

Alison Cork laminates a floor, chops an onion, cheers up the garden with some lanterns and still has time to read a book in the sun — without sunglasses



The Big Block (£25), from Joseph Joseph, is the toughest board on the market and dishwasher safe, too

For a big chopper

Big Block is a high-density polyethylene chopping board, which is a posh way of saying that it is incredibly tough and will last you for years.

In fact, the Big Block, which measures 30cm by 30cm, is said to be the toughest chopping board on the market — clocking up twice the density of standard plastic boards.

This creates a barren land for germs, which just can't find their way into its surface.

The Big Block is also dishwasher safe and ideal for chopping all kinds of food, including meats.

For the design conscious, it is available in bright green, orange, blue or plain white, and for the money conscious, it costs only £25.

Call 020 7261 1800 for mail order, or visit www.josephjoseph.com.



No aching arms with the Cush'n Shade

Stay in the shade

Read and sunbathe without getting achy arms or having to squint with the new Cush'n Shade.

It combines a cushion and a sunshade in one lightweight unit that protects your face from UV rays while comfortably supporting your neck.

Light and robust, the Cush'n Shade is £17.45, with replacement washable cotton covers costing £8.45, and is available on www.cushnshade.com with delivery within three to 10 days.

Glueless rustic charm

Bring a natural look to your home with rustic laminate flooring from Pergo. Easy to install with glueless click joints, the laminate stands up well to high heels and heavy furniture.

Pergo floors feature a built-in underlay, reducing noise levels. Choose from Classic-Plus Maple Blocked planking, at £18.99 a sq m, or Vintage Mansion Maple at £29.99 a sq m. For more details, call 0800 374 771, or visit www.pergo.com.



Cage 'em to save 'em

Keep your child safe in the kitchen with a Fun Pod. Aimed at under-fives, it is designed to keep them in one place while you get on with chores.

The Fun Pod has an adjustable floor so you can raise your youngster to worktop height, where they can play — just keep them well away from your appliances or knife drawer.

Pods are priced at £110, plus £18 for p&p, and are available online from www.littlehelper.co.uk.

Light at night

GIVE a glow to your garden this summer with these elegant metal and white-enamelled lanterns (code 02803) from www.earthworks.co.uk.

Complete with handle and hooks that enable you to dangle them attractively from trees, the real bonus is that the gift box-set of three is only £10.

So, why not enjoy your garden by night? To place your order, simply call 0845 370 8383, or log onto www.earthworks.co.uk.



Earthworks lanterns, £10 for three

For your contacts book:

For more homeware bargains visit www.homesandbargains.co.uk.

For recommended tradespeople and services visit www.problem-solved.co.uk, and for general advice call the Homes Advice Line on 0871 287 0344 (calls charged at national rate, lines open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm).

And if you can recommend a bargain outlet or a tradesperson, email me at alison@alisoncork.com.

Your turn to recommend

HERE are just some of the tradespeople you have recommended this week ...

■ Urban PA, PA services, covering most of London (020 8487 9400).

■ B B Plastering, for plastering jobs across London (0783 477 2797).

■ Michael of MAS Tiling, for tiling jobs across London (0793 219 6002).

■ Simon Whitehead Architects, covering all London (020 7183 1063).

■ MW Home Improvements, refurbishment and general building, covering south and west London (020 8870 4143 or 0786 672 6347).

■ Virtual Jeeves, events and concierge management service covering all London. Call JJ Murray-Leach on 020 7349 6662.