

# PRODUCTS

## Bamboo Decking

From renewable giant grasses

by Scott Gibson

**S**an Diego-based Cali Bamboo is now offering bamboo decking in 8-foot-long planks that are guaranteed for 25 years against rot and insect damage.

BamDeck boards are made from five-year-old organically grown moso bamboo, a giant bamboo species that can reach diameters of 7 inches and heights of 80 feet. Fibers are compressed and intertwined to form what the company calls a “fossilized” bamboo block, which is then milled into boards.

Bamboo decking has the density, strength, and durability of Brazilian ipe, according to the company, and it’s stronger than conventional decking choices such as redwood, cedar, and pressure-treated material. BamDeck is termite resistant and eligible for points under the LEED for Homes rating system. It also meets California class A fire standards.

Virtually unknown in the U.S. a decade ago, bamboo is now widely available as flooring, countertops, plywood, and a variety of other products. The plant is technically a



grass, not a wood, and it can be harvested in five years or less, compared with the decades it takes to bring a hardwood tree to maturity. Plus, it can be harvested regularly without harming the root system. As a result, bamboo is viewed as an easily renewable resource.

Cali Bamboo’s decking is 5½ inches wide and .80 inch thick and is manufactured with a groove in the center of each edge that accommodates a hidden fastener. It sells for \$3.65 a linear foot with a minimum order of 48 feet; it also comes in 6-foot long boards at \$3.33 a linear foot.

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

■ **Cali Bamboo**, 888/788-2254, calibamboo.com.

## Copper Post Caps

Borrowing an idea from the auto industry

**D**o your customers ask about copper post caps for their new decks and fences but balk at the price? Then take a look at the plated caps made by Copper Bella.

The auto industry has been chrome-plating plastic trim pieces for a number of years, and that’s the same technology Copper Bella has put to use for its line of roof finials, vents, gutter accessories, and post caps. The company uses a thermoplastic that was developed by BASF to resist weather embrittlement and UV degradation. The plastic is then plated with the same grade of copper used in sheet metal applications.



The injected molded parts are inherently scratch and dent resistant, and the manufacturing process makes it possible to add details that would be very expensive to create conventionally with sheet material, according to the company.

In addition to the copper-plated caps, Copper Bella offers caps in wrought-iron black, white, weathered-wood gray, and bronze metallic finishes.

A 4-inch ball post cap with either a hexagonal or rounded spire sells for about \$30, and a plain 4-inch ball-top cap sells for about \$24. Prices for any of the noncopper finishes are lower. — S.G.

■ **Copper Bella**, 918/245-1140, copperbella.com.

### Weathertight Decks

Water collection makes dry, usable space below

**D**eck and railing giant Trex has teamed up with Colorado-based Dri-Deck Enterprises to market a deck drainage system called Trex RainEscape, which has been available since April. The system is designed to create usable space beneath an outdoor deck — dry enough for a finished ceiling, as well as lights, ceiling fans, and other amenities. The licensing agreement should give RainEscape a much larger marketing base than it's had in the past.

A RainEscape kit consists of down spouts, drainage sheets in 16-foot and 12-foot lengths, waterproof caulk, and butyl waterproof tape. Installation is fairly simple. Down spouts are installed at the end of each joist bay, followed by a drainage sheet on top of the joists that channels water to the down spouts. Decking is installed on top of the drainage sheets.



Rain and snow melt that falls through gaps between deck boards is picked up by the drainage sheets. The water flows to the down spouts and is then routed to gutters and leaders. Trex says one advantage of the system is that

it protects deck framing from water damage, something below-joist systems do not. It's also easy to install, requiring only a utility knife, a staple gun, and a caulk gun.

The company says materials retail for between \$4 and \$5 per square foot and the installed cost is around \$10 to \$15 per square foot. Detailed installation instructions are available at [rainscape.com](http://rainscape.com). — S.G.

■ **Trex**, 800/289-8739, [trex.com](http://trex.com).

### Column Wrap

Dress up posts for less

**N**ew unassembled column wraps from Fypon in plain economy styles add lower-priced options — starting at less than \$140 per column — to the company's line of partially assembled column wraps. Column panels and trim pieces are made from cellular PVC, a foamed plastic that's impervious to water and insect damage.

Kits are shipped flat with panels, base, cap, nailing blocks, and installation cleats in one box. The panels are designed to be assembled around a wood or steel structural deck or porch post, a process that should take a builder less than 25 minutes, Fypon says.

Because they don't actually touch the support posts,



the columns aren't susceptible to damage or movement if the underlying post twists (as pressure-treated posts have been known to do). And the built-in wiggle room allows the columns to be lined up perfectly along the front of a porch or deck even when the structural posts are a little off.

The new economy kits come in more limited styles than the originals. Lengths run from 72 inches to 144 inches (a special order), and widths come in 6 inches, 8 inches, 10 inches, and 12 inches. Prices vary according to the length, width, and style. — S.G.

■ **Fypon**, 800/446-3040, [fypon.com](http://fypon.com).

### Coating for Weathered Decks

Roll-on polymer said to seal cracks and splinters

For those customers who want to replace an old wooden deck but can't afford it just yet, there's a product on the market that's claimed to make an old deck board look almost like a new composite one. It could open up a sideline to an existing deck business.

UDF-21 is a skid-resistant, breathable composite of acrylic polymers, according to the manufacturer. It's claimed to repel liquid water, while allowing water from inside the board to evaporate. UDF-21 applies with a ¾-inch-knap roller, although you may need to cut in the board edges with a brush first. The resulting finish should be thick — 10 to 14 mils. It's claimed to fill in checks and lock down splinters. It cleans up with water and can be tinted with the addition of a gallon of latex/acrylic paint to 2½ gallons of UDF-21.

The manufacturer claims that the first coating should last at least four or five years. If a second coat is added within two years, the company will extend the material replacement warranty to 10 years from the original application. Cost should be around \$1.15 per square foot. — *Andy Engel*

■ **Gulf Synthetics**, 678/584-9309,  
gulfsynthetics.com ❖

