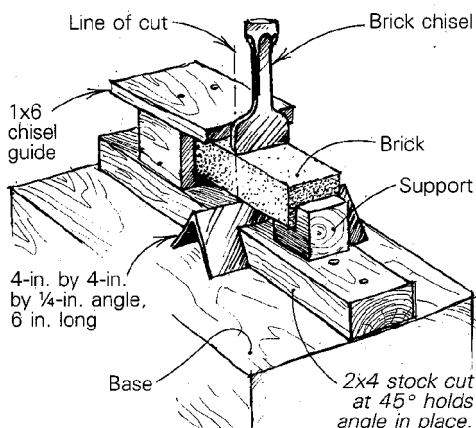


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Brick cutter

The device shown in the drawing is a simple but effective brick cutter that works by shearing a brick between a fixed angle iron and a brick chisel. It's not as fast as breaking bricks with a mason's hammer, but there will be more accurate cuts and a lot less waste. To make the cutter, file a true edge on the outside corner of a short piece of angle iron and place it on a heavy base, such as a beam off-



cut, with the outside corner facing up. Secure the angle by placing the mitered end of a 2x tight against each side.

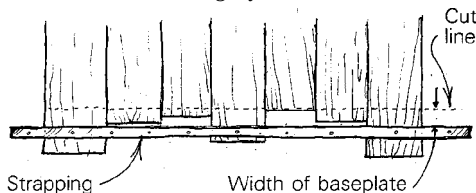
On one side of the angle, position a 1x6 up on a thick block to act as a guide for the brick chisel. Be sure to set the guide high enough to clear the thickest brick you plan to cut. Adjust its length so that when the bevel side of the brick chisel is held tight against the guide, the point of the chisel is directly over the edge of the angle iron. On the opposite side of the angle, place a support block to cradle the brick.

To use the cutter, place the brick on top of the angle with your mark centered over its edge. Position the chisel on top of the brick, bevel side tight against the guide. One or two blows with a heavy hammer should do the job. For face brick, cut the brick 1/8 in. to the waste side of the mark and clean up the exposed edge with short, controlled paring strokes of the chisel.

—Will Foster, Aberdeen, Wash.

Trimming siding

Whenever I finish a building's exterior with vertical tongue-and-groove, shiplap or rough board siding, I use the method shown below to make straight, neat cuts. Every 3 ft. or 4 ft., I leave a board long by 4 in. to 6 in. Then I



snap a chalkline about 1 3/4 in. down from my intended line of cut. This dimension is the width of my saw's baseplate from its edge to the blade. A piece of strapping tacked below this chalkline gives me a ready-made saw guide that will produce a crisp, straight line on the board ends.

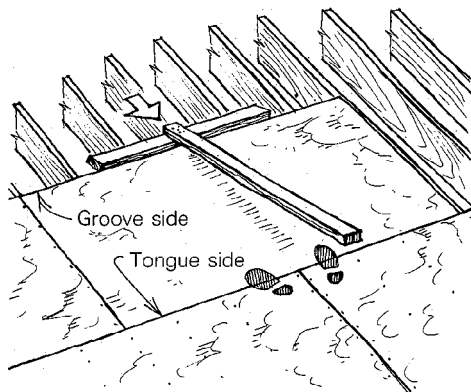
—Bruce MacDougall, Bridgewater, N. H.

Plywood persuader

Laying tongue-and-groove plywood subfloor usually calls for at least two carpenters. As one wields a sledgehammer on the sheet to be threaded, the other is easing the tongue of this sheet into the groove of the sheets in the preceding course by shifting weight from foot to foot.

The large T-square shown below can eliminate one of these jobs. It uses a 2x6 about 4 ft. long as a crossbar, and a 2x4 handle about 5 ft. long. With the plywood panel in position, run the crossbar out on the joist tops with the handle held only 12 in. off the deck. Then pull it back with a lot of force against the grooved side of the panel while keeping the balls of your feet on the seam to be threaded.

For real efficiency, try a crew of three. One spreads the glue on the joists and flops down



the plywood, the second person threads the sheets into final position with the T and tacks down the corners, and the third nails them off with a pneumatic nailer before the glue dries.

—Malcolm McDaniel, Berkeley, Calif.

Filling nail holes

I've got a system for filling nail holes that I've used for years. It takes a bit of time, but on your best work, it's worth it. I start with soft, oil-base jar putty (Color Putty, Monroe, Wis. 53566). This putty is very similar to oil-base glazing compound. I get several shades for each job, including some lighter and darker than what I think I'll be needing. I also get a small can of white, oil-base glazing compound to lighten colors, and some tubes of universal paint tinter (especially raw sienna) to modify the hues. With these materials, I can make all the shades I'll need by mixing and matching.

If the work surface is going to be stained, do it first. For best results, it should have one or more coats of clear finish, sanded lightly. Now mix a generous amount of putty to match the average color of your work. Next, mix some to match the lightest and the darkest colors of the wood. These are the base colors, or mediums. Intermixing these three will provide you

with a spectrum of shades, all related to the original bases. For a single project, I may use seven or eight shades—different colors for different parts of the grain—and it sometimes takes several tries to get it right. I fill the holes as flush as possible, and then clean around them with mineral spirits.

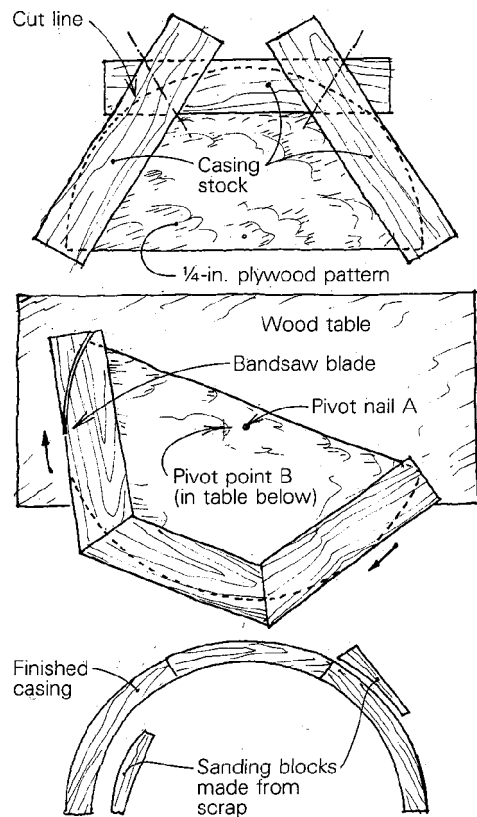
On some occasions, when the spring and summer growth rings of the wood grain meet, I've used two different colors back-to-back in the same hole.

—Byron Papa, Shriever, La.

Radiused window casings

Recently, while building a half-circle window, I needed a way to make the casing and interior stops. Instead of transferring the curves from templates onto the stock and then joining these pieces, I used a bandsaw fitted with a wood table, and a circle-cutting jig.

In this project, the interior face of the window jamb had a radius of 21 1/2 in. Since the exterior casing was to act as the outside stop, the inside radius of the casing needed to be 21 1/4 in., allowing 1/4 in. to overlap the window jamb. The casing was to be 2 in. wide, so the outside of the casing would have a radius of 23 1/4 in. I cut a half-circle with a radius of 23 1/4 in. from a piece of 1/4-in. plywood by drilling a hole near its center and fitting it over a pivot rail (A in the drawing) that was attached to the wood bandsaw table 23 1/4 in. from the blade. Oh this pattern I placed three pieces of stock, arranged to avoid short grain, and marked the necessary cuts. Once I was satisfied with the miters, I tacked them to the plywood and ran the pattern with the three pieces attached to it through the bandsaw, again from pivot A. This gave me my outside radius. I then repositioned the hole in the

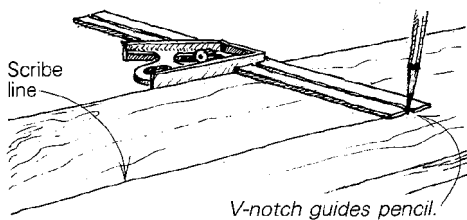


circle-cutting jig to pivot point B, a radius of 21¼ in., and ran the pattern through again. This gave me my 2-in. wide casing with the joints already fitted. I saved the waste from both cuts, and used them as sanding blocks for the inside and outside edges of the casing.

—Brian K. Shaw, Johnson, Vt.

Pencil scribing

I file a small, V-shaped notch in the end of my combination-square blade to guide the tip of my pencil when scribing straight lines for ripping to width. The point stays put as the square is moved along the edge of the work,

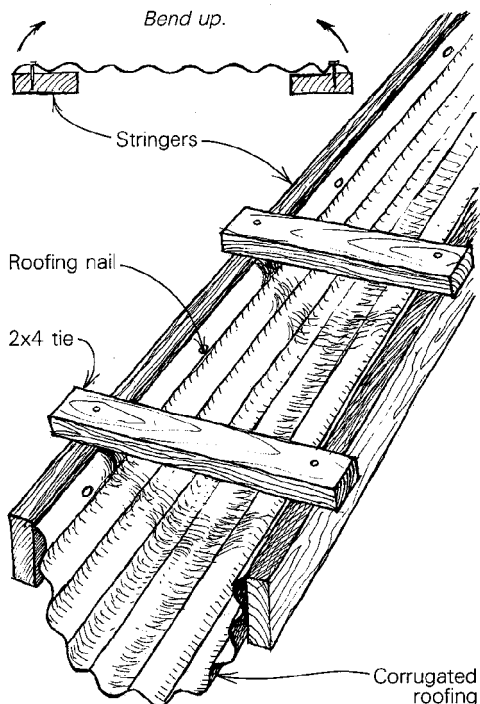


and makes a quick, accurate scribe at the width I need. —Paul Dostie, Brunswick, Maine

Corrugated concrete chute

When the ready-mix truck runs out of chute, it's easy to extend your reach with the site-built job shown below. It's made of corrugated steel roofing that has been nailed to two flat 2x6 stringers and bent into a U shape. It maintains its profile with the help of 2x4 ties nailed across the top, and it is secured to the truck chute with a length of chain. Wet concrete is mighty heavy, and I consider 2x6 stringers to be the absolute minimum. My 16-ft. chute is strung on 2x10s, but it's somewhat overbuilt.

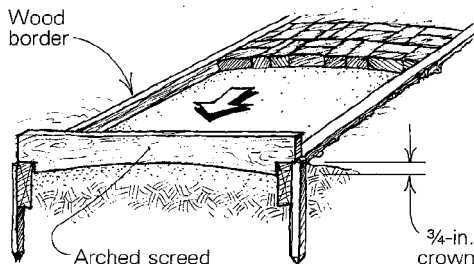
Without the 2x4 ties, the chute can be used as a slide for concrete blocks, as the corrugations eliminate much of the drag. Sure beats using a wheelbarrow. —Al Dorsa, St. Croix, V. I.



Brick-path screed

All walks, drives and patios should be constructed to ensure proper drainage. Concrete sidewalks are normally flat, but walks made of brick, tile or paving blocks should have a slight crown built into them. The crown promotes drainage, minimizing the effects of the freeze-thaw cycle, and eliminates puddling.

Before laying a brick path, I use a wood screed with a slight arch to contour the sand

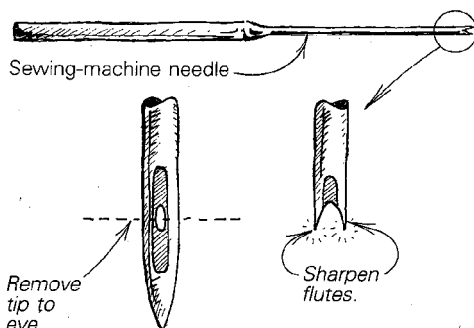


bed. The screed has a notch cut into each end, as shown above. The notches, which are ¼ in. shallower than the thickness of the brick I'm using, ride on the path's wood borders. Before I use the screed, I moisten and tamp the sand to minimize settling.

—Rod Goettlmann, Vincentown, N. J.

Little bits

To make a drill bit for setting small brads in oak or other hardwoods, grind the tip of a sewing-machine needle to the middle of the eye, as shown in the drawing, and sharpen the



resulting flutes as you would a twist drill. A pin vise makes it easy to hold the needle as you grind it. Even broken needles can be salvaged, and they bore excellent pilot holes—even in thin metal.

—Jeffrey D. Taylor, Newport, Ore.

Cutting vinyl and aluminum

I've found a much better cutting tool than my circular saw for the occasions when I have to cut vinyl or sheet metal—a 100-millimeter disc grinder. It's a lot more maneuverable than a saw, and the blade and cutline are easier to see.

For sheet vinyl, I use a masonry blade in the grinder. It actually burns away the material and produces a smooth cut every time, regardless of the outdoor temperature.

For cutting aluminum, steel roofing or flashing, I replace the masonry blade with a metal grinding disc. And this is one job when I really do wear my goggles.

—Jim Billman, Sigourney, Iowa