

# PRODUCTS

## Faster Stair Building

Brackets adjust for a wide range of rise and run



by Mike Guertin

For the past couple of years, I've seen the magazine ads with William Shatner promoting EZ Stairs — but I never gave them a second look. I figured it was a DIY product for people who couldn't lay out and cut a proper set of stringers.

Seeing them in action at DeckExpo, though, got my attention. After a short learning curve, you can prepare a pair of 14-foot-long stringers with the EZ Stairs brackets in 30 minutes or less — just try doing that with a framing square and saw.

The only cuts on the stringers you need to make are the top and bottom ones. The brackets screw to a pair of parallel 2x6s or 2x8s, which take the place of 2x12 stringers. Spacers precisely align the brackets and can be set for riser heights between 6 inches and 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches and tread depths between 9 inches and 12 inches, following the spacer-setting chart. Structural risers 2x8 or deeper screw to the vertical face flange of each bracket and span between the stringers.

You can build up to 9-foot-wide interior and 7-foot-wide exterior stairs with no intermediate stringers. There is a limitation, however, that some users won't like: The

system doesn't allow for open-end stringers with mitered skirt-to-riser trim detailing. The structural stringers house both sides of the staircase.

It's easiest and fastest to make treads from 2-by stock, but finish decking can also be used for treads with the addition of accessory brackets and 2-by blocks.

The written instructions for making the top and bottom cuts on the stringers will make sense to seasoned stair cutters, but may leave others wanting more information. Before you try using EZ Stairs for the first time, watch the short animation video on the Web site ([www.ez-stairs.com/3d.ram](http://www.ez-stairs.com/3d.ram)). It's helpful to see the assembly process in order to fully understand the installation guide; but it's after using the system once that you'll fully appreciate the labor and material savings.

A set of eight pairs of brackets (which is enough for a nine-riser set of stairs) sells for just under \$50, and a set of eight reusable spacers for the system is less than \$15. — Mike Guertin is a builder and remodeler in East Greenwich, R.I., and a siding, roofing, and deck specialist at Hanley Wood's JLC Live, DeckExpo, and Remodeling Shows.

■ **EZ Stairs**, 866/693-9570, [www.ez-stairs.com](http://www.ez-stairs.com)

## Solar Flair

Post caps that incorporate solar-powered lights and clocks



Lighted post caps immediately create interest and invite families to spend the cool of the evening on their decks. Solar-powered ones such as the Tiffany-style Mission cap shown not only look great, but also don't require the deck builder to wire them. And if you're selling solar power, why not add in a modern version of the world's oldest timepiece, the sundial? Both the solar-powered cap and the sundial are available to fit 4x4 and 6x6 posts. — A.E.

■ **Maine Ornamental**, 866/780-3507, [www.postcaps.com](http://www.postcaps.com)

## PRODUCTS

### Fix It, Don't Replace It

Composite-decking repair products



What do you do about a damaged composite board in the middle of a deck, particularly if you're using a hidden fastener system? How many boards do you have to take out to get at that one? Talk about a nightmare of work you never wanted to do. And if the deck's been there for a while, what are the odds of exactly matching the color of the new board to the old?

The Composite Products Repair line struck me as a potential lifesaver for a deck builder facing that circumstance. Offered in colors said to match closely most composite decking are pigmented markers for repairing scratches (\$4.50), a two-part putty for fixing larger dings (\$6.95), and pigments for tinting the

putty (\$6.60). For about \$85, you can buy a kit containing a variety of markers, pigments, and putty. — A.E.

■ **Gemini Coatings**, 800/742-8516,  
[www.compositeproductsrepair.com](http://www.compositeproductsrepair.com)

### Composite Railings

Painted-look railing system



The new WeatherBest Crystal White railing from LP is made with Fibrex, a material technology supplied by Andersen Windows; Andersen has long used it for the frames of its Renewal replacement windows. Fibrex is a blend of vinyl (which can come from post-production sources) and what the industry calls “bio-fibers” — plant fibers from sources such as wood or bamboo.

Crystal White railing is hollow with a smooth acrylic surface that's claimed to resemble painted wood. It's available in a traditional round-top profile or, for those needing a spot to park their beverages at parties, in a flat-top version. The balusters attach to the rail by way of concealed screws.

LP also makes matching accessories such as post sleeves, post caps, skirts, and hardware. — A.E.

■ **LP Corp.**, 888/820-0325, [www.lpcorp.com](http://www.lpcorp.com)

## PRODUCTS

### Gold-Tone Connectors

Priced in the middle ground between galvanized and stainless steel



by John Wilder

The International Builders' Show marked the launch of USP's Gold Coat line of polymer-coated galvanized-steel connectors intended for decks. When used with ACQ lumber, they will outlast standard G185 connectors by two to three times, claims the manufacturer. The connectors also have the advantage of a gold tone that blends with the color of wood and adds a professional appearance.

A wide range of connectors is available, from joist hangers to post bases to hurricane ties. Gold Coat connectors sell for roughly twice the cost of G185 connectors, and about one third (or less) the cost of stainless steel connectors, according to the maker. — *John Wilder builds decks in Jacksonville, Fla.*

■ **USP Structural Connectors,**  
800/328-5934,  
[www.uspconnectors.com](http://www.uspconnectors.com)

### Vinyl Screen System

Wrap dimensional-lumber framing with low-maintenance PVC



Maintenance is the downside to a screened porch. Either the wood framing supporting the insect screening is left unfinished — to deteriorate in the weather — or it needs regular painting to keep its original shipshape look.

L. B. Plastics offers an alternative: a porch screening system made from low-maintenance vinyl. The components snap in place around new or existing 4x4 and 2x4 framing members, and an integral channel accepts splines to secure the screen.

The Sheerline Screen Clad System is available in any color you want — as long as that color is white. — *A.E.*

■ **L. B. Plastics,**  
800/752-7739,  
[www.lbplastics.com](http://www.lbplastics.com)

## PRODUCTS

### Hybrid Flashing

Polymer-backed copper sidesteps corrosion



If you're confused about flashing ACQ-treated lumber, get in line. ACQ's high copper content corrodes aluminum flashing in short order. Copper flashing is an alternative, but raises its own corrosion issues when it comes in contact with galvanized-steel items, such as joist hangers.

Yorkshield 106 PT offers a solution to this dilemma. One face is copper, and the other's a polymer. It bends easily, and holds its bent shape (it does spring back more than traditional copper, but not so much as to be a problem). Installed as ledger flashing, its copper side faces inward, wrapping the ledger and running up the house wall. The polymer side faces out, and isolates the joist hangers from the copper. — A.E.

■ **York Manufacturing,**  
800/551-2828,  
[www.yorkmfg.com](http://www.yorkmfg.com)

### Protecting Deck Supports

Site-applied sleeve keeps posts out of the dirt



Originally designed to protect pole-building posts from ground contact, the shorter (42-inch) version of the Post Protector is available for buried deck posts. The maker claims that in addition to preventing the ground or concrete contact that deteriorates even treated posts, Post Protector II can offer 3,000 pounds of uplift protection when installed properly. The cost is about \$20. — A.E.

■ **Post Protector,**  
877/966-8768,  
[www.postprotector.com](http://www.postprotector.com)

### Factory-Applied Post Wrap

Isolation membrane separates wood from decay organisms



Even if you're building in termite-prone areas, Postsaver's ICC Evaluation Services Report ESR-1834 should allow direct burial of these deck-support posts. The isolation membrane is composed of a polyethylene outer layer and a bitumen inner layer. Heat-applied in the factory, the membrane bonds to the wood posts. This treatment is said to be impervious to water and to soil-borne decay organisms, as well as to subterranean termites. Also available are wrapped posts with a notch at the bottom for improved uplift resistance. An ICC-ES report on this feature is due soon. — A.E.

■ **Postsaver USA,** 610/681-6451,  
[www.postsaverusa.com](http://www.postsaverusa.com) ❖