

## PRODUCTS

### Night Lights

CertainTeed offers solar-powered post caps

by Scott Gibson

Photovoltaic panels are one way of beating the high cost of utility-provided electricity. The same technology applied on a smaller scale can add accent lighting to fence and rail posts without the hassle of running low-voltage lines and without any ongoing operating costs.

CertainTeed has introduced solar and decorative caps for its Bufftech vinyl fencing and EverNew railing lines. Caps use light-emitting diodes (LEDs), which should last the life of the cap. Bulbs are powered by two nicad AA batteries, which are rated for 500 charging cycles



before needing replacement. Assuming the caps are left on continuously, battery life should be good for about one and a half years. A day's worth of sunlight is enough to power the lights for eight hours.

The stainless steel caps have a powder-coated finish in copper, amber, or satin nickel to complement popular railing and fencing colors. They're 5 inches square, but adapters for 4-inch posts are available. Caps cost about \$35 each.

*Scott Gibson is a writer in East Waterboro, Maine.*

■ **CertainTeed**, 610/341-7000, certainteeted.com.

### New PVC Decking

Sensibuilt has a 10-year color-retention warranty

Connecticut-based start-up company has entered the decking market with Sensibuilt, a cellular PVC plank that comes with a 10-year warranty against color fade and a limited lifetime guarantee against splitting, insect damage, and decay.

Cellular PVC is made by introducing a foaming agent during the extrusion process, which reduces the density to about half that of regular PVC. It weighs about the same as softwood and is widely used for exterior trim and molding as well as decking.

Sensibuilt comes in four colors — mocha, cedar, redwood, and driftwood — in boards that are 1 inch thick and 5½ inches wide. It's designed for 16-inch on-center spacing (12 inches when laid diagonally or used for stair treads). The decking can be screwed through the face, as close to ¾ inch from an edge without risk of splitting and without predrilling. Dealer-approved color-matched fasteners will not cause any mushrooming in the surface, the company says.

One advantage of cellular PVC is that it is more dimensionally stable than solid-plastic decking. Sensibuilt says no expansion gap is necessary between end-to-end butt joints when the installation temperature is



70 degrees or higher, and that between 70 degrees and 32 degrees, a gap of 1/16 inch is sufficient. Side-to-side spacing can be as small as 1/8 inch.

Sensibuilt decking is manufactured with a cross-lined urethane-acrylic surface which the company says is more scratch- and stain-resistant than similar products. It can be cleaned with a mild, non-abrasive cleaner. The material reflects infrared heat, so it remains comfortable underfoot, and is self-extinguishing, with a Class 1 fire rating. Planks come in 12-foot, 16-foot, and 20-foot lengths and retail for between \$2.60 and \$3.25 per lineal foot. — S.G.

■ **Sensibuilt**, 888/860-8009, sensibuilt.com.

## PRODUCTS

### Adjustable Shade

Patio louvers let the sun in or keep it out

Outdoor decks mean plenty of sunlight, while porches offer shade. But if those options seem too limited, consider the Solara Plus, an aluminum patio cover that can be opened or closed depending on the weather.

The aluminum louvers, which open up to 130 degrees, won't rust and shouldn't need repainting. When the cover is fully closed, the interlocking panels are completely waterproof, according to the company. Covers can be installed in two separate zones that are operated independently, either manually or with a motor and a remote control. The portion over a grill could be opened for venting, for example, while the balance protected the patio from sun.

Louvers are made from recycled aluminum and can be cleaned with soap and water. Standard colors are white, cream, and wood-toned, but the company also offers custom colors. Covers are custom-made for any patio shape,



and louvers can be installed perpendicular or parallel to the wall of the house, depending on solar orientation.

Louvers are attached to aluminum purlins called Solara rafters. The maximum distance between rafters varies depending on wind and snow loads, from 6 feet for 20-pound design loads down to 2 feet for 70-pound design loads. Standard lengths are available up to 18 feet.

Rafters, louvers, and other parts (not including the structural frame) retail for a total of between \$19 and \$25 per square foot. — S.G.

■ **Solara**, 602/388-8429, [patiocover.us](http://patiocover.us).

### Waterproof Deck

Aluminum panels replace joists

Installing a plastic drainage system isn't the only way to create a dry zone beneath an outdoor deck. DryJoist's structural aluminum planks take the place of conventional joists and provide a foundation for finish decking while simultaneously forming a waterproof barrier.

The planks — made of 6005-TS marine-grade extruded aluminum — can span up to 8 feet without any intermediate supports and can be cantilevered up to 18 inches. They're connected with joint covers that also keep out water. Decking is screwed to anchor clips, which can be installed at any point along the water channel without compromising weathertightness. The company recommends the system



be installed with a pitch of 1/8 inch per foot.

DryJoist is available in lengths of up to 24 feet, in widths of either 4 inches or 8 inches. It comes with an ivory-colored powder-coated finish, but the company says it can be painted. The aluminum components weigh about half as much as similar-size components made of wood.

A matching railing system also is available. Post connectors are screwed through the finish decking into anchor clips, which makes for a simpler installation than a conventional railing system on a wood deck. Rail posts are available in 36-inch and 42-inch heights. The system meets structural requirements of the International Building Code, the company says.

DryJoist costs about \$13 per square foot. — S.G. ❖

■ **DryJoist**, 866/595-4064, [dryjoist.com](http://dryjoist.com).