

Products | by Tom O'Brien

Skinnier Shakes. Fiber-cement siding manufacturer Nichiha recently introduced a low-priced line of shakes.



NichiFrontier Siding has the same footprint (9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 8 feet) and cedarlike appearance as the company's $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick Sierra Premium boards but is only $\frac{7}{16}$ inch deep. It can be ordered with a factory-prime coat or finished in one of four stain colors. Contractor pricing runs about \$3 per square foot.

Nichiha USA, 866/424-4421, nichiha.com.

Stainless Steel Railings. Lavi Industries recently introduced a complete line of stainless steel tubing, brackets, and fittings that can be used to assemble — without welding — almost any type of interior or exterior hand-rail.



Tubing options include three diameters, two wall thicknesses, and two finishes. Prices range from \$6 to \$19 per lineal foot.

Lavi Industries, 888/285-8605, lavi.com.

Prefab Post Wrap. With *KleerSnap Post Wrap*, it takes as little as 10 minutes for a single worker to trim out a post, says the maker. The product's cellular PVC formulation is so resistant to moisture damage the company offers a lifetime warranty against splintering, rotting, delaminating, and excessive swelling.



It's sold in lengths of 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 10 feet, in packages to fit 4x4, 6x6, and 8x8 posts. Package prices range from \$85 to \$200. Three moulding kits (bed, crown, and base & cap) are also available.

Kleer Lumber, 866/553-3770, kleerlumber.com.



Cutting-Edge Tubs. This year Kohler added three bathtubs to its *Rêve* collection of modern geometric bathroom fixtures. The new styles include a drop-in/undermount bath, a drop-in bath with a massage feature, and a freestanding bath. Each is made from 93 percent recycled cast iron, measures 67 inches by 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and comes in white, almond, and ash. Prices range from \$1,900 to \$5,700.

Kohler Co., 800/456-4537, kohler.com.



Air-Flow Enhancer. When you need to increase air movement between rooms, the *Perfect Balance In-Door Pressure Balancer* offers a more elegant solution than leaving an enormous gap beneath the door. The 24-inch-by-4-inch grille is made of high-impact ABS plastic and features an interior baffle to reduce noise and light transmission. Though it's made only in white, it can be painted to match any color scheme, says the maker. Prices are \$30 for one unit, \$80 for a three-pack.

Tamarack Technologies, 800/222-5932, tamtech.com.

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Affordable Air Bath. Mansfield Plumbing Products recently added a line of air baths to its Pro-Fit collection of whirlpools and soaker tubs. Air baths typically cost more than whirlpools but — according to manufacturers — produce a gentler massage and feature a more hygienic drainage system. *Pro-Fit Air Baths* come in eight sizes. They feature as many as 58 air channels — which the maker says surround bathers with millions of bubbles — and a motor that automatically purges surplus residue 20 minutes after the bath is turned off. Prices start at \$1,380.



Mansfield Plumbing Products, 800/999-1459, mansfieldplumbing.com.



Lightweight Stone. Although *BellaStone* looks remarkably authentic — thanks to the real stone used in the manufacturing process — the 50-inch-by-24-inch panels weigh a fifth as much as traditional stone and install 50 percent faster, says the maker. The panels have sound-deadening properties and an R-value of at least 2.5, and are sold in three color blends. Installed costs average \$12 per square foot.

Exterior Portfolio by Crane, 800/366-8472, exteriorportfolio.com.



PVC Deck Boards. Wolf says its *PVC Decking* offers the performance of premium PVC at a more affordable price. Its features include a cellular PVC core (with no organic fillers) that's virtually impervious to moisture, according to the company, and a UV-resistant PVC capstock. The 1-inch-by-5½-inch boards are manufactured in 12-, 16-, and 20-foot lengths in two colors — grey and sand. The contractor price is about \$3 per lineal foot.

Wolf, 877/315-6669, wolfbuildingproducts.com.



Weather-Resistant Sheathing. *Drywood* is a structural wall and roof panel with an integral weather barrier that eliminates the need for roofing felt, waterproof membranes, or housewrap. Joints are sealed with a 4-inch-wide asphalt-based seam tape (sold separately). The sheathing can support shingles, slate, tile, wall veneers, and siding. Standard offerings include 4x8 OSB panels in ½-inch and ⅝-inch thicknesses for \$20 and \$25 respectively. Larger and thicker sizes can be special-ordered.

Drywood Products, 309/303-0514, drywoodproducts.com.

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Resistant Coating. The Trex *Transcend Decking & Railing System* is made from the same durable, low-maintenance material as the company's standard products, with one difference: The tops and sides of the boards have a hard-shell coating with a wood-grain pattern and low-sheen finish that allegedly resists stains, scratches, and mold. Each board comes in two profile options (square and grooved) and six wood-like colors. Costs run about \$3 per lineal foot. Various railings are also available.

Trex Co. , 800/289-8739, trexpartners.com.



Replacement Shower. The *Ciencia* solid-surface shower is primarily designed as a replacement for an outdated bathtub. The base, which features an integral trench drain (with removable cover), installs directly over the subfloor. The walls glue on to the existing surface — whether it's drywall, plaster, or tile. The shower comes in a variety of sizes, with four color options and five tile patterns. Prices for the complete kit range from \$1,875 to \$2,650.

American Standard Brands, 800/442-1902, americanstandard.com.

Quick-Connect Patio. *EcoShield Deck Tile* is a wood-plastic composite that's made with 95 percent recycled content and never needs staining or painting, says the maker. Its grid backing lets you lock adjoining tiles together to create a floating floor. It can be installed on rooftops and over concrete or gravel. The 12-inch-by-12-inch tiles come in one brick and three wood-grain patterns and cost about \$8 per square foot; matching border trim is also available.

Advanced Environmental Recycling Technologies, 866/729-2378, moistureshield.com.

