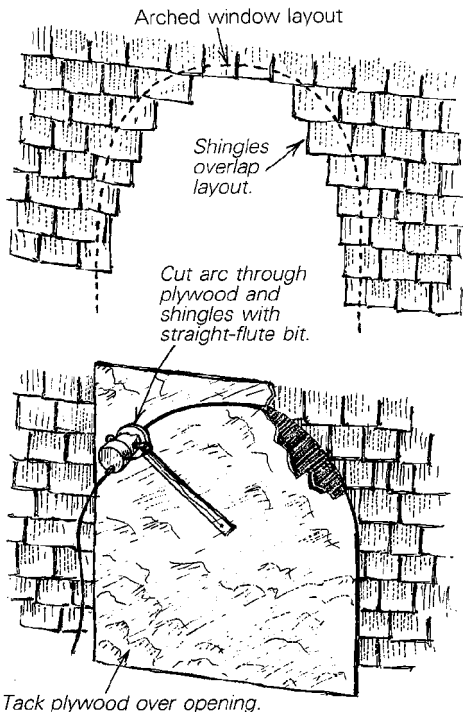


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Arched window preparation

If I'm installing half-round windows or arched windows with a consistent radius, I take care of the wall finish first. Although this method works with all sorts of siding, let's use shingles as the example. Instead of jigsawing each shingle to fit, I let the shingles overlap the rough opening. While doing this I make sure that no nails are driven within a few inches of the rough opening. This ensures an unobstructed space under the shingles for my flashing.

Next I tack a piece of thin plywood (1/4-in. plywood will do) over the area to be occupied by the window. This is my flat work surface. Then I attach a trammel to my router, and I screw it to the center point of the arch. Using a straight-flute bit, I make my first router pass deep enough to cut through the plywood. Then I continue with more passes until I've cut through the



shingles. If the pivot point is placed correctly, the opening I get will fit my window and its trim.

—David Hornstein, Arlington, Mass.

Color-coded tools

Sometimes I've got so many power tools plugged into various outlets on the job that it becomes impossible to distinguish which cord goes to which tool. To make sense of this tangle of spaghetti, I bought five different colors of tape at my electrical-supply house. Then I color-coded my tools. I marked each cord with a wrap of tape near the plug, another near the midpoint of the cord and a third next to the tool. When I got more than five tools, I started putting two colors of tape on the cords.

This simple identification strategy saves me

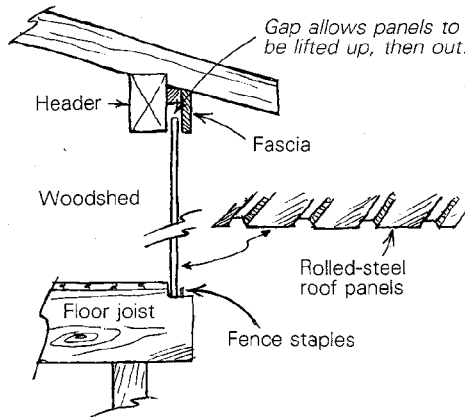
time when I need to unplug one tool and plug in another, or find a specific cord when they become entangled.

—Bill Haynes, San Francisco, Calif.

Sheltered woodshed

Our woodshed is near the driveway, where it is easy to load directly from our pickup. Unfortunately its loading bay faces into the weather, so I had to add a door to protect our firewood from rain and snow. As shown in the drawing, I used some leftover steel roofing panels that match our roof to make a removable wall.

At the top, the panels are held captive by the header and the fascia. At the bottom they are



secured by the threshold on the inside and a row of fence staples on the outside. A space at the top of the panels gives me enough room to lift them out when I need to open the shed.

I've found that the 7-ft. high by 2-ft. wide roofing panels are sturdy enough to stand up to a strong wind. Lapped in the intended manner, they haven't leaked, and the structure looks right at home next to our house.

—Ron Milner, Grass Valley, Calif.

Documenting projects

I have a simple, accurate way to document the placement of the framing, wiring and plumbing parts that go into a construction project: photographs. If I see the possibility of future remodeling, or special use for a particular wall (such as carrying a row of cabinets), I photograph the wall before the drywall installation. If possible, I stretch a tape measure in a corner of the photo to give me a scale. When excavation is part of the job, I take pictures of the water lines, septic systems and other underground utilities.

Over the years I have saved many hours and avoided a lot of mistakes by referring to my photo file. When I'm done with a job I leave the photos with the owners in a package that includes the plans of their projects. I retain the negatives in my file.

—Howard Furst, Bellingham, Wash.

Locating studs

If you need to locate a stud in a stick-framed wall, remember that most electricians are right-handed. Find an outlet, and tap the wall directly to its left. The odds are in your favor that the stud will be there, and you can measure away from it in 16-in. increments to find other studs.

—Art McAfee, Edmonton, Alta.

Heavy-duty paint scraper

I had been puzzling for some time over a safe and efficient way to remove the peeling paint from our propane tank, when our dog solved the problem for me. The dog had carried off the horse's curry comb, and left it a few feet from the tank. As I picked it up, it crossed my mind



that it might make a good scraper. It did. In five minutes, I had removed all the loose paint from the tank. Since then I've used the curry comb as a scraper on other repainting projects. I've found it to be faster than ordinary scrapers, and its handle makes it easier to hold without tiring.

—Betty Lartius, Ames, Iowa