

BY EMANUEL SILVA



## Dressing up Porch Posts With PVC

**I've renovated a lot of porches** that have treated 4x4 or 4x6 posts supporting their roofs. Aside from treated wood not being very attractive, those posts seem spindly and out of proportion with the scale of the porch. So I have a system for wrapping PVC trim around the posts to give them the appearance of being more substantial while also making them look infinitely better than the bare treated wood.

One of the keys to making this process fast and efficient is creating all the components on my workbench. Instead of working with stock sizes, I rip everything I need from a sheet of ¾-inch PVC using a track saw (1). Ripping the pieces is less expensive and it gives me the flexibility to create exactly the sizes that I need. I also use butt joints instead of miters to join the edges of each component. Butt joints are faster and easier to make than miter joints, and they all but disappear when sanded and finished.

Treated posts can move and twist over time, so I like to give them ½ inch of wiggle room on all sides when I make my wraps. The posts in this project were 4x6s, so I ripped the narrow part of the main sleeve at 6 inches: 3½ inches for the post, ½-inch space on each side, plus ¾ inch on each side for the intersecting sides of the wrap. The wide sides of the sleeve were 6½ inches: 5½ inches for the post, plus ½ inch on each side for the extra space. For length, I measure from the porch floor to the beam overhead and subtract a couple of inches to account for the part of the post that will be covered by the base.

First I pre-assemble three sides of the sleeve on my workbench (2). Every joint in the entire wrap is glued and screwed, and for consistency, I lay out the screw locations using a marking gauge and measuring tape. I've tried different fastening systems over the years, and



using countersunk screws with plugged holes gives me the most dependable, long-lasting results. I pre-drill the holes using a Fuller countersink (wlfuller.com) and tapered bit with a depth collar that leaves a perfect %-inch hole. I drill and fit the fourth side temporarily without gluing it. Then I set the sleeve aside to help me fit the other components as I make them.

**The base** comes first, and I rip the widths I need and cut them to length. As before, I glue and screw three sides together and screw on the fourth side temporarily. I bevel the top of the base to shed water, so while it's still all together, I set the bevel angle on my table saw and run the piece through on all sides (**3**). Then I remove the fourth side and set all the pieces aside.

**The top collar** is thicker and wider than the other components, so I stack two layers of ¾-inch PVC glued and screwed face to face. Because this band is purely decorative, I glue and screw three sides together with simple butt joints (4). Again, the fourth side is screwed on temporarily so that I can ease the edges using a roundover bit in my router. I also give the edges a quick sanding to even them out and to smooth the "end-grain" of the PVC. Instead of removing the fourth side completely, I leave a screw in one end that will let me slide the collar over the post wrap and swing the fourth side into place. The final component is a simple square-edge support band that I make and pre-assemble like the other components.

**Sleeving the posts.** Now I can bring all of the parts for the wrap onto the porch. I start by slipping the pre-assembled part of the sleeve around the post **(5)**. With the final side of the sleeve already predrilled, I glue and screw it permanently to the pre-assembled part. At this point, the sleeve is just floating around the post, and the space I built into it gives me the flexibility to plumb it in both directions.

I slide the sleeve up as high as it can go

and drive screws on all sides at the bottom, securing it with a space between the sleeve and the post. Next I plumb the sleeve in both directions and drive screws near the top to anchor it **(6)**. At this point I can use my screws to micro-adjust the sleeve for plumb. When it is plumb, I drive screws into the pre-drilled holes on all four sides from top to bottom, taking care not to distort it by overdriving the screws.

**Installing bases.** I install the bases by slipping the pre-assembled part of the base around the post (7) and then screwing and gluing the final side in place. Once the base is complete, I just slide it down to the porch floor and screw it to the sleeve on all four sides.

The top collar is the only component that can be installed in one piece. I swing the free side out of the way as it slips around the sleeve (8). Now it's just a matter of swinging that side back into place to complete the assembly. The supporting band is last and is installed much like the base; I slide it up

## On the Job / PVC-Clad Porch Posts



along with the collar and attach it to the top of the sleeve (9).

**Plugs**. Depending on my schedule for installing the wraps, I can plug the holes on the bench or after the wrap is installed. I make the PVC plugs from leftover scraps, cutting them with a ¾-inch Fuller plug cutter chucked into my drill **(10)**. I always cut a lot of plugs—on this project, there were more than 90 holes to plug in each post wrap.

I dip each plug in PVC glue before tapping it into the hole (11). When all of the plugs are in, I go back and trim them flush, using a thin, flat saw (12). I sand the faces to smooth over the plugs and to remove any remaining saw marks. Finally, I caulk all the joints using 100% acrylic latex caulk. The wraps are now ready for paint.

Emanuel Silva owns Silva Lightning Builders, in North Andover, Mass.

## On Site With Liquid Flash

BY KYLE DIAMOND

**Recently, I used Huber's** Zip System Liquid Flash for the first time. It was on a remodeling project where we installed Zip System R-Sheathing on the walls (see *JLC* Oct/13) and <sup>5</sup>/s-inch-thick Zip Panel on the roof. Huber designed Liquid Flash to be used in areas where Zip tape might not be easy to apply, such as pipe penetrations and window openings.

This liquid-applied "membrane" comes either in 20-ounce sausage packs or in 29-ounce cartridges and is covered by the same 30-year warranty as Huber's full system. It is relatively new—available since last summer—and we wanted to try it out on a few windows that we were installing, as well as on pipe penetrations, to see how it performs.







## On the Job / Trowel-Applied Flashing



**Sill pans.** After making sure that the rough sills were free from debris, wood splinters, and other contaminants, we started off by running a thick bead of Liquid Flash at the corner of the rough opening (1). Next, we applied it in a serpentine pattern a minimum of 6 inches up the jambs, then across the sill in straight, parallel beads, filling in any irregularities by squeezing out a little more product. Last, we ran a bead on the outside face of the sheathing (2). We then spread the product out evenly using a disposable putty knife, being careful to spread it a minimum of 2 inches onto the face of the sheathing.

Liquid Flash is fairly sticky and has a tendency pull away from itself, so it's important to use enough product for proper coverage, especially at corners (3). Because it self-levels a little bit, we didn't have to overwork it. You can tell when you've achieved the minimum thickness of 12 to 15 mils: when you can no longer see the substrate underneath.

We used one 29-ounce cartridge to complete the sill pan on this 5-foot-wide window framed in a 2x6 wall with 1.5-inch-thick R-Sheathing panels (4). Liquid Flash is a moisture-curing product; low temperatures and low relative humidity slow the drying time, while high temperatures and humidity accelerate it. The day we applied Liquid Flash was moderately humid and in the 70s; it took about 45 minutes to skin over and 4 hours to dry.

One more thing: Be sure to use Huber's recommended sealant for setting the window nailing fins. Initially, we tested Lexel, a solvent-based co-polymer rubber sealant, on some scrap Zip panel coated with Liquid Flash and it didn't cure. After talking with Huber, we ended up using 100% silicone sealant, though butyl and polyurethane are also acceptable.

**Penetrations.** At the roof, we sealed gaps around vent pipes (5) and a PVC flue (6) as

a precaution until the self-adhering membrane, flashing boots, and shingles were installed. At the flue, we followed Huber's specs, which call for backer rod in gaps wider than ½ inch. At wall penetrations, which were blocked out for the siding, we put a bead on the top of the block, tooling it to create a fillet (7), again as a precaution until the flashing and siding were installed.

**Costs.** For a sill pan, Liquid Flash is more expensive than tape—\$34 for one 29-ounce cartridge compared with less than \$10 for 12 to 15 feet of 6-inch tape. (Liquid Flash took about 5 minutes less to apply than tape.) However, I'd highly recommend it for flashing mechanical penetrations.

Kyle Diamond is a partner with New Dimension Construction, in Millbrook, N.Y. To see a video of this project, go to the online version of this article.