

home solutions 10 USES

## Gift cards

They keep on giving long after you've cashed them in. One handy reader clued us in about all the things he does with them



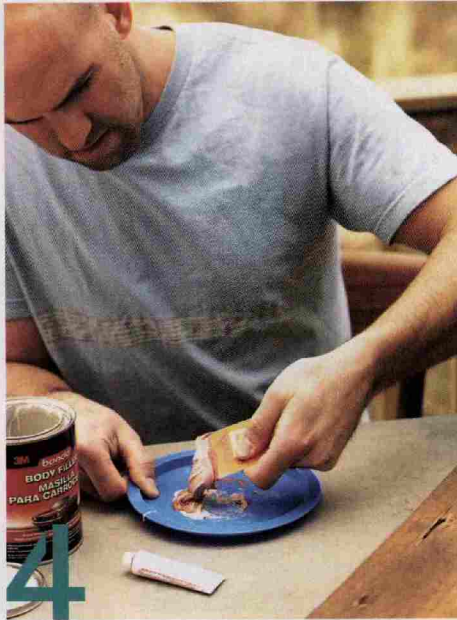
WHO> Bill Tuscano  
WHERE> North Billerica, Mass.

### 1 Use as a straightedge.

Keep a few cards in your workshop for marking cuts on small pieces of trim and other materials.

### 2 Spot-fix a tile floor.

Why dirty a trowel when gluing down a few loose tiles? Instead, snip off one edge of a card with pinking shears to make a zigzag edge, use it to apply the mastic, then toss it.



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### 3 Get rid of air bubbles.

Rub the edge of a card along a freshly wallpapered surface—especially in corners and around tight spots near windows and doors—to help the paper lie smoothly.

### 4 Mix and apply glues and putties.

Use a card to mix and apply small batches of patching compound or two-part epoxy, or to work stiff putty until it's elastic enough to apply.

### 5 Scrape off gunk.

Keep a few cards on hand in your workshop and kitchen to remove paint drips, stubborn labels, candle wax, and other sticky stuff from smooth surfaces.

### 6 Help caulk your tub.

Scrape away old, moldy caulk with the corners of a card (or two). Then cut off one corner using utility

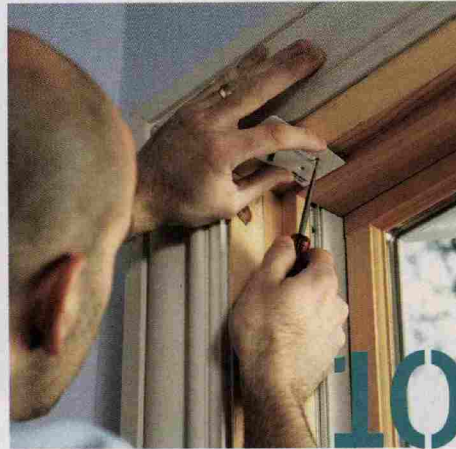
scissors, wet the edge, and use it to smooth down a freshly squeezed bead.

### 7 Level just about anything.

Cut cards to size and use them as shims to level out a countertop or help a door hang plumb.

### 8 Remove paint from details.

When scraping paint or stain off decorative



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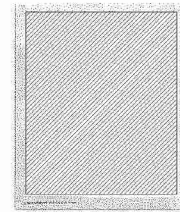
moldings or turned-leg furniture, cut a card to match the piece's profile and trim off any excess with a utility knife. Then use your custom scraper to get at every little nook and cranny.

### 9 Stabilize furniture.

Cut cards to shape and size and fit the pieces under the legs of wobbly tables and desks to help them stand up straight. If necessary, use glue or double-sided tape to keep the cards in place.

### 10 Mark screw-hole locations.

Create a template by using an awl to pierce holes in a card at the appropriate spacing. Then hold the card to each surface and mark the spots to be drilled with an awl or pencil.



PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT) DON PENNYTIME/INC. DIGITAL STUDIO; LAURA MOSS (3)

home solutions

GARDENING

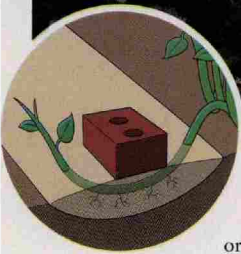
ORGANIZING

→ HOW-TO

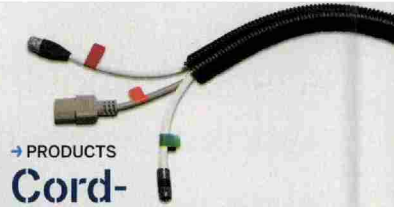
## Grow more flowers by layering



This Old House reader Rosi Zingales grew two lush lacecap hydrangeas by layering a single small plant (also grown by layering) that her neighbor gave her.



Why blow your hard-earned cash on bloomers when you can grow new plants from old ones? Layering, one of the easiest forms of plant propagation, works especially well for hydrangeas, azaleas, and forsythia. If you've got one that's been established for two years or longer, follow these steps to stretch your garden dollar: (1) Find a healthy, pliable branch that's 12 to 24 inches long. Prune off the nodes and leaves, keeping just two or three on the tip of the branch. (2) Dig a trench 1 to 2 inches deep beside the plant's base, then bend the branch into the trench and secure it with a wire pin. (3) Cover the branch with soil and water the area. Top it with a brick to mark the spot and ensure that the branch stays buried. (4) Check for roots in a year or two. When you see them, sever the branch from the mother plant, carefully dig out the new plant, and relocate it.



→ PRODUCTS

## Cord-control basics

Snarled cables and cords aren't just an eyesore—they're also a trip hazard, and the kinks can cause premature wear and tear. These tips and product picks will help you tame the tangles.

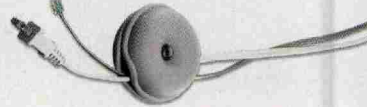
—MEGHAN DOCKENDORF

*Use a flexible sheath* to bundle together different cords belonging to the same electronics unit. Label each cord to avoid confusion—or worse, accidental unplugging.

**Cord Control Kit** (pictured above), \$15; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)

*Wind thinner cables*, such as phone and electrical cords, around spools for compact storage.

**Cable Turtle**, \$14; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)



*Extra-long cords* that are tucked behind desks and furniture should be suspended off the floor to keep them from snagging when you vacuum or dust.

**Command Cord Bundler**, \$4; [cableorganizer.com](http://cableorganizer.com)

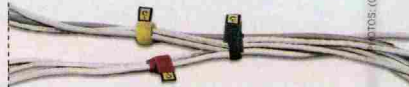


*A single Ethernet cable* that snakes its way around a room can be secured to walls or baseboards to keep it from tripping you up.

**Command Adhesive Cord Clips**, \$3; [officedepot.com](http://officedepot.com)

*To keep groups of cords together* when they branch off from a larger bundle, adjustable ties with labels provide flexibility.

**Case Logic Velcro Cable Ties**, \$5; [walmart.com](http://walmart.com)



home solutions **STARTER KIT**

## Everything you need to frame a photograph

Those graduation and wedding pictures you're snapping this month might be priceless...but the prices they charge at framing shops to preserve your keepsakes will give you a serious case of sticker shock. You're a DIY type, so why not make the frames yourself? Sure, you'll lay out a few bucks for tools, but they're still cheaper than having even a couple of pictures framed at a specialty store—and you'll use them over and over again. Pick up the materials (prefinished molding, glass, mats, foam backer board) at a crafts or framing store, gather up your favorite prints, then jump right in and get started. —JENNIFER STIMPSON



### Tools



**mat cutter** The blade slides along the track to make clean, crisp, beveled cuts. Use the freehand accessory for trimming or straight cuts. \$64.50; logangraphic.com



**miter saw** Quick-lock settings give you the perfect angle every time, and an adjustable-length stop makes multiple cuts a breeze. \$56; adjustableclamp.com



**four-way speed clamp** This handy device holds mitered corners firmly in place while the glue dries. \$29.50; leevalley.com



**point driver or glazier's hammer** Clamp a driver (\$29; logangraphic.com) onto the frame to attach flat points that hold the photo and backing in place, or use a specialty hammer (\$23.50; leevalley.com) to tap in glazier's points.

### Materials

Attach acid-free **linen tape** (\$21 for 35 feet; lineco.com) to the back of the mat so that your photo won't slip once placed inside. Use **wood glue** (\$3.99 for 8 ounces; gorilla.com) to hold mitered corners together before driving in a few nails.



### Who knew?

To make ornate frames look handsomely aged, rub them with a paste made from powdered **rottenstone** (\$8.50; rockler.com) and water, then wipe off excess and let dry.

### Home Solutions:

(pp. 19–24) **Starter kit** Thanks to Christopher Muse, Harborframes, Newburyport, MA; 978-465-9494.

**Mat cutter:** Mat Cutting Kit (525), Logan Graphic Products; 800-331-6232; logangraphic.com. **Miter saw:** Jorgensen Mini Compound Miter Saw (64027), Adjustable Clamp Co.; 312-666-0640; adjustableclamp.com. **Clamp:** Veritas 4-Way Speed Clamp (05F01.01), Lee Valley Tools; 800-871-8158; leevalley.com. **Point driver:** F400-I Fitting Tool, Logan Graphic Products. **Glazier's hammer:** Picture-framing hammer (05K99.23), Lee Valley Tools. **Linen tape:** Acid-Free Gummed Linen Tape (L533-1016), Lineco Inc.; 800-322-7775; lineco.com. **Wood glue:** Gorilla Glue Inc.; 800-966-3458; gorillaglu.com. **Rottenstone:** Rottenstone (53892), Rockler Woodworking and Hardware; 800-279-4441; rockler.com.