

HIT LIST

Craig's booklist: workshop reads

Every cottage should come with at least two books: an essential repair manual, and a book to keep putterers dreaming through the depths of winter.

For the first, I have two top choices. Home Depot's **Home Improvement 1-2-3** (\$49.95) is one of the best DIY guides on the market. In 560 pages, it covers everything from structural issues to wiring, plumbing, and decorating, with fair estimates of the time and difficulty of each project. It has clear, step-by-step instructions, and the second edition, although written for the U.S., has a section flagging building-code considerations for Canadians.

Compare it with **Do It Yourself** by Julian Cassell and Peter Parham (\$45). A little shorter than the Home Depot book, it covers much the same ground. Occasionally the sequence of illustrations is unclear, but it was more seamlessly Canadianized (throughout the book, not just as an add-on at the end) by celebrity handyman Jon Eakes. Overall, a reliable tome with a little more focus on finish and decor, covering topics such as fireplace types and how to install a mantel.

About the House with Henri de Marne (\$19.95) uses an engaging Q&A format, compiling material from the syndicated columnist's 32 years of solving real-world problems. His column seems geared to the northeastern U.S., so most, but not all, answers apply to Canadian

cottages. Few illustrations mean the book packs in a lot of good advice but, like a handy uncle, it shouldn't be your only reference.

One real DIY bargain is Black & Decker's easy-to-follow **Outdoor Fix-It 101** (\$23.95). With 26 of the most common outdoor repairs, it covers cottage projects other books miss, such as tuning up a gas grill or repairing walkways. A great beginner's guide.

For daydreaming, especially if you can't get to the cottage in winter, **More Straw Bale Building** by Chris Magwood, Peter Mack, and Tina Therrien (\$39.95) provides a convincing argument for building with straw, written for Canadians with Canadian examples. It's very seductive — a plentiful, cheap, and environmentally friendly building material that will give you instant bragging rights. Could it be time for a new straw-bale bunkie?

Unbuilding by Bob Falk and Brad Guy (\$38) is basically *Home Improvement 1-2-3* in reverse, explaining how to dismantle buildings to sell their components. Useful and environmentally responsible for those renovating, especially if a dump isn't handy, the book is also great fodder for a lakeside reverie, especially the one where I imagine I live at the cottage, earning money by quietly tearing down my neighbours' places. Sweet. —Craig Saunders

