

YOUR BUSINESS

Facing the annual workers' comp audit

YOUR CLIENTS

Finding good field employees

YOUR TEAM

New-homeowner lead source

YOUR PROJECTS

Photo editing as a sales tool

hanley wood

# remodeling

YOUR TOOLBOX FOR SUCCESS



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## The Look for Less

Creative manufacturing helps J. Aaron customers save money

REMODELING BUDGETS ARE SMALLER. You know it, and your clients know it, but no one wants the neighbors to know it. Stretching project dollars means choosing the right products — those with the best look for the best value.

In the countertop market, improvements in laminate imaging techniques and fabrication point to manufacturers' efforts to offer high style at lower prices. Cast concrete or concrete tiles and slabs are other options. And now one manufacturer of high-end wood countertops, J. Aaron, is making a move. Over the past year, the company has introduced a new construction style and a DIY option, each of which can reduce customers' costs by 40% or more.

### DROPPING THE PRICE POINT

"Price has been a dictator for the whole market," says company president Joshua Johnson. "We've been working on modifying our products and thinking outside the box with this new economy."

Recognizing the amount of DIY interest among homeowners, Johnson determined that a finish-it-yourself wood countertop might attract interest. The DIY option uses the company's same species selection and fabrication techniques, but the countertop is shipped before sanding and staining. **"The price point goes down from \$100 per square foot to just \$30 per square foot for walnut, which is our top seller,"**

he says. Customers can order the countertops direct, rather than through a showroom.

Alternatively, homeowners who aren't prepared to test their sanding skills can opt for

**J. Aaron's new countertop construction technique using ¾-inch-thick tops finished with breadboard ends, plus thick ledges for a bulkier look.**

"The tops are beautiful, and the end result looks identical to a solid 2- or 3-inch-thick countertop," Johnson says. "You're getting that wonderful look for about 40% less."

Johnson says that the breadboard construction has gotten a great response from customers over the last year. The DIY product launched in fall 2011, and he's looking forward to feedback from those customers as well. Johnson says he intends to post sanding and staining technique videos on the J. Aaron website to help guide customers. —*Lauren Hunter*



### All Above Board

Breadboard ends add bulk and a finished look to thinner tops. J. Aaron's Joshua Johnson says that customers can actually save more money with this construction as the countertop area gets larger.



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### NEW + NOTABLE



#### Lava Lure

The bold, intense colors of Pyrolave lava stone surfaces are only outdone by the material's durability. The workhorse material can withstand high temperatures, acids, and corrosive products. Quarried from volcanic craters in France, Volvic lava stone is cut into slabs, glazed with enamel, and fired at temperatures exceeding 1,000° C. Choose from 16 glossy or 16 matte colors, or custom colors to match any interior. [Pyrolave | pyrolave.com](http://pyrolave.com)



#### Tight Radius

VT Industries has added a new edge profile, Marbella, to its line of post-formed laminated countertops. The profile mimics granite's pencil edge with a 1/8-inch radius, providing a modern, slab-like appearance for a variety of applications, including kitchens, bathroom vanity tops, and work stations. [VT Industries | 800.827.1615 | vtindustries.com](http://vtindustries.com)



#### Goodbye, Thin Brown Line

Decorative edges in three sculptured profiles eliminate the telltale brown edge line from laminate countertops. Cascade, a waterfall roll with a straight base; and Crescent, a modified bullnose with top and bottom curves, offer thicker looks with no visible lines. The edge styles are available in the maker's most popular laminate finishes. [Wilsonart | 800.433.3222 | wilsonart.com](http://wilsonart.com)

# HOME PERFORMANCE

## A Drop in the Bucket

Replacing lavatory faucets, showerheads, and toilets – the water hogs we use several times a day – is the low-hanging fruit of home water savings. Here are some products that may get less attention but can make a big impact when efficient models are introduced. –*Lauren Hunter*



### Sleeker Soaker

Sozo Bath's water-saving design allows it to use just 60 gallons of water for the average bather, compared with 75 gallons for other luxury baths. Tapered inside walls reduce the amount of water consumed while comfortably supporting the bather in a reclined position. **Diamond Spas** | 800.951.7727 | [diamondspas.com](http://diamondspas.com)



### Water Better

With rainwater not subject to water bans or restrictions, the Original Rainwater Pillow is ideal for irrigation or storm-water management. Constructed from a reinforced polymer alloy fabric, the system is available in kits and custom sizes from 1,000 to 10,000 gallons. Kits include the pillow, filter, pump, UV light, and all fittings. **Rainwater Pillow** | 770.853.9918 | [rainwaterpillow.com](http://rainwaterpillow.com)



### Efficient Comfort

The Affinity Large Bypass WaterSaver Humidifier features a water-wicking panel that pulls water up in a sponge-like action. The design allows for 100% of the water to be used in evaporation, the maker says, leaving less than 8 ounces in the unit at any time. **York** | 8770.453.9675 | [yorkhvacdealer.com](http://yorkhvacdealer.com)



## SPOTLIGHT: SMART SENSORS



### Pipe Dream

Some products help you save water, others can save you from it. **Pipe-Burst Pro** uses high-tech wireless sensors to detect plumbing leaks before they cause damage, and it can be integrated into home security systems. Available components include:

- **VIP (valve interface panel) with SideKick** proactively controls potential damage by automatically turning off the water supply
  - **Ticker Valve** features a 3/4-second close time to quickly stop leaks
  - **FloodBug wireless sensors** for areas where leaks are most likely to occur, such as near dishwashers, refrigerators, toilets, or bathtubs
  - **FloTrax control panel** that allows homeowners to monitor the system
- Pipe Burst Pro** | 800.246.5325 | [pipeburstpro.com](http://pipeburstpro.com)

### Power Washer

Compared with units manufactured as recently as 2006, Whirlpool Gold Series dishwashers use nearly half as much water and energy. A micro-filter wash system allows more water to reach the dishes and removes micro-particles so the water can be used for a longer period of time. **Whirlpool** | 800.253.3977 | [insideadvantage.com](http://insideadvantage.com)



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## Stone Cold Style

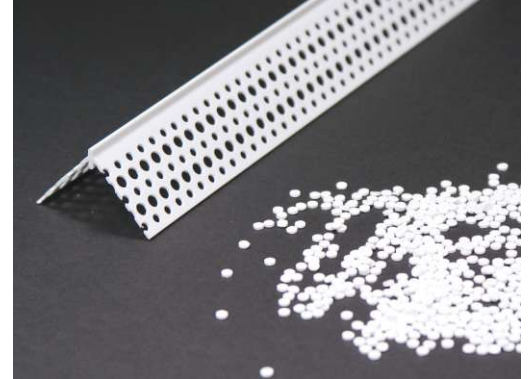
Alterna Reserve luxury vinyl tiles capture the colors and textures of travertine stone, quartz, and slate while offering a softer feel underfoot. Available in three patterns: Moselle Valley, Cuarzo, and Classico Travertine, the collection has 32 pattern variations for a more natural-looking synthetic floor. **Armstrong | 800.233.3823 | armstrong.com**



## Great Vintage

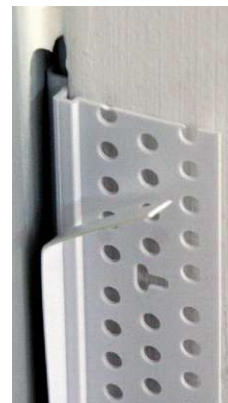
Enjoy a glass of wine at dinner along with a stylish new flooring option underfoot. Zinfandel Tigerwood engineered wood flooring features light hand-scraping on each plank and French bleed to accentuate the wood's grain variation. Boards measure 5 inches wide, are 1/2-inch thick, and come in varying lengths from 12 to 71 inches. The flooring is backed by a 35-year warranty. **BR-111 | 800.525.2711 | br111.com**

## SPOTLIGHT: DRYWALL ACCESSORIES



## Trim-Tex Offers Two New Finishing Solutions

Adding to its extensive line of corner beads, Trim-Tex has introduced its **Rigid Jumbo Corner Bead**, featuring extra-wide 1 3/4-inch mud legs. The I-beam nose creates a sharp, distinctive outside corner allowing for easier mudding and crisp transitions. An exclusive T-arch punch helps installers achieve smooth, tight corners.



For basements, garages, and other areas where concrete walls are involved, try the new **Caulk Channel Tear Away**. The strip creates a 1/4- by 3/16-inch reveal and can also be used to cover expansion areas filled with fire-rated or acoustic caulk. For use with 1/2-inch or 5/8-inch drywall. **Trim-Tex | 800.847.2333 | trim-tex.com**