to 384 square feet of space depending on the size container you choose. These container conversions are perfect DIYer projects adding square footage to accommodate for extra room without sacrificing utilized space in your home.

One of the primary challenges of using metal for functioning home structures is that it's such a good conductor. This fact means that the inside of an uninsulated shipping container is witheringly hot during warmer months and hypothermia-level cold during the winter. The metal will also experience condensation when the internal temperature changes rapidly, and this moisture will corrode the metal. To resolve these issues, InSoFast provides superior insulation panels.

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Set Up a Home Theater



By Nicola Reynor

Nothing can boost your in-home entertainment experience like a fully equipped home theater. Although setting up a media room at home is an exciting project, it involves a lot of meticulous planning and work. You need to pay attention to important aspects like the most suitable audiovisual devices, the lighting, the viewing angles, the speaker location, and the type of furniture to be included.

ABCS OF A HOME THEATER SYSTEM

When planning to build a home theater make sure you bring together the following elements:

- a. The display device can be a high-definition television or a video projector and screen.
- b. The sound system consists of the home theater receiver and the speakers.
- c. You will also need other equipment, such as DVD players, game consoles, satellite box, HDMI cables, and electrical surge protectors.

Other elements that complete a home theater are ambient lighting and a comfortable seating arrangement.

DEDICATE A SUITABLE ROOM

When building a home theater, one of the toughest decisions you will have to make is selecting a suitable location.

The room you choose should be large enough to accommodate the comfortable recliners and the audiovisual equipment. Furthermore, it should offer an appropriate viewing distance and have a high ceiling for mounting the projector.

Finding a dedicated space for your home theater means ensuring that this space is not used for or disturbed by other activities in the house. For instance, if your

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SKILL SAVVY

home theatre room is near the kitchen or dining room, the cooking sounds and smell can hamper the viewer's entertainment experience.

Find a spare room and use common soundproofing methods to insulate its walls and ceilings with materials like acoustic foam and fabric, Rockwool, or mass loaded vinyl (MLV). These materials act as a sound barrier, thereby blocking unwanted sound and enhancing the cinematic experience.

TAME YOUR ROOM'S SOUND REFLECTIONS

The best of microphones, sub-woofers, preamps and fancy monitors will fail to deliver the desired home-theater experience if you overlook the room acoustics. You may not realize but your room can largely impact the sound frequencies. The sound you hear is a mix of direct (straight from speakers) and indirect sound (reflected from the walls, ceilings and furniture).

Reflected sound can either make the movie dialogues and the music fuller or distort the sound waves, making them sound echoey and harsh. Therefore, it is important to consider your room's acoustic properties, thereby improving the theater's sound delivery.



Good and bad sound reflections can be tamed by absorbing the waves or scattering them. For instance, if your room has plastered walls and ceilings and tiled floors, these surfaces will reflect and propagate sound to people seated behind. In such cases, the

easiest way to improve sound quality is to move the seating arrangement farther from the speakers and screen, to the middle of the room.

Similarly, a large expanse of glass windows can distort the sound. Installing heavy drapes can help absorb the unwanted sound reflections, thereby enhancing your home-theater experience. Further, consider replacing the standard hollow-core doors with solid wooden ones to reduce the sound transmission.

POSITION THE SPEAKERS PROPERLY

The speaker-placement diagram should help you understand the ideal positioning of speakers in the home theater. The center channel is responsible for speech clarity, enabling the viewers to understand what the actors in a movie are saying. Thus, you should place it above the center of the screen.

Left and right speakers are responsible for producing the on-screen sound effects. These should be placed at an angle of 30 degrees on either side of the center channel.

The rear speakers (left and right surround) emit ambient background sound. Position them behind and at 110 degrees on either side with respect to the listening position.

Besides the above-mentioned speakers, sub-woofers help amplify the bass energy. Audiophiles suggest placing the sub-woofer in the front of the room for accurate sounding bass.

The rule of thumb to achieve a good mid-range and mid-bass response is to place speakers at least 60 centimeters away from walls, bookshelves or couches.

Lastly, if you have a small room, use a sleek soundbar that packs the sound effects of multiple speakers into one device.

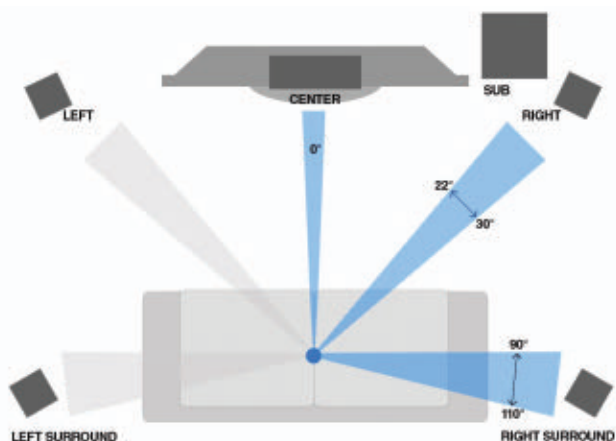


Illustration courtesy of www.digitaltrends.com.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE LIGHTING

The main purpose of lighting in a home theatre is to create a dedicated entertainment experience. Therefore, it is wise to stay away from distracting lighting and invest in subtle ambient lights that are dimmable and can be controlled using smart devices.



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THINK ABOUT AESTHETICS AND COMFORT

Convert your home theater into a cinema hall by incorporating aesthetic elements, such as red

velvet walls, tiered seating, and carpeted flooring. Invest in comfortable recliners and couches made using different types of woods for furniture and equipped with a wireless touch-screen monitor, thereby creating the ultimate home-theater experience.

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If budget permits, go a step ahead and create a bar area or add a popcorn maker in a corner to make the area welcoming for your visitors.

Lastly, don't miss on checking the viewing angle. Most high-definition televisions can be viewed at extreme angles, yet others may require the viewers to be seated in the center. Consider these factors when planning your room's seating arrangement, enabling the viewers to enjoy the home theater without straining their eyes.

Your home theater is the perfect place in your house to unwind, entertain your visitors, or enjoy a movie night with your loved ones. **EHT**

Editor's Note: Nicola Reynor is a passionate blogger who loves to blog about fashion, beauty, property guide, home decor, wedding and lifestyle trends. When in leisure time, she prefers to spend time in traveling with friends and family.

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Replace a Hanging Light Fixture



By Matt Weber

A hanging ceiling fixture is more than simply a light source. It's a focal point for the interior décor of the home.

We recently upgraded a ceiling fixture with a new chandelier from Lamps Plus, the nation's largest lighting retailer. This lighting fixture was located above the staircase we recently remodeled and made a beautiful "crown jewel" to decorate the space. The homeowner selected the Lacey 28" Wide Round Black Chandelier to replace a smaller (and outdated) pendant. The result was a dramatic improvement to the look and feel of the home's front foyer.

Replacing an out-of-style ceiling fixture not only updates the look of a room, but the manner in which it casts light can also dramatically impact the ambience of the living space. Hanging fixtures range in style from elegant chain-mounted chandeliers and sparkling art-deco crystal fixtures to modern geometric wood designs with candle-style lighting. The available fixture designs really seem endless.

Regardless of style, a major concern when selecting a replacement feature is to ensure that the box, ceiling and wiring will support the weight of the fixture. For a new fixture that weighs approximately

the same as the old one, the existing electrical box will probably suffice. However, if the replacement is heavier, the ceiling box may need to be replaced to support the extra weight.

Replacing a light fixture doesn't require an electrician. Following a few simple safety guidelines, a DIY homeowner can replace a fixture successfully (although the work should probably be inspected by a professional, so check with local authorities to see if a permit is required).

OUT WITH THE OLD

Before making your first move, turn off the power at the breaker box. Do this by flipping a circuit breaker or unscrewing a fuse. Use a voltage tester to make sure the power is off.

We wanted the new fixture to hang approximately at the same height as the old, so we measured the old light's position before removing it.

When removing the old fixture, it helps to use a work platform fastened to a ladder to support the weight of the fixture while you remove the mounting screws from the electrical box. With the screws out, pull off the box cover. The wires should be twisted together and capped with a wire nut. Before you disconnect any wiring, a good DIY trick is to take a few photos at different angles to show how to reconnect the new fixture to the house wiring. To disconnect the old fixture, just unscrew the wire nuts and untwist the wire pairs.

Note: If you have aluminum wiring, you should avoid working on it and call an electrician, because special techniques are required to make the connections.



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ASSEMBLE THE NEW FIXTURE

Unpack the fixture and verify that it was shipped with all the necessary parts. Organize the components, including the canopy,

the hanging hardware, etc. Because ceiling fixtures vary greatly in style and construction, so do the associated components and the assembly process. However, any quality lighting manufacturer



Chandeliers vary greatly in design, but any quality manufacturer will include specific assembly instructions for your model.



The design of the Lamps Plus chandelier conceals all wires within the fixture components for a sleek, refined look.

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will include assembly instructions specific to the fixture model, and usually the job requires nothing more than a screwdriver or wrench. The electrical cord fixture follows the chain, looping through it periodically to keep the wire and chain bundled. Remember to thread the canopy (box cover), the canopy's retainer nut, the new mounting strap (which screws into the junction box) and any other necessary parts over the wire and chain before installing the fixture.

Carry the fixture to the electrical box and use your ladder/work platform combo to support the weight of the fixture while you work. Ultimately, the height of your hanging fixture is up to you, but for the over-the-stairs location shown, we wanted to ensure plenty of headroom clearance for anyone walking beneath it. The lighting supplier



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QUICK FIX

will usually include more chain than you will actually need. Measure and cut the chain to its desired length with metal snips. Then cut the wiring 6 inches longer than the chain.

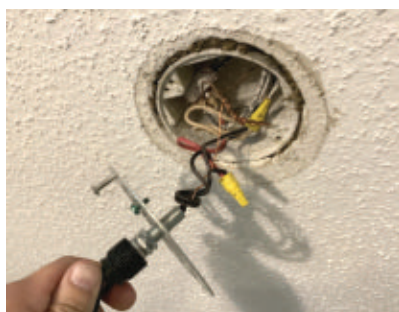
INSTALLATION

To install the fixture, you'll need a screwdriver and some wire strippers. It might help to screw the metal mounting strap to the junction box to keep the wires close together while you work. The end of the chain will thread into the mounting strap.

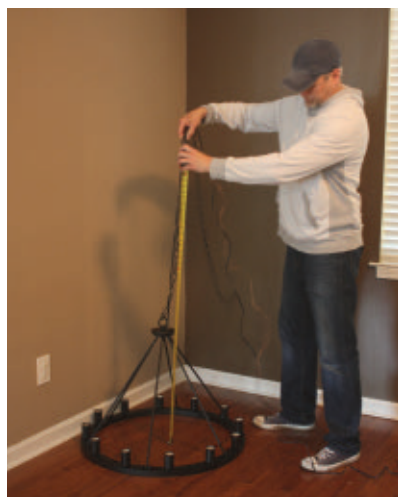
Using a combination stripper, pinch the fixture wire in the appropriately sized hole, squeeze to cut the sheathing, then twist and pull to remove about 3/4-inch of insulation from each wire.



The new chandelier's height is optional, but measuring the height of the existing fixture will serve as a good reference when determining the height of the replacement.



A good DIY tip is to snap photos of the existing wiring connections to use as a guide for the new fixture.



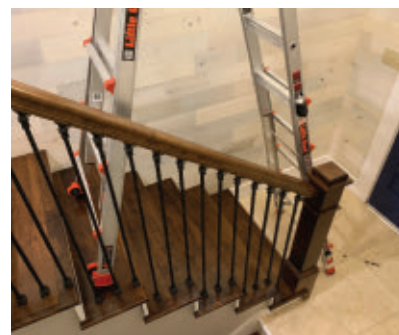
Measure and cut the chain to its desired length. Thread the electrical cord through the chain every three loops, leaving it 6" to 8" longer than the chain.



When adding or subtracting links to the chain, pry them open in a "C" shape rather than twisting them, which will weaken the link and risk breakage.

In modern home supply wiring, individual wires are bundled together in a sheathed cable. "Two-wire with ground" cables have a black wire, a white wire and an uninsulated ground wire. "Three-wire with ground" cables (used with three-way and four-way switches) have a black wire, a white wire, a red wire and an uninsulated ground.

The white wire is usually the neutral wire, and the black is the



Since the fixture was located above a split-level stairway, the job required a telescoping multi-ladder. I used the Leveler by Little Giant Ladder, because each side of the ladder telescopes independently, granting the ability to set up the ladder with one side safely on the floor and the other resting securely on a stair tread above.

live or "hot" wire. Any red wires are hot, too. The unsheathed, exposed copper wires are ground wires

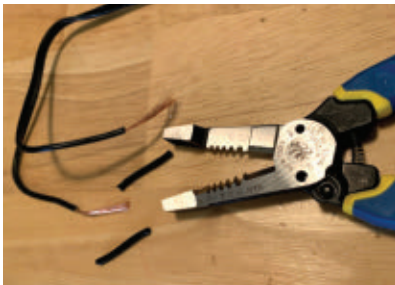
Match the fixture wires to the supply wires (hot to hot, neutral to neutral), twist the exposed wires together clockwise. Light fixtures don't have black and white cables, but it's still important to connect the neutral wire of the circuit to the neutral wire of the light. To identify the neutral wire, examine the lamp cord closely; the neutral wire usually has a white rib on the sheathing as its indicator. The ground wires typically anchor to the mounting strap with a small green-painted screw.

Because the fixture wires are stranded and the supply wires are solid, it usually helps have 1/4 inch extra exposed strand wire to wrap around the solid wires. Secure the connections with a UL-listed wire nut.

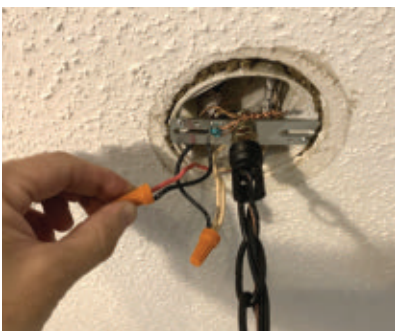
If only a single cable, or one set of black and white wires, enters the box, then the fixture is at the end of the circuit, which allows for the simplest method



As a makeshift work platform, we used a couple of large, sturdy framing clamps to support the fixture atop the ladder during installation.



Leave the stranded fixture wire about 1/4" longer than the solid supply wires when twisting together the connections.



Connect hot wires to hot wires, neutral to neutral, and attach the ground wires to the green screw in the mounting strap. Cap with a UL-listed wire nut and seal with electrical tape.

of installation. If two cables (or two sets of black and white wires) enter the box, the fixture is in the middle of a circuit, which means you will have to twist multiple wires together. This is why it's handy to have photos of the wiring connections.

Install a light bulb and test the connection before the fastening the fixture. If there's no illumination, you probably have a loose connection, so try again. Once the light functions, add some extra connection protection by wrapping electrician's tape around the wire nuts.

On the fixture shown, the threaded end of the chain screws into the mounting strap, the canopy slides over the wiring box, and a lock not holds the canopy in place for a finished appearance.

The stylish new chandelier from Lamps Plus not only enhances the interior décor but also offers a warm glow to the living space. **EHT**



The canopy slides up the chain to conceal the wires and fastens with a retainer nut

Editor's Note: Founded in 1976, Lamps Plus, the nation's largest lighting retailer, also carries thousands of exclusive designs in ceiling fans, furniture, home furnishings and décor. Learn more about the company's extensive catalog at www.lampsplus.com.



Adding bulbs is final step to avoid accidental breakage during installation.

HOT PRODUCTS



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INSTATRIM

The EHT staff had the opportunity to test the new InstaTrim product, and it makes a neat alternative to light-duty caulking jobs. Rather than a tube of sticky caulk, InstaTrim comes as a roll of plastic-backed trim tape. You simply cut it to the desired length, remove the backing, then press the adhesive strip into place. As long as the area to be “caulked” has been thoroughly cleaned of grease and dirt, the InstaTrim will make a strong bond with the surface. It acts as a barrier against air, moisture and dust, covers sloppy painted or cracked wall corners, and can also be used as an accent décor trim for any area of the home. Although the product is



currently limited to a single 1/2-in. bead size, six different colors are available, and application is quick, easy and—best of all—not messy. The biggest downfall of traditional caulk application is the sticky, messy nature of the product, the need to tool the bead into shape and then dispose of the excess goop. InstaTrim completely eliminates the mess and can complete the job in a fraction of the time it takes to apply with a caulk gun. Made in the USA, the product is odorless, non-toxic, waterproof, mold- and mildew-resistant, and no cure time is needed. Visit instatrim.com.

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HOT PRODUCTS

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PM-8000 PORTAMATE STR WORKSTATION

The Portamate PM-8000 from Bora Tools offers a combination of portable workstation, flat work surface and compact storage (31"W x 29"D x 34"H). Miter saws or other table-top tools up to 26.5" wide can be mounted to the rotating top. From the working position the miter saw or other tool can be rotated 180 degrees to an underneath storage position. While in the storage position the rotating top provides a flat metal work surface. The PM-8000 includes two retractable wings which provide a total of 7 linear feet of



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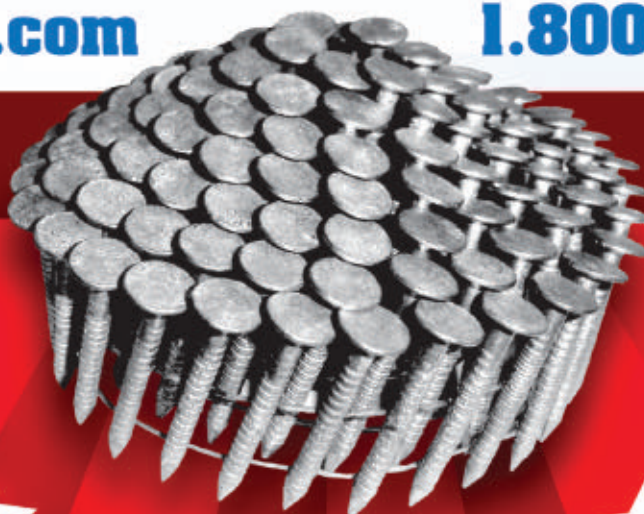


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