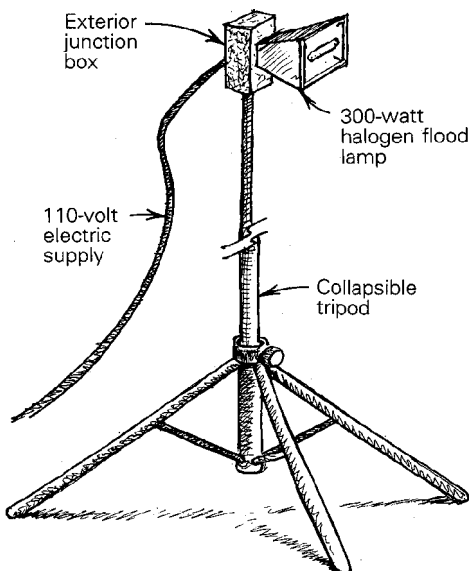


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

A better work light

I believe that you can't do good work if you can't see what you're doing, so I built the job light shown below to illuminate my work area. It's made up of a heavy-duty aluminum tripod (the kind used to support public address speakers) and an exterior 300-watt halogen flood lamp. I discovered that the knuckle at



the back of the lamp fixture would fit into an exterior junction box, and that the junction box would slip over the top of the tripod shaft. The telescoping shaft extends to 72 in., and it rotates, allowing me to easily direct the light in any direction.

The tripod base is 3-ft. wide, and this generous span is the key to the success of this system. I've bumped into it many times, but not once have I knocked it over.

—Michael J. Geier, Hackensack, N. J.

Substitute nail set

I've found that a 3-in. powder-actuated fastener makes a good substitute for a nail set. These nails are made to withstand the shock of being driven by a gunpowder charge into concrete, and so far I haven't been able to bend one using it as a nailset. They have a plastic collar on them that makes them easy to hold, and they're cheap enough so that I don't mind if they get misplaced. Before I use one for this purpose, I file its tip flat. And to be on the safe side, I wear eye protection when I'm pounding on it.

—Ross Elliott, Lanark, Ont.

Plastic laminate on two sides

To apply plastic laminate on both faces of a cabinet door, you can save yourself some time by doing them simultaneously. Drill a hole at each corner of the door, 1 in. to 2 in. from the edges and drive a small wood screw a few turns into each hole. Apply contact cement to

the side with screws, then turn it over so that the door is supported on the screw feet. Apply cement to the other side of the door, and to the laminated pieces. When the cement is tacky, apply the laminate to the side without the screws. Flip the door, take out the screws, laminate the second side and you're ready to finish the edges with a trim bit in a router.

—Roy T. Higa, Honolulu, Hi.

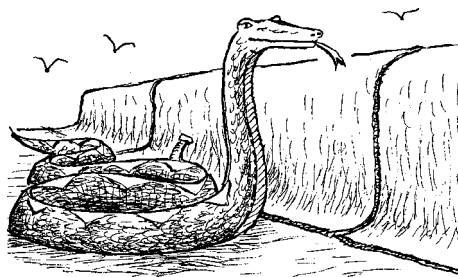
Dial-a-reptile

I work for a small architectural office in Boston that does work along the seashore. We sometimes design buildings with low-pitched roofs. When we do, we specify elastomeric membrane roofing because of its good performance overall. It comes in big black rubbery sheets.

Recently we were surprised to see a small rectangular hole in one of our newly installed roofs. It was located next to a seam in the roof where two pieces of membrane had been glued together. We called a few manufacturer's reps, figuring it was some kind of a defect, and found out much to our surprise that it was just another seagull attack.

As it turns out, seagulls are attracted to newly installed membrane roofs. Perhaps the black color and elastic consistency reminds them of whale or fish skin. The gulls like to pick at the seams, especially where the softer flashing sheets overlap the field sheets. After about four or five days, the flashing material cures to its final hardness and the gulls leave it alone.

If you are planning to install an elastomeric roof, take advantage of the seagulls' phobias. They hate snakes. Synthetic rubber snakes are



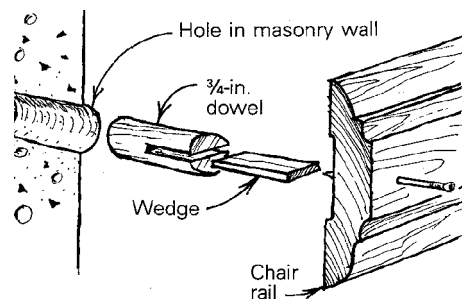
available at most joke shops. Even better are the big inflatable jobs (try the Nature Company, P.O. Box 2310, Berkeley, Calif. 94702). You have to weight them down, but they look pretty lifelike wiggling in the breeze. If you can't get a snake, we were told that an owl might also work.

—William F. Roslansky, Cambridge, Mass.

Moldings on masonry walls

The drawing above right illustrates the method that I use to apply trim pieces, such as chair railings, to a concrete, brick or block wall. I do it this way because it allows me to use finish nails to secure the work to the wall. Then the nail holes can easily be filled to match a natural or stained finish.

First I drive nails into the railing so that their tips just begin to emerge on the backside. Then I hold the railing in place on the wall and drive the nails far enough to make marks. Next I drill 3/4-in. holes in the mason-



ry, using the nail marks as centerpoints. I fill each hole with a piece of 3/4-in. dowel that has been kerfed on one end with a bandsaw. If I'm working on a concrete block wall with open cells, I make sure that the dowel is long enough to bear against the far inside wall of the block.

Once the dowels are wedged in place and trimmed flush with the wall, I affix the railing to the wall by driving the nails into the dowels.

—Jim Stuart, Covina, Calif.

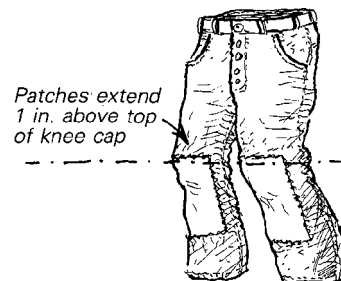
Drywall pattern for complex cuts

Sometimes a piece of drywall has to take on a rather contorted shape to fit a complicated wall or ceiling. Add some cutouts for light fixtures, switches or outlets and you've got a piece that represents a good hunk of time and attention. When I'm faced with laying out such a piece, I use a pattern made of 1/2-in. rigid foam insulation. This material comes in lightweight 4x8 sheets, so lifting it into place to check alignment is easy. To mark fixtures, I simply push nails through the foam to locate the corners of electric boxes. Then I lay the insulation atop a piece of drywall and tap on the nails to transfer the corner marks to the drywall. If I need to make cutouts in the foam, I save them so that I can use sealing tape to put the foam board back together and use it for insulation.

—Jim Klahn, Seattle, Wash.

Padded work pants

As a general contractor, my clothes take a lot of abuse over the course of a day. To get more use out of a new pair of pants, my wife



stitches large padded patches to the knees, as shown in the drawing above. This also makes me much more comfortable when I'm kneeling on cold, damp concrete floors.

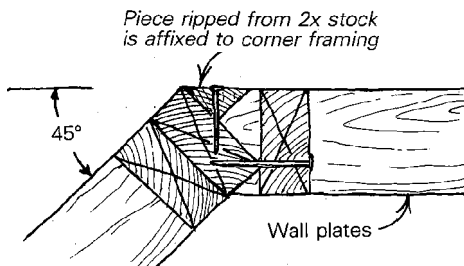
She uses bonded batting (used for quilts) as the padding, and twill for the patch. Two 8-in. by 13-in. patches cover padding that measures 7 1/2 in. by 12 1/2 in. She centers the padding on the patch, folds the sides of the

patch and straight-stitches perimeter edging. Then she rips out the inseams of the legs to make it easy to sew on the patches. The patches are positioned so that they extend about an inch above the kneecap, and they are attached to the pants with a zigzag stitch.

—Paul Arena, Rome, N. Y.

Another corner-framing method

In past issues (*FHB* #22 and #26), readers have sent in their methods for stick framing a corner that needs drywall backing. Both techniques work, but they require a bandsaw or a



couple of passes on a 10-in. table saw in order to rip filler pieces made out of 4x4s. The illustration above shows how I use a 2x ripping made on a single pass on the table saw to accomplish the same thing.

—Brian Erdek, Califon, N. J.

Mudbucket helpers

Recently I came up shorthanded on a job site where we had planned to lay a 3/4-in. T&G plywood deck. Knowing this can be a frustrating job even with help, I was loathe to start it by myself. But there was no other work to do. Spying a trio of full joint-compound buckets, I decided to go ahead and put down some decking single-handedly. After nailing down the first row, I used the buckets as weights to hold down the tongues of the second row as I drove sheets home with a 2x4 and a sledge. This method worked so well that I got the entire deck laid before my tardy helpers arrived.

—Dennis Darrah, Montpelier, Vt.

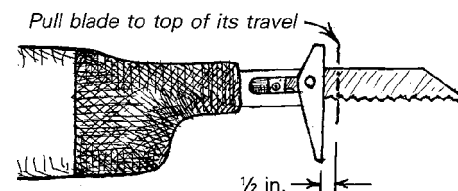
Removing drywall

If you've ever had to slug it out with a wall to remove drywall for a remodeling project, you can appreciate how tedious it is. Faced with this problem on a recent job, I came up with the following method to cut the drywall into manageable chunks.

As shown in the drawing at the right, I affixed an old, general purpose wood-cutting blade to my reciprocating saw (after unplugging it, of course). Then I pulled the saw's drive shaft outward, to the limit of its travel, and marked a cutline on the blade 1/2 in. from the shoe. This represented the thickness of the drywall I was removing. Next I used a

pair of cable pliers to cut the blade.

In use, I simply held the saw against the wall with its shoe flush against the surface. As I moved it up and down the wall, it punched a



series of closely spaced holes in the drywall. Studs didn't interfere—the saw just passed right over them. In no time I had a tidy pile of ex-walls, without a cloud of asphyxiating dust.

—Patrick C. Perry, Lakewood, Colo.

Stain control

If you've got a wood-staining job coming up, consider using a pad painter to apply the stain with. The foam pad holds more stain than a brush, and the flow can be controlled by the amount of pressure that you apply. I have found that with a little practice, I can almost eliminate the need for wiping the stain with a rag.

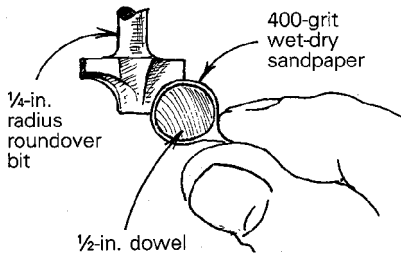
I use an old plastic dishwashing-soap bottle to deliver stain to the pad. It has a pop-up cap so it's easy to close, thereby eliminating the

chance of a major spill. To keep the stain "stirred," I shake the bottle now and then.

—Emily Neal, Alfred Station, N. Y.

Sharpening roundover bits

I found a quick and easy method for sharpening high-speed steel router bits when I was doing some 1/4-in. radius roundovers. I didn't have the appropriate stone or file to sharpen the bit, so I took some 400-grit wet-dry sandpaper and wrapped it around a 1/2-in. dowel. By pulling the paper taut and holding it between my thumb and forefinger, as shown in the drawing below, I was able to use the paper like a file to quickly sharpen the bit. Now I



keep an assortment of short lengths of dowel and 400- to 600-grit paper on hand to touch up all my concave bits. You can also use sandpaper wrapped around a wood block as

a sharpening-stone substitute for honing chisels, knives and plane irons.

—Eric Urani, Adah, Pa.

Chalk lines on wet concrete

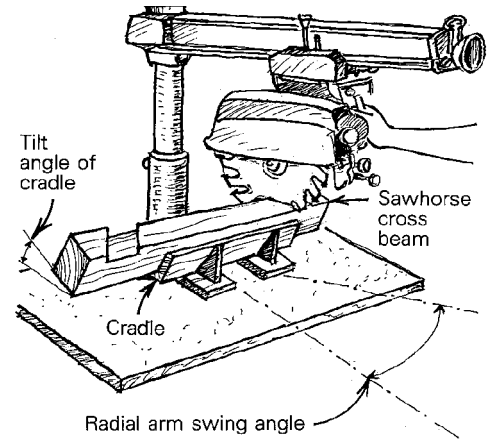
What do you do when you're ready to start snapping chalk lines for the walls on a new slab, but the slab is wet and more rain is on the way? You could answer, "Head for the nearest coffee shop." But that's not it.

I go to the local rental yard and get a "weed burner." It's simply a 5-gal. propane tank with a 6-ft. hose and a torch nozzle. Next, I use the burner to dry a 6-in. wide path on the slab in the general area of a wall. Then I snap the wall lines and spray them with quick-drying lacquer (it comes in an aerosol can). After a couple of minutes the line is there to stay, regardless of rain or constant sweeping.

—Gil Meador, Jacksonville, Ore.

Sawhorse jig

There's a guy in my neighborhood who builds wooden mason's trestles similar to the sawhorses featured in Tom Law's article in *FHB* #43. To speed up the cutting of the gains that house the legs, he uses a wobble-dado mounted on a radial-arm saw, along with the cradle setup shown in the drawing (top right). The cradle fits on the table of a radial-arm saw, and its tilt determines the splay of the legs in



one direction while the swing of the saw determines the splay in the other direction.

—Scott McBride, Irvington, N. Y.

Mixmaster

If you are about a week away from using a can of paint that's been sitting around long enough for the solids to settle, put it in the back of your car or truck. Make sure the lid is on tight, turn the can upside down, and let the motion of the road mix the paint as you drive.

—Eric Olsen, El Cerrito, Calif.