

BY CHARLES WARDELL



1. Plug-and-Play LED Options

The expanded Loox LED lighting line from Häfele America Co. includes new fixtures, switching options, and peel-and-stick flexible light strips, or ribbons, that can be configured for nearly any application, such as under wall cabinets or inside a drawer. Components were designed for easy installation with color-coded, mated connectors, and with drivers that plug into a wall outlet. Prices vary by design and components; the installation shown here should go for around \$230. hafele.com/us



2. Fire-Resistant Foam

Lapolla's Foam-Lok FLX 500-EM Spray Foam just simplified the process of insulating attics and crawlspaces. That's because it has been certified by the International Code Council Evaluation Service for use in uninhabited spaces without an ignition barrier—in other words, it can be left uncovered without drywall. The testing criteria require that the foam withstand an open flame for a specific time without igniting. The closed-cell version has an installed cost of \$1 to \$1.25 per square foot for every inch of depth, while the open cell runs \$0.50 to \$0.75. lapolla.com



3. A Better Recip Blade

Milwaukee says that with optimized 5-tpi tooth geometry, its new The Ax Sawzall blade will cut twice as fast as other carbide blades and allow for faster plunge cuts, without worry about bouncing on the work surface. The teeth resist fracturing from hitting nails, and according to Milwaukee, The Ax blades will last 30 times longer than bi-metal blades. They come in 6-, 9-, and 12-inch lengths with costs of \$8, \$11, and \$14. milwaukeetool.com



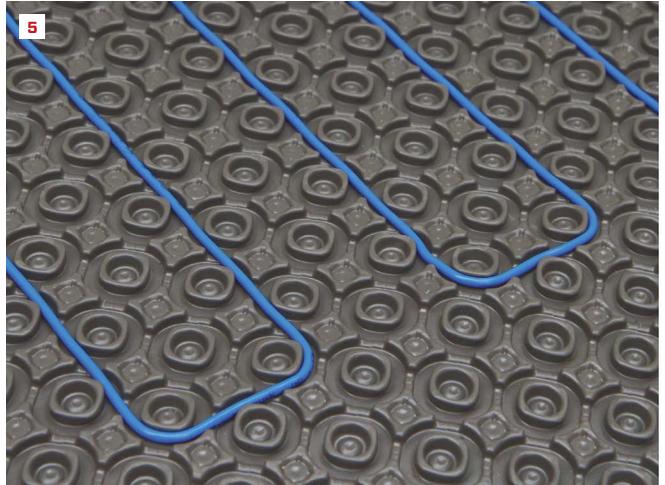
4. ICC-Compliant Zip Panels

Huber has added an R-9 thickness to its Zip System R-sheathing, a line of panels with a layer of polyisocyanurate foam. The new thickness lets builders satisfy the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code's continuous-foam-insulation requirements in areas where Huber's existing R-3 and R-6 panels aren't thick enough, and where the builder doesn't want to use the R-12 version. Material costs range from a few dollars more to twice that of a wall assembly with OSB, housewrap, and rigid foam, but installation is faster. Huber Engineered Woods, huberwood.com

Products

5. Customizable Floor Heat

When radiant-heating cables are installed below the floor surface, SunTouch's new HeatMatrix uncoupling membrane provides the ability to vary wire spacing. This lets customers fine-tune heat output for a room's heating needs. And by uncoupling the floor tile from the subfloor, the membrane also reduces the chance that differential movement will crack the tile. It's installed using a modified thinset. List price is \$2.40 per square foot and it comes in a 161-square-foot roll. The manufacturer also sells heating wire with a diameter made specifically for the HeatMatrix. suntouch.com



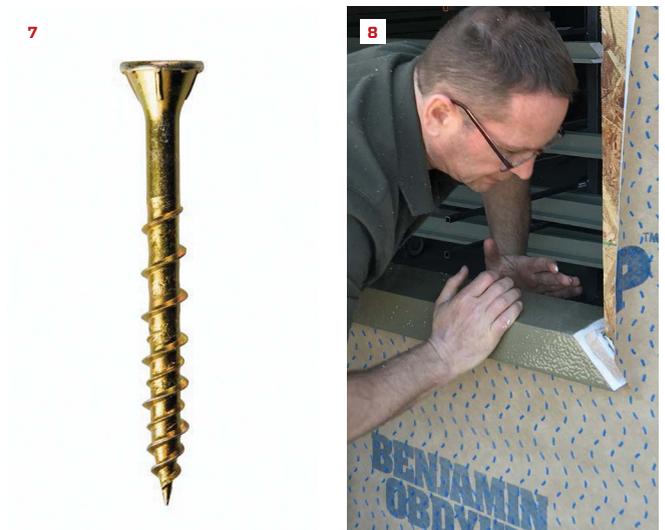
6. Tough New Surface Material

Neolith is one of a new class of "Sintered" materials made by placing the ingredients of glass, porcelain, and quartz under extremely high heat and pressure (2,200°F and 5,900 psi). The result is a uniform, stone-like slab with excellent scratch, chemical, and heat resistance. It's sold to licensed fabricators in three thicknesses: 3mm (for furniture and walls), 6mm (flooring), and 12mm (countertops). The 12mm (1/2 inch) material weighs 8 pounds per square foot. The manufacturer says the cost should be comparable to quartz. neolithcountertops.com



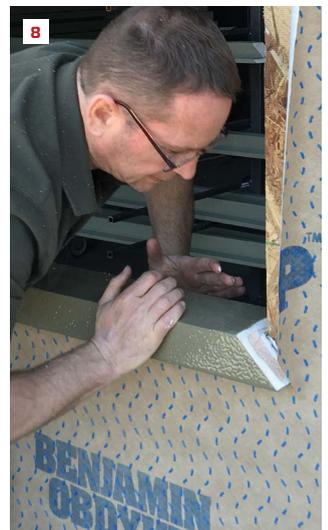
7. Faster Subfloor Screw

Simpson's new Strong-Drive WSV subfloor screw can be driven faster and with less force, while delivering more holding power than a standard subfloor screw. Its tip and thread pattern provide up to 25% less torque than standard screws, and a deep-recessed, six-lobed ribbed head delivers cleaner countersinking and more secure bit retention for fewer cam-outs. The screw was developed for use with the company's Quik Drive system. A box of 2,000 collated screws costs \$85. strongtie.com/wsv



8. High-Performance Window Buck

ThermalBuck is a window buck made from expanded polystyrene insulation wrapped in a polyurethane shell. Meant for installing windows in walls with rigid exterior foam, it comes in 8-foot lengths that are cut on site to fit, and held in place with adhesive and screws. The manufacturer, Brinc Building Products, says that unlike wood, this material won't warp, shrink, or expand. And because it protrudes out from the framing to support the weight of the window, it will transfer wind loads from the window to the structure. It comes in four thicknesses, from 1 to 2.5 inches, with prices from \$2.50 to \$2.75 per foot. thermalbuck.com



Products

9. Easy Accent Wall

With modern design all the rage these days, the Endura line of 3D decorative wall panels from Ekena Millwork provides an affordable way to add a modernistic, textured accent wall to any room. The PVC plastic panels measure 12 inches square, can be used inside or outside, and are paintable. The panels are glued in place. (The manufacturer recommends using Loctite Power Grab adhesive.) The line includes dozens of patterns; with a retail price of just over \$9 per panel, an 8-foot-by-12-foot wall would cost around \$360. ekenamillwork.com

10. Polymer Cedar Roofing

PlyGem's new Engineered Cedar roof shingles are crafted to mimic the look of milled cedar shingles, and come with a gray hue similar to that of weathered wood. The shingles are made from the same polymer formulation as the company's Engineered Slate roofing, with nearly 100% recycled resins. They can be cut and scored with a utility knife and fastened in place with roofing nails fired from a standard nail gun. Pricing should be on a par with premium asphalt shingles. plygemroofing.com

11. Prefab Shower Base

Schluter's Kerdi-Shower-ST prefabricated shower base is part of the company's series of new shower components that are designed to speed the process of waterproofing a shower prior to tile installation. The sloped base is made from expanded polystyrene foam that can be cut with a utility knife and installed with thinset. It's available in six sizes, from 38 by 38 inches to 72 by 72 inches, with prices from \$65 to \$200. Each base has a drain hole sized to accept the company's shower-drain product. schluter.com

12. New Poly-ash Beadboards

Boral has added three new profiles to its line of Boral TruExterior Beadboard: a 4-inch, a double-4, and a double-6. The new profiles (which join an existing 6-inch beadboard) are made with poly-ash material, a blend of polymers and fly ash that is dimensionally stable and resistant to moisture, cracking, splitting, and termite damage. The profiles are $\frac{5}{8}$ inch thick and come in 16-foot lengths. The material can be installed 24 inches on-center with no support backing. Price to the contractor runs about \$5 per square foot. boraltruexterior.com

