



## Issue 23, May 2022

Hi Steve R,

Today is one of those lazy, warm, springtime Sunday mornings we long for during the darkest days of winter. I came outside with a cup of coffee to sit on my patio and write this newsletter, but had to set my phone down for a bit to just sit and soak in the peaceful simplicity of this moment.



The lavender is in full bloom as are all the other perennials that have been scraggly throughout the winter. My tomato plants are getting big and I need to make new cages to support them.

The air is completely still and there are a lot of bird conversations going on...I wish I knew what kinds of birds. Under their chirping is the constant, steady drone of the freeway which I find oddly comforting, reminding me that the world is teeming with life and bustling activity.

Cobra is sitting under a bush in a meatloaf position while slowly blinking his eyes. If he were human, I'm pretty sure he would be listening to some lo-fi chill beats. Bubbles, on the other hand, keeps darting in and out of the house, unwilling to take in the moment. She's

more techno rave.

Over the years, I've discovered one of the fundamental challenges in woodworking is finding, recognizing, and appreciating simplicity; something all creative people struggle with. We might set out to build a table with the intention of showing off every woodworking skill we've learned and at some point in the build process, we hit a wall. The sliding dovetails we planned for joining the top together are difficult to make at this length, and not at all necessary. The inlay looks ridiculous on the legs, and did we really need to use two different router profiles for the tabletop and the apron?

Anyone who's ever written a story, (or a newsletter) will tell you that it often starts from a place of needless complexity with redundant passages and indulgent descriptions. It takes editing to pare it down and remove the superfluous.

We need to edit our woodworking. We begin projects from a complicated place because in our heads we conflate complexity with accomplishment. The reality is that people are usually drawn toward things that display a level of simplicity. Think of how Apple applies this to their successful product designs.

Personally, whenever I begin to design a woodworking project, I tend to naturally overcomplicate it. As I work through the design over the course of hours or days, I'm able to slowly discover more and more simplicity. This might involve removing excess lumber (I always want to overbuild) or finding better joinery that will make assembly more efficient. On top of this, I even edit the design *while* I'm building as I make real-world discoveries.

After years of thinking about this issue, I've identified a few strategies to consider when building your own projects:

- Understand that usually the simplest solution is the best, and often the most aesthetically pleasing. Always ask yourself if there is a simpler way of achieving the same goal.
- Work within constraints. Instead of mixing three species of wood, try to make one type of wood look outstanding by selecting the best pieces. If you want to try out a new technique, showcase it alone. Make your ebony inlay the one really showy part of the coffee table. It doesn't want to compete with your hand carving or LEDs.
- People marvel at your woodworking projects more than your woodworking skills. Nothing is quite as satisfying as holding and opening a small box with a lid that slides on perfectly. End users will probably not understand the skill it took to achieve that, but will admire the box on a visceral level.

I'm in the early stages of exploring this philosophy and approach to woodworking in a new program that I hope to share with you later this year. At this point, I'm in the over-complication stage and have a long way to go before I begin to find its simplicity. But that's how the process works. What I'm discovering is that approaching woodworking from a place of simplicity is something that can greatly benefit beginners to the craft as well as experienced builders. I'll keep you posted.

Have a great month!

Steve

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## Combo blades vs general purpose blades

How many blades do you really need for your table saw? Well, in my opinion, you can pretty much get by with one. Combination blades and general purpose blades are good one-size-fits-all solutions, but what's the difference between them and which do I recommend?

Spoiler: I'd go with a 40 tooth general purpose blade. But watch the video to see why!



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## A conversation about the obsession with making things with Dan Harmon

I recently spoke to Dan Harmon on my podcast. He's the creator and writer of the animated series, *Rick and Morty*. He's a bit obsessed with building all kinds of things, to the point of transforming an entire house into a maker space. I talked to him about his goals, growing up in the midwest, the hero's journey, as well as his fears and struggles. It's a really fun interview.

Check it out on any podcast app or on my new [WTS Podcast website](#).



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## Community Highlight

A beginner's beauty

Just a few months ago, Allie took up woodworking and joined [The Weekend Woodworker](#). Since then she gained the confidence and skills to make upgrades around her house and build this beautiful herringbone coffee table. She even started an Instagram to help inspire others to build the home of their dreams. Well done, Allie!

You can check out a quick video of the coffee table build [here](#).



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## This Month's Member Projects

Check out these awesome projects made by members of [The Weekend Woodworker](#) and [The Weekend Workshop](#).



### Classy Catification

I could easily fill this section with cat and dog projects every month, but I'll restrain myself and showcase just one: Amanda's bit of catification.

What I like most about this project is that it functions as a decorative wall element as well as a cat shelf. Honestly, I rarely see aesthetic consideration put into these things, and I hope to see more!

### BMW Modifications

In the shop, Jeff modified the basic mobile workbench to build this rolling stand for his table saw. I love that it has lumber support on the left and is the same height as his outfeed table. (Great seeing the Handi-Cart there too!)





## Harmony Console Table

And speaking of mods, Frederick took the Harmony Garden Bench design from *The Weekend Woodworker* and transformed it into a console table. This is what woodworking is all about!

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Thanks for reading,

- Steve

P.S. If you are new this month, you can read last month's issue of Notes From the Shop [here](#).

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