

PRODUCTS

PVC With a Twist

Multicolored for a more natural look

by Scott Gibson

Gossen's newest cellular PVC decking, WeatherReady Passport, has varying shades of color that help replicate the look of real wood grain, the company says.

Cellular PVC is infused with tiny air bubbles as it is extruded, making the decking relatively light (1½ pounds per running foot). It has working characteristics similar to wood; however, it doesn't contain wood fiber, which could absorb water or support the growth of mold.

The decking, available in London grey or Tuscan cherry, has long-lasting color protection, is resistant to scratches and stains, and won't



be attacked by insects, according to the company. It has a Class A fire rating and a lifetime warranty.

Passport comes either factory-grooved to accept hidden fasteners or in a square-edged version. No pre-drilling for fasteners is required, the company says, even close to the edge of a board.

The planks are 1 inch thick and 5½ inches wide and can be installed on 16-inch-on-center framing. They're available in lengths of 12 feet, 16 feet, and 20 feet. Color-matched fascia boards are 5/8 inch thick, in widths of 7¼ inches, 9¼ inches, and 11¼ inches. Passport retails for about \$3.25 to \$3.50 per lineal foot.

Scott Gibson is a writer in East Waterboro, Maine.

■ **Gossen Corp.**, 800/558-8984, gossencorp.com.

Greening the Deck

Way cool exterior finish

Whey, a by-product of making cheese, isn't just something for Little Miss Muffet to eat with her curds. It's also a main ingredient in the floor and furniture finishes produced by Vermont Natural Coatings, which is now expanding its product line to include an exterior coating. The company's interior finishes were named a Top 10 green building product in 2008 by *BuildingGreen* and are listed in the *GreenSpec Directory*.

Greg Hebert, business manager of the Vermont-based company, says the exterior coating will be ready for sale later this spring. It will be suitable for vertical and horizontal surfaces, including decks. The clear finish should last three years outdoors, possibly longer, says Hebert, before it needs recoating.

Developed at the University of Vermont, the product's "PolyWhey" formulation is tougher than other water-based finishes and contains no toxic binders, says Hebert. It's safe to handle and has 25 percent fewer volatile organic compounds (less than 180 grams per liter) than conventional finishes, for improved air quality.

Pricing for the exterior coating was yet to be determined at the time this article was written, but Hebert says it is a "premium" product that will cost somewhat more than standard finishes.

Vermont Natural Coatings distributes products in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region as well as California, Colorado, and other states where interest in green building products has been high. — S.G.

■ **Vermont Natural Coatings**, 802/472-8700, vermontnaturalcoatings.com

PRODUCTS

Rice Composite

Terratec combines recycled plastic and rice hulls

Mixing wood flour with recycled or virgin plastic is a familiar recipe for composite decking. Yet McFarland Cascade has opted to blend rice hulls, rather than wood, with recycled high-density polyethylene to create Terratec Naturals, its new line of decking.

Rice hulls, unlike wood, contain only trace amounts of digestible nutrients and have a high silica content, which McFarland Cascade says makes Terratec more resistant to moisture, mold, stains, and insects than conventional composites, without the introduction of chemical biocides or preservatives.

Most composite and wood decking fades over time, but the company says Terratec's rice formulation makes it more UV tolerant than other composites. Colors do fade to a lighter shade but won't turn gray.

Terratec is available in two styles: a traditional 1x6 plank that's screwed through the face and a 1x6 "archi-



tectural" version that's installed with hidden clips. Both styles come in 12-foot, 16-foot, and 20-foot lengths in three colors — cedar, redwood, and slate gray. Also available are fascia boards, railing components, and stair kits. The company recommends using its Super Deck Screw, a self-tapping fastener that pulls the deck boards tight to the framing and creates a flush countersink. Screws are available in colors to match the decking.

Terratec retails for about \$2.50 a lineal foot. — S.G. ❖

■ **McFarland Cascade**, 800/426-8430, mcfarlandcascade.com.