

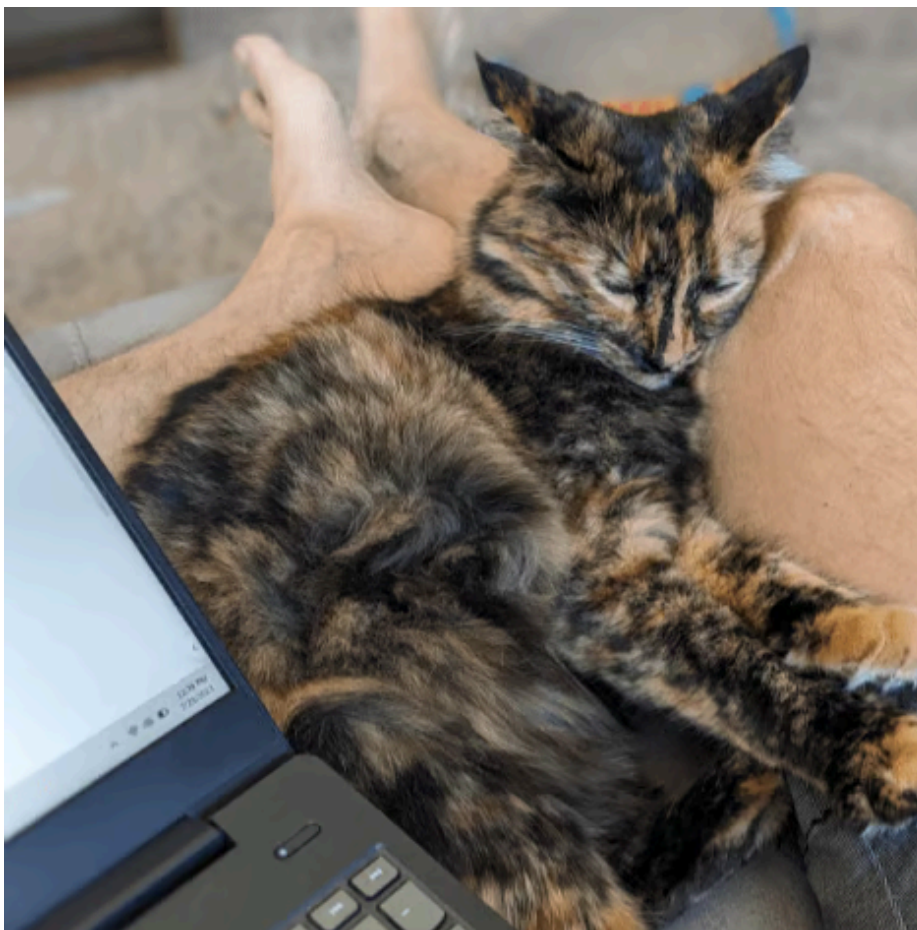


Issue 38, August 2023

Hi Steve r,

August is a month of melancholy. When I was a kid, our summer holiday trips were usually over by now and the new school season was looming dangerously close. Ads for back-to-school sales tore at my soul a little and the endless possibilities of adventure that June offered were long gone. As a latchkey kid in the 1970s, I fell into an August routine of watching morning game shows on TV while eating Count Chocula, listening to my Kiss records, riding my bike to the community pool in the late morning, and marking time by hanging out with a revolving cast of neighborhood kids until dusk. Nothing really happened, and I kinda miss that.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that August is the only month (at least in the U.S.) without a holiday *and* it's the hottest month of the year. There are no gifts to buy, decorating to do, or family gatherings to plan. It's a month to reset. We should give ourselves permission to just hang out during the dog days of summer.



Bubbles embracing August as I write this newsletter.

A lot of people tell me their shops are just Too Damn Hot to work in right now, and are feeling unproductive. When did we come up with this mania to be productive all the time anyway? By no means do I support a sedentary lifestyle, but we need to embrace a little downtime in order to recharge and be more effective in productive activities such as woodworking.

You might recall one of my New Year's resolutions was to read a book every month: an actual dead tree, analog book with pages and everything. Well, in the seven months since that declaration, I've managed to read five books. Not bad. I'm enjoying the pace. I especially enjoyed [*Crying in H-Mart*](#) by Michelle Zauner, and [*At The Edge Of The Haight*](#) by Katherine Seligman.

If you're not the type to sit and read a novel, I suggest cooling off in an air-conditioned used book store (or even Goodwill) and picking up a vintage woodworking book. The ones from The 70s and early 80s are

especially fun. A growing number of people are collecting these along with old woodworking magazines.



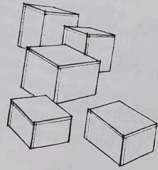
Handsome! A circular saw, a hammer and a screwdriver.

These publications offer an interesting glimpse into a bygone era of woodworking. A time before *The New Yankee Workshop* Normalized the home-based power tool workshop. The staged lifestyle photos are usually the best parts... Oh, those bell bottoms and cocktail parties.

Nesting Boxes

Modular staging for people and plants

Nesting Boxes



Grouped, these easy-to-make modular boxes serve as a picnic table and benches, creating the pleasing effect of enclosed space and random levels. Placed side by side, they make a formal setting for potted plants. Children are attracted to them like cats to a paper bag—for kids, the boxes become oversize building blocks or props for a backyard theater.

Best of all, these boxes nest compactly and are easily wheeled away on their own cart for storage when not in use.

Though the boxes shown were made of $\frac{3}{4}$ " exterior rough-sawn plywood siding, a less expensive exterior plywood can be used where appearance is less important than economy.

Design: Rick Morrall

Tools you'll need:

pencil • measuring tape • square • crosscut saw or power circular saw • hammer • nailset (or large nail) • screwdriver • wire brush or coarse sandpaper and finishing tools.
Helpful tools include a table saw or radial-arm saw and a power sander with coarse sandpaper.



Unstacked, nesting boxes accommodate groups or create intimate settings.

Nesting Boxes

Howard needs to step away from the hibachi and make a charcuterie board for all those crackers and cheeses.

Some projects I can't imagine anyone ever actually built (a flat-bottomed plywood boat seems sketchy in all kinds of ways), while others will fire your imagination for ways to update them to a more contemporary feel (okay, a hanging chair is kinda awesome). Some seem even ahead of their time: the modular plywood patio furniture pictured below looks like it was cut with a CNC!

Hutch Bookcase

This hardwood piece uses pre-turned legs. It's designed for quick and easy assembly.

By John Capolotto



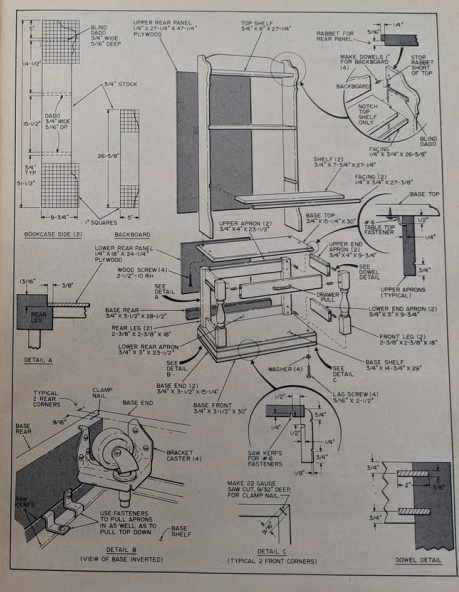
This elegant bookcase is easily made with ordinary tools. No lathe is needed, since the two gracefully turned legs are store bought. The unit shown is made of ash wood, but any wood may be substituted. Ash is similar to oak. Both are hardwoods and take a beautiful finish.

The base and upper hutch top are made as two separate pieces. This facilitates construction and makes the piece more mobile. The front apron is set a drawer, the pull is merely decorative.

Start with the base piece. Cut the boards for the top and lower shelf. These must be glued up to obtain the necessary width. If you have a shaper, you can use a glue joint center to form the sections, etc. Reverse every other piece to prevent warping of the large flat surfaces. If dowels are used, they should be the spiral grooved type 2 inches long.

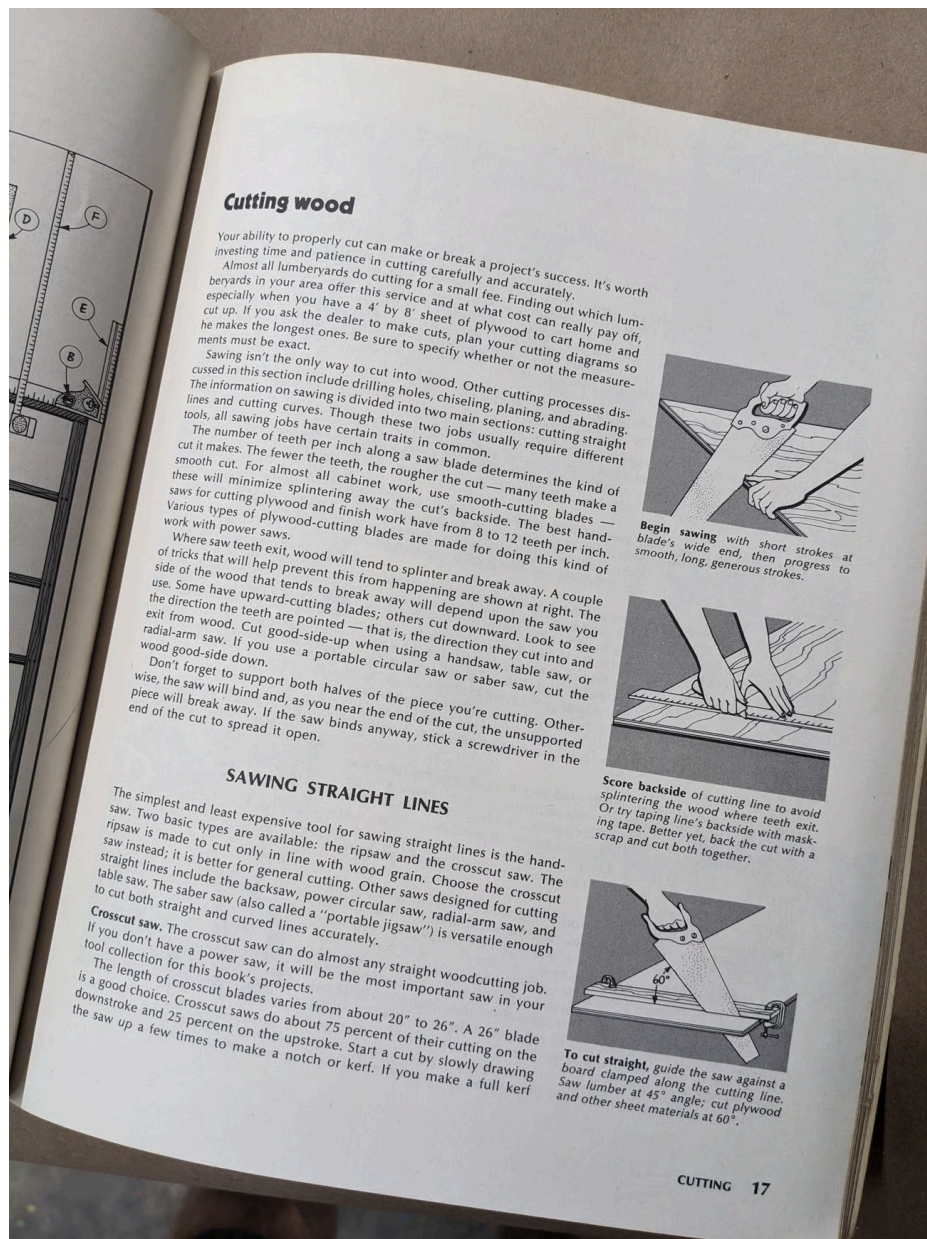
Use a good furniture glue and

clamp the parts securely until the glue sets. The lower shelf is cut with square edge. The upper piece is shaped on three edges to a round. Before shaping, however, the surface should be sanded to remove any unevenness at the glue line. A belt sander is ideal for this operation. If hardwood is used, start with a medium grit paper, then finish with a softwood grit. As you are working with a softwood, as pine, use care not to gouge the surface. Raise and lower



Good luck!

Tablesaws were definitely not mainstream in the home workshop yet, though an ambitious hobbyist might have had a radial arm saw. Circular saws and jigsaws were common, but hand saws still seemed to be the go-to cutting tools for many people.



Cutting wood

Your ability to properly cut can make or break a project's success. It's worth investing time and patience in cutting carefully and accurately.

Almost all lumberyards do cutting for a small fee. Finding out which lumberyards in your area offer this service and at what cost can really pay off, especially when you have a 4' by 8' sheet of plywood to cart home and he makes the longest ones. Be sure to specify whether or not the measurements must be exact.

Sawing isn't the only way to cut into wood. Other cutting processes discussed in this section include drilling holes, chiseling, planing, and abrading. The information on sawing is divided into two main sections: cutting straight lines and cutting curves. Though these two jobs usually require different tools, all sawing jobs have certain traits in common.

The number of teeth per inch along a saw blade determines the kind of cut it makes. The fewer the teeth, the rougher the cut — many teeth make a smooth cut. For almost all cabinet work, use smooth-cutting blades — these will minimize splintering away the cut's backside. The best hand saws for cutting plywood and finish work have from 8 to 12 teeth per inch. Various types of plywood-cutting blades are made for doing this kind of work with power saws.

Where saw teeth exit, wood will tend to splinter and break away. A couple of tricks that will help prevent this from happening are shown at right. The side of the wood that tends to break away will depend upon the saw you use. Some have upward-cutting blades; others cut downward. Look to see the direction the teeth are pointed — that is, the direction they cut into and exit from wood. Cut good-side-up when using a handsaw, table saw, or radial-arm saw. If you use a portable circular saw or saber saw, cut the wood good-side-down.

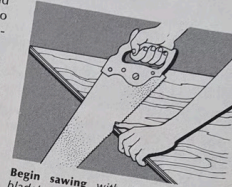
Don't forget to support both halves of the piece you're cutting. Otherwise, the saw will bind and, as you near the end of the cut, the unsupported piece will break away. If the saw binds anyway, stick a screwdriver in the end of the cut to spread it open.

SAWING STRAIGHT LINES

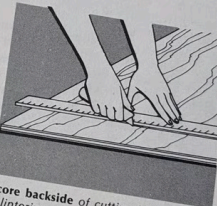
The simplest and least expensive tool for sawing straight lines is the hand saw. Two basic types are available: the rip saw and the crosscut saw. The rip saw is made to cut only in line with wood grain. Choose the crosscut saw instead; it is better for general cutting. Other saws designed for cutting straight lines include the backsaw, power circular saw, radial-arm saw, and table saw. The saber saw (also called a "portable jigsaw") is versatile enough to cut both straight and curved lines accurately.

Crosscut saw. The crosscut saw can do almost any straight woodcutting job. If you don't have a power saw, it will be the most important saw in your tool collection for this book's projects.

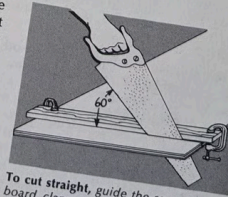
The length of crosscut blades varies from about 20" to 26". A 26" blade is a good choice. Crosscut saws do about 75 percent of their cutting on the downstroke and 25 percent on the upstroke. Start a cut by slowly drawing the saw up a few times to make a notch or kerf. If you make a full kerf



Begin sawing with short strokes at blade's wide end, then progress to smooth, long, generous strokes.



Score backside of cutting line to avoid splintering the wood where teeth exit. Or try taping line's backside with masking tape. Better yet, back the cut with a scrap and cut both together.



To cut straight, guide the saw against a board clamped along the cutting line. Saw lumber at 45° angle; cut plywood and other sheet materials at 60°.

Pretty solid advice for using a hand saw.

Do you have any of these old books or magazines? Send me pics of some of the funkiest moments you've run across—just hit reply!

Pairing Up

In the introduction note for my recent [nightstand plans](#), I wanted to address the fact that unless your bed is up against a wall, you'll most likely want to build two (add your own joke about one-night stands). This raised the question, if you're going to build two of something, should you build one completely, then build the second one, or build them both simultaneously? As hobbyists, most of what we build are one-off projects. That spice rack you're making is probably the first one, and

after you're done, it's unlikely you'll be making another anytime soon. For a lot of us, that's part of the appeal of woodworking; every project is a fresh new challenge.

If you've ever made a batch of something—say charcuterie boards for Christmas gifts (I'm looking at you, Howard)—you'll know that the first one is more or less a test subject. You work out the kinks and improve the process for subsequent pieces. The second one is always better.

Last month, I made a pair of [Adirondack chairs](#) using a one-at-a-time method. It was the right choice for that project because I really needed to sit in the chair and have other people test it to see how it felt and if the size was adequate. I learned that it was perfect for my wife, but felt a little cramped for my body. So I made a larger version on the second go-around (plans include both sizes, BTW). The drawback is that they don't match. For some people, that might be a dealbreaker.

The thing is, a pair of nightstands should ideally match (maybe not, though, there's no law), and this project has a few areas that might prove tricky: gluing up the panels, making the legs, and cutting out the shelf corner notches.

You could certainly make one in its entirety to work out all the kinks and understand any pitfalls, but I think you're more likely to have a closer matching pair if you build them simultaneously. One will still end up being better because you'll improve each individual procedure as you do it the second time.



Also, run tests. It's always a good idea to have a little extra lumber on hand for testing those rabbet cuts, or seeing if you really like the look of that edge profile on a drawer face. Almost every time I make a tapered leg for a table, I cut a burner leg to see if I like the shape. For any areas you think might pose special challenges, it's much better to make an extra piece than to ruin a workpiece and have to recut it. Anytime you have to reset a stop block, rip fence, or whatever, you introduce potential inconsistencies.

But honestly, making a project in its entirety and then remaking it just isn't quite as fun. I'm already thinking about my next project.

—Steve

P.S.: [Here's an interesting article](#) I ran across about the early days of woodworking (pre-YouTube). Apparently, scientists think early humans were woodwork experts. I'll still bet you anything that they had heated arguments about the best way to sharpen their spears.



Early influencers flexing their pointy sticks

MICROJIG GRR-RIPPER 2GO

Did you know I began working with Microjig all the way back in 2011? It's crazy seeing how far they've come and how many fingers they've kept safe with the **GRR-RIPPER** since then.

Recently, they launched the new **GRR-RIPPER 2GO**, their first color-coded push block. It's smaller than the regular **GRR-RIPPER**, and super handy for lots of cuts. There's no set-up involved and it's completely assembled right out of the box. It's fast, grab-and-go safety for the saw with that same grippy green stuff I love. Here's a [fun video](#) I made about the GRR-RIPPER 2GO and its features.



SPECIAL OFFER!

The best part is, if you [buy a set of 2 GRR-RIPPER 2GO](#) and use the promo code **WWMM2GO**, you'll get a free **1" Track Screw Dovetail Hardware 6-Pack** (that's a \$14.99 value) *and* free shipping!

Head [here](#) to take advantage of that deal.

Solid Wood Nightstands: 20% OFF PLANS

Here's the aforementioned nightstand project! I made these with maple legs and a cherry on top. In the plans, I've included cut lists for making one or two. The way it works out, if you make a pair, you'll end up with less scrap. The cost per table is one 8' board less.



If you'd like to make this project, plans are **20% off** for readers of *Notes from the Shop* for one week! Just use the discount code **NIGHTSTAND** when you checkout over at [ShopWVMM!](#)

Offer good through next Friday, August 11.

New Yankee Workshop Now Streaming



Good news for those of us who fondly remember watching Norm Abram back in the day; finally, there's an official [New Yankee Workshop](#)

[YouTube channel](#) streaming complete episodes! So far, it looks like the first six seasons are online... hopefully, all 21(!) seasons will eventually be uploaded.

By today's YouTube standards, you may find the episodes a little slow, but it's amazing how much they managed to pack into 25 minutes—tons of great woodworking tips, techniques and advice. Beautiful furniture, all made with inexpensive power tools, very few hand tools, and no CNCs... Or epoxy lol. Now if we could just get Roy Underhill!

Creative Culture Podcast



With all the talk of AI these days, I wanted to speak to someone close to the topic to help us understand exactly what's going on, especially as it pertains to artists.

Mary Tsai is a Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Designer for Adobe, working on their audio and video products.

Most of the fear involving any new technology is based on simply not understanding it, but surprise...AI isn't really new. It's been used for more than a decade.

Listen to Creative Culture on all podcast platforms or the [Creative Culture website!](#)

Reader Mail

"I love your newsletter and especially your youtube channel. You have a real knack for selecting interesting but approachable projects. Your sense of humor is delightful as well. Even your sponsored content is fun to watch. Keep doing what you are doing to educate and entertain us!

I wanted to share my most recent project with you. It is a pantry for my kitchen. Oak is a lot harder than the pine I'm used to working with so it definitely forced me to level up my skills to get a perfect fit. It took me months to make, mostly because I chose to make the panels from glued-up strips of 1/4-inch boards rather than just using plywood. I realize now that plywood would have been good enough and would have saved me dozens of hours of resawing, gluing, and sanding but I still enjoyed the shop time and am very pleased with the end result."

—Rob D.



That was a bold move to make solid door panels. But honestly, it was the best choice for this beautiful piece. Plywood would never match.

— Steve

“Just a quick note to say thank you for the weekend woodwork course!

It’s super accessible and although I’ve tinkered with woodworking and woodturning for a number of years, it’s given me a good focus point to drive myself to make time to do more and get much better at it!

Here’s the first two projects, I spray painted the table with a style I’ve developed with one of my other hobbies!”

—Joe



I’m so happy you’re enjoying [TWW](#). Love the design on the tabletop. It reminds me of Eddie Van Halen’s [Frankenstrat](#)! —Steve

“I just wanted to send you a note of thanks for all you do with Woodworking For Mere Mortals and your help on my own woodworking journey.

I first stumbled across your YouTube channel in 2021 when I was thinking of buying a miter saw for some projects around the house and was wanting to learn more about them before buying one. When I found your channel I enjoyed the way you presented topics and how fun you made woodworking sound. After watching a lot of your videos and quite a bit of dithering, I finally took the plunge and bought the Weekend Woodworker course. I really enjoyed the first few projects but by the time I got to the paper tray I was starting to get a bit fed up, not of the course but of what a disorganized mess my garage was! There were bits of wood everywhere, the light was rubbish and I was constantly tripping over my miter saw. To me, this meant only one thing: sign up for the Weekend Workshop!

It took me a year and a half but I finally completed the Weekend Woodworker and all the Weekend Workshop courses apart from the BMW+, which I don't have room for, and wall mounted lumber rack, which I don't think I need since I can store wood above my garage.

Despite some mistakes and frustrations, I loved working through both courses. The projects are great fun and your teaching style is perfectly suited for a novice like me. While I have not really done any projects apart from the ones from your course and a couple of your non-course shop projects, signing up for TWW has given me the confidence to take on new projects and try new techniques I have found from watching other YouTubers. Without TWW, I don't think I would be mixing shellac or building router sleds to smooth down oak slabs!

Of the course projects, I especially enjoyed the Catalina wall cabinet which is a beautiful piece, the dropdown work center which is a great base for working in the shop, and the home hardware store which is just a fun build.

Thank you for all you do to help make woodworking accessible to people like me who might otherwise not have the belief in themselves to give woodworking a shot and create beautiful and useful things.

Many thanks.”

—John N.

Thanks, John. I really appreciate hearing that! I like to think that my job is to simply give people a nudge to get started. — Steve

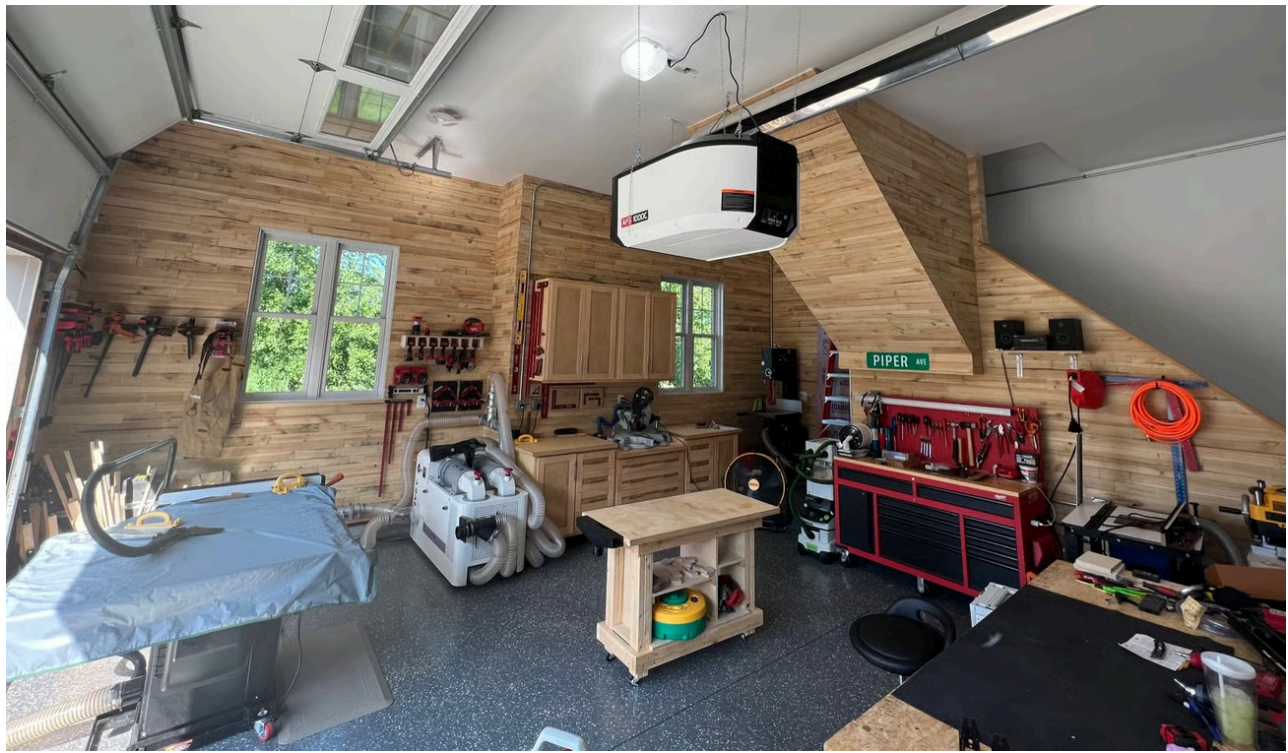
Thoughts on this month's newsletter? Drop me a line by replying to this email!

Reader Projects

Here's an awesome little rocking horse that Dennis D., a member of [The Weekend Woodworker](#), made for his grandson.



A stunning shop that [Weekend Workshop](#) member, Bill P., crafted from recycled pallets. It truly showcases the reclaimed wood's eco-friendly charm and unique character!



And, in the It's-Adirondack-Chair-Season Department:

“Thank you for getting me started with woodworking. It’s been a couple of years now since I took your basic course and ever since then, I keep making different things (whenever time permits, of course). When I saw your last email it made me smile, and I am sharing my latest project with you. Also, I will be signing up for another more advanced course in the future. I hope you have a wonderful rest of the summer.

Thank you again.”

—Darko M.



“Have enjoyed your newsletter and YouTube content now for a few years and also joined one of your workshops and never looked back.

I made some Adirondack chairs last year; they certainly have been a talking point with lots of visitors who instantly comment that the chairs look really uncomfortable, but then take a seat and don't want to leave!

I guess living in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, these chairs are not very common but are definitely worth making. Already had to make a few more for friends and family.

Thanks again for the inspiration and keep the content coming.”

—Alex



Have you made something you want over a quarter million people to see in next month's newsletter? Just hit reply and send me a pic!

Can't get enough WWMM? Subscribe on [YouTube](#) or connect on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#).

Interested in previous issues of this newsletter? Check them out [here](#). I just realized that this issue kicks off year #3 of this thing!

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