



handsOn

A newsletter of the
Boston Building Materials Co-op and
the Building Materials Resource Center

spring 2008

Women's Night Set for June 3

John Tarantino



Carpenter Becky Pierce, shown at Women's Night 2006, will be back again this year.

Women homeowners, as well as women interested in the building trades, can bring their questions about home maintenance and renovation projects to Women's Night at the Building Materials Resource Center on Tuesday, June 3. The event will take place from 5:30–7:00 p.m. at the BMRC store at 100 Terrace Street.

Those who attend can speak one-on-one with a variety of experts, all of whom are women: a general contractor; landscaper; Women in the Building Trades representative; kitchen, window, and door specialist; attorney; carpenter; electrician; architect; plumber; pest management specialist; holistic design and space planner; general contractor; home safety specialist; HomeWorks financing coordinator; and window repair contractor.

Free refreshments and childcare will be provided. The biannual event drew more than 100 attendees in 2006. If you'd like to attend, RSVP to 617-447-8917, ext. 235, or deb@bbmc.com.

BMRC Summer Hours

Effective June 1

Monday through Saturday, 9:00–4:30
(Closing earlier on Thursdays, open later on Saturdays)

Put Your Best Foot Forward with Ladder Safety

When the home repair you have in mind is out of arm's reach, chances are you will rely on a ladder to get the job done. But homeowners and contractors alike should keep in mind that ladder-related accidents are a major cause of injury. The following tips will help you stay safe when you're up there.

Use the right ladder for the job. Make sure it is tall enough to allow you to follow the "belt buckle rule" while working (see page 6). Each ladder has a weight rating, shown on the sticker on the side rail, indicating how many pounds it will support. This includes the weight of the person climbing, plus any tools and supplies. Light-duty ladders for household use are rated for only 200 pounds. Other types are commercial

(225 pounds), industrial (250 pounds), and heavy-duty industrial (375 pounds).

Inspect your ladder first, especially if it's been a few months or years since you've used it. Are the rungs or steps free of dirt, grease, or other contaminants that could cause you to slip? If it's a stepladder, is the spreader bar working right? If it's an extension ladder, are the non-skid safety feet in place, and does the rope and pulley system work correctly? Safety consultant Peter Kuchinsky offers an inspection checklist (see page 6) that includes these items, plus rails, label, pail shelf, braces, rivets, rung locks, hardware, and overall structural condition. Is anything loose, missing, corroded, or damaged? If repairs are

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SELECT PRODUCTS AVAILABLE AT THE CO-OP

New countertop options

Co-op members have several new choices for countertops through a partnership with Aggregate Designs.

Concrete countertops and sink basins are becoming popular because of their wide variety of colors, textures, and styles and because of their eco-friendly properties—no volatile organic compounds (VOCs), locally quarried ingredients, fly ash (a waste product) used in the concrete, and local manufacturing that involves little waste. Another new option is **Richlite**, a paper-based countertop made from pulp that is harvested from certified managed forests. Wood countertops are also available, including **Plyboo**, a laminated bamboo product. Recycled, and recyclable, **stainless steel** is another option.

In addition to these new choices, the Co-op sells IceStone, a countertop made from recycled glass in a cement matrix; granite, soapstone, and other stone products through a partnership with Aldrich Stone and Gerrity Stone; and Corian and laminate countertops in hundreds of colors.



Vanity top made of concrete

Unfinished cabinetry now in maple

Young Furniture, a supplier of unfinished cabinetry, has now added red maple to the pine and poplar cabinets available at the Co-op for many years. Maple is the same price as poplar, and an option of FSC-certified wood (Forest Stewardship Council) is available for an additional charge. The FSC maple expands the Co-op's selection of earth-friendly cabinetry choices.



This Young Furniture maple hutch was part of the Co-op's display at the Down:2:Earth show at the Hynes Convention Center in March.

Energy-saving floodlights

The weather is getting warmer, and porches, decks, and yards have come alive with activity. Now you can light your outdoor get-togethers with compact fluorescent floodlights that will withstand the elements while saving electricity. Greenlite 23-watt bulbs give light equivalent to a 100-watt incandescent bulb and last five times longer—an estimated 10,000 hours. (\$8.00)



Reduce your water bill with a rain barrel

Whether you're a casual gardener or a serious sower of seeds, you know the importance of adequate watering. A rain barrel will help you save money on your water bill by collecting rain-water to use for your garden, lawn, composter, or car

washing. Our barrels are repurposed (used previously for food products such as fruit juice) and outfitted with a valve that fits a standard garden hose. Place the barrel under your downspout to collect water during a rainstorm and use it later for your plants. You can also opt for an overflow fitting at the top of the barrel to direct water away from your foundation after the barrel is full or to connect to a second barrel. (\$50, optional overflow fitting \$10)

Home compost bins

Home composters will turn your orange rinds, eggshells, leaves, grass clippings, and more into nourishing compost for your garden. Choose from two different types: The Earth Machine is made of rigid plastic (50% recycled content) and has a sliding door at the bottom to remove finished compost, and the Brave New Composter is made from flexible material (100% recycled content) and can be configured in two different diameters. Either way, you will reduce your household waste and help your garden, bushes, or lawn grow without artificial fertilizers. If you've been bitten

Mayor's Green Business Award

The Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center were among the businesses recognized this spring with one of Mayor Thomas M. Menino's 2008 Green Business Awards.



Mayor Thomas Menino presented a Green Business Award to Matthew St. Onge on April 17.

Co-op member Maggie Cohn nominated the organizations. "I've been shopping at the BBMC since it was on Green Street in JP, before it landed on Terrace Street," said Maggie, a Mission Hill resident. "Over time, I've watched it become "greener"—developing the BMRC, carrying more recycled products, as well as composters and water barrels, so I thought it

merited recognition." Maggie's nomination also cited the Co-op's focus on helping members with energy conservation and the environmental benefits of donating reusable materials to the Resource Center rather than having them become needless waste.

The awards were given to businesses in Boston that demonstrate extraordinary performance related to sustainable environmental practices such as water conservation, solid waste reduction, the promotion of alternative transit, energy conservation, or use of renewable energy.

Saying he wanted to turn "Beantown into Greentown," Mayor Menino congratulated the winners at an April 17 award ceremony. "I hope that all other residents and businesses will follow your lead," he said. "While climate change is a global problem, we all can take local action to combat its effects. I thank you for your efforts and dedication to improving our city."

Other Green Business Award winners are the Boston Children's Museum, Boston Properties, Costa Fruit and Produce, EarthWorks, EnerNOC, Goody Clancy, Hines, Mass. Energy Consumers Alliance, Staples, Suffolk University, and Taranta Restaurant.

by the composting bug, you can learn more by picking up a copy of the *Rodale Book of Composting*, a comprehensive reference. (*Compost bin \$35, book \$13.56*)

Rent a watt meter

How much electricity does your fridge or DVD player really use? Find out by renting a watt meter from the Co-op. The meter is a simple device that plugs into a wall outlet; an appliance can then be plugged into it. The resulting readings will help identify opportunities for energy conservation. (*\$7 per week with \$30 refundable deposit*)

Freestyle flooring

The flooring you've seen in the Co-op's showroom is now available to members. Made of 78% recycled vinyl and carpet, the interlocking tiles can be installed without adhesive. Many styles and colors are available in 18¹/₄" x 18¹/₄" tiles; check them out at www.freestyleflooring.com. (*\$6 per square foot plus freight*)

Prices include the member discount and are subject to change without notice.

Disposal of Fluorescent Bulbs

We know that using compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) instead of incandescent bulbs saves energy. However, CFLs do have an environmental downside—they are made with small amounts of mercury. That raises the question of how to best dispose of them when they burn out. CFLs should be brought to household hazardous waste collections.



Boston residents can bring them to UMass on June 14 or the West Roxbury Public Works Yard on June 28. Other municipalities have drop-off days and locations listed on their Web sites. Handle bulbs with care; if they break, the mercury will be released.

Volunteer Design/Build Group Helps with Warehouse Improvements

You may have noticed some changes in the Building Materials Resource Center warehouse recently. A new lighting area has been opened to better showcase the many light fixtures in stock. Tile is now displayed on racks with a sample piece affixed to the top of each box, making it easier to see the different styles available without rummaging around.

The impetus for many of these changes is a partnership with Archventures, an all-volunteer design/build collaborative that seeks to make buildings user-friendly for Boston nonprofits. Volunteers from Archventures conducted a building usability survey and visited the warehouse on a busy Saturday this winter to see how the space was being used. The survey results and observations led to a number of recommendations, covering display of materials, lighting, heating and cooling, signage, and more. While some improvements have already been made, the process is ongoing.

“Numerous nonprofits don’t have the financial capability to immediately address architectural or environmental concerns within their own working space,” said Josh Rucker, Archventures project manager. “One question we pose is, ‘If it could have been done better originally, why not strive to make it so?’ As a result, a nonprofit may operate more efficiently within a more welcoming working environment.”

Wayfinding, stock organization, and energy efficiency are the three areas that Archventures identified as priorities to address at BMRC. As a next step, efforts will be focused on making the front entry area more user-friendly. Customers entering now find themselves immediately face-to-face with inventory. “By providing a designated entrance area free of inventory and with information about BMRC membership, customers can orient themselves and decide how to go about shopping,” said Josh. “During the next couple of months we will sit down together to brainstorm some issues that both the customers and staff face with the front entry area, then develop some potential solutions.”

A challenge with stock organization is that each product at the Resource Center is unique, making it difficult for customers to shop efficiently because they must sort through individual

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Resource Center News

Lead Paint: Still a Risk for Kids

Recent news coverage about lead paint on imported toys serves as a reminder of the risks to children from the lead paint that remains in many older homes in the Boston area. Lead poisoning can result when old paint cracks and peels, creating dust that gets into children’s bodies when they put hands or toys in their mouths. Much deleading work has been left undone because the cost has been a major barrier.

Fortunately, financial help is available in the form of low-cost financing from the state’s Get the Lead Out

program. City of Boston HomeWorks grants can also be used for deleading work. What’s more, a state tax credit of up to \$1,500 is available when the work is completed. To reduce costs further, homeowners can receive free training to do low-risk and moderate-risk deleading work themselves (though high-risk deleading must be performed by a licensed deleading contractor.)

For more information, call the state’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 1-800-532-9571 or visit www.mass.gov/dph/clppp.

Hats Off to Referring Contractors

The Building Materials Resource Center salutes all those contractors who refer their clients to us for donations of materials being removed or left over during renovations. Although the client goes on record as the

official donor, we know that many of them wouldn’t have found us without a word from their builder. A tip of the hard hat to all of you!



Imagination and Adaptation Make a BMRC Wall Unit a Perfect Fit

With a little imagination and some help from her dad, Nadine Jackson adapted a large wall unit from the Building Materials Resource Center so that it provides some attractive and needed storage in her cozy Jamaica Plain condominium.

Since she bought her home in 2006, Nadine has added lighting, enlarged a pass-through between kitchen and dining room, and remodeled the bathroom. When it came time to look for shelving for the dining area, she decided to check out the Resource Center, which she heard about at an event sponsored by the Boston Home Center.

Nadine was already convinced of the advantages of reuse. "Often, older items will be better quality than things you can buy elsewhere," she said. "I like classic styles and solid wood."



Nadine Jackson adapted a large wall unit to fit in her small condo.

As she prepared for the project, she did some heavy-duty comparison shopping, checking out traditional home supply stores and Craigslist as well as the Resource Center. "I came in several times to see what was available," she said. "I wasn't thinking of a wall unit at first, but I really like the fact that it is solid wood. That can be hard to find," she said. "My dad is a contractor, and he appreciates the quality and value of the materials."

The wall unit was originally designed for a larger space, with a center span that allowed for a couch to be placed between the two side sections. To fit it in Nadine's home, the center span was reduced to about two feet. That left some extra wood from the shelves that had been shortened, which Nadine's dad used to build additional shelves in that space.

The Resource Center's changing array of materials continues to fuel Nadine's imagination for whatever her next project might be. "It's interesting to see all the materials and think about what you might be able to use," she said.

Boston Sports Raffle Raises Funds to Support the Resource Center

Approximately \$4,000 was raised this spring through the Boston Sports Raffle, a benefit for the Building Materials Resource Center and Mission Hill Main Streets, which promotes the revitalization of the Mission Hill commercial district. Winners were drawn on April 23.

Edward Rose of Rochester, Mass., won the grand prize: a pair of tickets to see the Celtics play in the second game of the NBA Eastern Conference finals. Tickets were donated by Boston Building Materials Co-op contractor Drywall Plus. In addition, Red Sox tickets contributed by the Red Sox Foundation were won by Resource Center members Lois Statlender of Brookline and James Washington of Dorchester, by former Mission Hill resident Glen Olhund, now of New Hampshire, and by current Hill resident Judy Weldon.

Announcing Greenbuild 2008

The Building Materials Resource Center is a bio-regional partner of the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild 2008 nationwide conference, to be held in Boston November 19–21. With the theme "Revolutionary Green: Innovations for Global Sustainability," the conference will feature Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu as keynote speaker. The conference will bring together green building professionals from the movement's diverse specialties. For details, visit www.greenbuildexpo.org.

Ladder Safety *continued from page 1*

needed, *don't improvise*—use only the manufacturer's replacement parts. It's better to spend a few extra dollars than to risk possible lifelong consequences from serious injury.

Set it up right. The area where the ladder is placed should be clean and free of conditions that might cause it to slip. To make sure the ladder is placed at a safe angle, use the "four to one rule" specified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Imagine a rope in a vertical line starting at the top support of the ladder and dropping straight to the ground. Now imagine a horizontal line from the bottom end of that rope to the foot of the ladder.

That horizontal distance should be one-fourth of the ladder's working length. Plus, you should never try to reposition a ladder while you're on it by "walking" it; climb down to make any needed adjustments.

Climb with the "three point rule" in mind. Two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot, should be in contact with the ladder at all times.

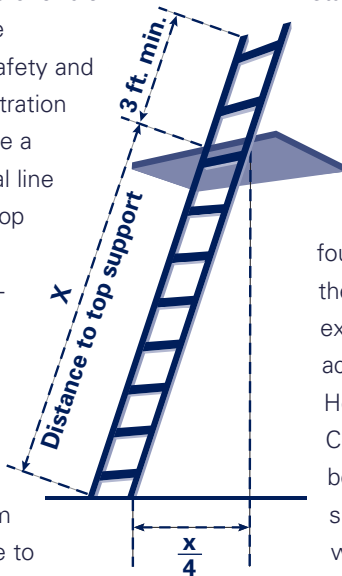
That means you shouldn't climb while holding supplies in one of your hands. Use a tool belt or hoist your supplies up with a bucket and rope. Climb slowly and carefully while keeping your face, not your back, to the ladder.

Follow the "belt buckle rule" to keep from climbing too high or leaning out too far to the side. If you stand at or below the highest safe standing level

(that's the second rung from the top for a stepladder and the fourth rung from the top for an extension ladder, according to the Home Safety Council), your belt buckle should always be within the area of the ladder—

never over the top or out beyond the side. Don't sit on a rung or straddle a stepladder.

Use common-sense caution. Avoid climbing a ladder in rain, windy conditions, or when there is risk of lightning. If you become dizzy or disoriented from the height, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and wait for the feeling to pass—then climb down slowly.



Open House Welcomes Architects and Contractors

Sales rep Tom Evans, left, explained the features of Windsor windows to Co-op member John Battiste at an April 10 open house for architects, contractors, and real estate professionals. This new line of windows and doors, along with new options for earth-friendly cabinetry, were the focus of the evening.

Beware of power lines.

Aluminum ladders conduct electricity. A fiberglass ladder should be used when live electrical wiring is nearby.

Store it right when done.

Hang your ladder on sturdy hooks to prevent decay and accidental damage.

Peter Kuchinsky's ladder inspection checklist is available at http://event.on24.com/event/96/50/3/rt/1/documents/player_docanchr_2/gm6407ldrinspectionform.pdf. A free Web seminar on ladder safety, from which much of this information is drawn, is available on the Journal of Light Construction Web site, www.jlconline.com.

Window Sale June 1 - 30

Your Window of Opportunity



Save money now, and save energy during the next heating season!

From June 1–30, take 5% off the price of all new replacement windows from the BBMC. This includes three types of Harvey windows (vinyl Classic and Slimline, and wood Majesty) as well as wood windows from Boston Sash and clad wood windows from Windsor. And, we can install them for you.

Design/Build Group Helps with Warehouse Improvements

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items. Providing more information about specific products or making products more accessible will help customers to quickly focus their shopping. In the area of energy efficiency, suggestions include adding insulation to existing exterior walls and ceilings and adding skylights to bring natural daylight deeper into the warehouse space, reducing the need for artificial lighting and heating during the day.

Improvements made as part of the process will not only help the Resource Center use its building better, but will also serve as a demonstration to others. "Those who shop or work at the BMRC tend to be directly linked with constructing buildings or spaces in some shape or form," said Josh. "Exposing members of the BMRC to a more well-utilized space can help further encourage others to design and construct better with the user in mind."



Students See the Co-op at Work

Co-op staff member Pernell Jackson demonstrated the first step in making a rain barrel to a group of kindergarten and first-grade students from the Mission Hill School. The students and their teachers visited the Co-op in February as part of a learning series about the world of work.



Take Me Out to the Co-op

For several years, the Co-op has sponsored Regan Youth League teams in Jamaica Plain, and the league baseball shirts displayed on our wall have drawn many comments from customers. In response to popular demand, we now have a supply of baseball shirts to sell (suggested price \$25 each), in either blue or green, celebrating the Co-op's 30th anniversary and with all proceeds to benefit the Regan League. Pick one up the next time you stop in!

Cooperating with the Community

The Co-op is proud to support a number of local schools and community organizations. Among them are:

- Madison Park High School's carpentry job exploration program
- Mission Hill Little League and the Jamaica Plain Regan Youth League
- Friends of Kelly Rink
- Wake Up the Earth Festival
- Injury-Free Kids Coalition
- Mission Hill Main Streets

BMRC Helps New Orleans Rebuilding

The Building Materials Resource Center donated some kitchen cabinets, light fixtures, and molding to the New Orleans Women Artists Collective for their February rebuilding project in the seventh and ninth wards. NOWAC's Tye Waller, second from left, loaded up a truck with assistance from Resource Center staff members Deb Beatty Mel, Matthew St. Onge, and Shaun Newell.





handsOn

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Deb Beatty Mel, *HandsOn* Editor



Discount Zipcar Memberships
www.zipcar.com/bbmc-bmrc



The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a member-controlled, not-for-profit building materials retailer and technical assistance provider. Founded in 1978, we specialize in cabinets, counters, windows, doors, and weatherization materials. We offer a range of affordable homeowner support services, including in-home consults, educational workshops, a tradesperson referral file, a lending library, and a Saturday morning window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op.

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The Building Materials Resource Center is a project of the Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund, a 501(c)(3) charity. Founded in 1993, the BMRC is a building materials reuse center that accepts donations of new and used building materials and distributes them to homeowners, nonprofits, and small businesses. Anyone may shop at the BMRC, with substantial discounts offered to income-qualified customers and nonprofits.

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