

TESTIMONY

BENCHMARK SHARK UTILITY KNIFE
A utility knife with wire-stripping jaws
PRICE \$20



Sharp **ATTACK**

A **utility knife** that won't lurk at the bottom of your **toolbox**

EVERY FEW MONTHS, a manufacturer sends me a new design of utility knife to test. So far, none have been able to sway my allegiance for my favourite models made by Olfa. After unsuccessfully attempting to usurp the throne, I usually pass the challengers to family and friends. To be honest, as I was unwrapping the new **BENCHMARK SHARK KNIFE**, I found myself wondering who I might give it to. It didn't look like anything special, then I noticed a feature that made me want to keep it after all.

The Shark looks like a multi-purpose, do-just-about anything knife, but I don't think that's where its strength lies. It's really a surprisingly good tool for electrical work, thanks to the wire-stripping jaws that extend below the bottom edge of the tool. Before the Shark, I had to keep both a knife and a pair of strippers in my pouch. Now, the one tool serves both purposes. A small, red toggle at the end of the handle releases the jaws for cutting electrical wire, stripping insulation and pinching crimp-on connectors. While there's no shortage of astonishingly poor wire strippers on the market, the Shark cuts and strips well enough to gain a permanent place in the tool belt that I reserve for electrical work. It's not as good as a pair of pro-grade strippers, but close. Despite the wide handle, the Shark is a pretty fair utility knife and a very good electrical tool for the modest \$20 price tag. For more information, visit www.rapidtools.net or call 905-336-0553. —STEVE MAXWELL

DIY FAST FACT



Roughly **64 trees** are needed to build a 2,500-sq.-ft. wood-framed single-family home.

(Source: 2.009 Anchor Quantities Wiki)

BULLETIN

Sod Façade

New **artificial grass** leaves the old stuff behind

FORGET SPORTS FIELDS and AstroTurf. Today's **ARTIFICIAL GRASS** has become so lifelike that it's sprouting up in playgrounds, rooftop terraces and even your neighbour's front yard. Recent innovations in the fake grass field include infill made of sand or rubber pellets, which are layered between blades for support. The grass itself is made from plastics such as polyethylene—a soft but durable fibre—and comes in two-tone blends that provide a natural colour (even in the heat of summer). The result is a picture-perfect lawn that even suits dog owners and shady backyards. Passersby will never know you're not spending countless hours maintaining that lush green.

What's more, fake turf comes with a surprising number of environmental benefits. While it may not be as virtuous as the real thing (or alternatives such as xeriscaping—a.k.a. water-conserving landscaping—and perennial gardens), it does eliminate watering, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and gas-powered mowers. Drainage is equal to or better than traditional lawns, allowing 20" of rainfall per hour to penetrate the earth. And all components can be reused or recycled in 15 to 25 years when your lawn starts to break down. For example, the backing on turf made by AGL Grass is shredded and used in road bases, and its rubber infill can be cleaned and reused to make...more lawns.

The cost of the convenience? About \$8 to \$15/sq. ft., including installation, while sod tops out at a couple of dollars per square foot—not including the price of maintenance. But you'll have the prettiest lawn on the block. And your neighbours will be green with envy. For more information on AGL's artificial grass, visit www.aglgrass.com or call 877-884-7277. —JULIA MORGAN

