



Issue 53, November 2024

Hello Steve r,

Happy November! As the days get shorter and the air gets crisper, remnants of summer remain. The last of my tomatoes still cling to scraggly, leggy stems. The ripe ones are still edible (better than anything at the supermarket) but are less sweet and more acidic. The green tomatoes have basically given up. It's time to pull up the plants and let the planter boxes of soil rest until spring. Good job, 2024 tomatoes! 👍



Clinging to summer

If you've been doing a lot of woodworking this year, now is a good time to shift your focus from active making to more thoughtful preparation and introspection. A time to harvest your creative resources, especially if you live where it is just too unpleasant to spend hours in a freezing cold shop. Here are some woodworking-adjacent things to consider doing.

Gather your resources

- **Organize Your Workshop.** I feel like this is something I suggest a lot, but I really believe an organized, tidy shop is a big component to an enjoyable woodworking experience. Take this moment to straighten up, declutter, and create an environment that you love walking into, even just to escape to for a few moments while family is visiting for the holidays.
- **Take stock of your materials.** Restock any supplies that you're running low on. Sandpaper? Glue? Finish? Sandpaper in particular is something worth stocking up on. I'm really bad about saving sandpaper scraps way past their useful lifespan. Also, now is a good

time to weed out the scrap bin and toss out those tiny chunks of wood you've been hanging on to but will probably never use.

- **Are you satisfied with your tools?** If you've been getting poor results with a tool, first check and see if it needs maintenance. Clean it, oil it, sharpen it...whatever you've been putting off. If you still aren't satisfied, maybe it's time to invest in a replacement. Now is the perfect time to research new tools or go scrounging garage sales and estate sales.
- **Gather inspiration.** Take the time to browse through blogs, YouTube, and books. When was the last time you went to a public library? It's pretty fun to look at old books on woodworking and furniture design. You may not want to build the exact things you see, but they can provide great ideas. Also, check out used book stores. I've picked up some amazing (and sometimes utterly ridiculous) woodworking books from the 1970s that are, if nothing else, quite amusing to flip through. They'll make you want to install orange shag carpeting and build a wet bar.

Plan for the future

- **Draw things.** November is pretty chill for the most part. Use this time to sit down with a piece of paper and start sketching out ideas for projects you've been thinking about making. Experiment. You don't have to be skilled at drawing, this is just for you. You don't even need to draw an entire project in perspective, just focus on parts...ideas you've had. It's like note-taking: only you need to read your writing.
- **Design a project.** If you have used design software, now's a great time to hone those skills and play around with some designs. If you haven't used any design programs, take the time to learn Sketchup or Fusion 360. They are easier to learn than you might think. It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the tools and features these apps offer, but most woodworking projects only require a tiny portion of their capabilities. Start by drawing a simple box. That's 90% of what you'll need to learn!

- **Plan for gifts.** If you are still working in your shop, there are so many small holiday projects you can make that don't take a lot of time and are perfect for gift-giving. Plan out what you'd like to make, keep them simple, and crank them out in December. Ornaments are always good choices.
- **Test some finishes.** If you don't have a lot of time to spend in the shop, consider testing out some finishes. Grab a few scraps of wood, different species, and apply different oil finishes, lacquers, varnishes, or anything else you've been meaning to experiment with. When we're actively building something, we usually don't want to risk trying something new, so now's your opportunity.

Reflect on your inner craftsperson

- **Embrace the quiet time.** Enjoy the tranquility that November offers. Rather than seeing it as a time of inactivity, recognize it as a fertile moment for growth beneath the surface. Now is the time to nurture your ideas, so when you return to your workshop they will bloom. Yeah. You are the planter box of dirt awaiting spring tomatoes. 😊
- **Slow down.** If you are still building things, think about slowing down your process — focusing not just on the end result but on the experience of the craft itself. Try making smaller, simpler projects, but with greater intention. Focus on the process of making each cut as if it were the only cut. Consider how woodworking can be a form of meditation, grounding you as you work with your hands.
- **Evaluate your creative goals.** Where would you like to take your woodworking? It's not a bad idea to start thinking about this now, rather than waiting for the new year. Ask yourself what your long-term creative goals are. What projects would you like to tackle in the coming year? Do you want to master a new technique? Maybe you could start a side business? Create a portfolio of your work. Start a TikTok? Build a dream project? November is an ideal time to reflect on your larger creative journey.

Let me know what you plan to do over the winter months. Just reply to

this email!

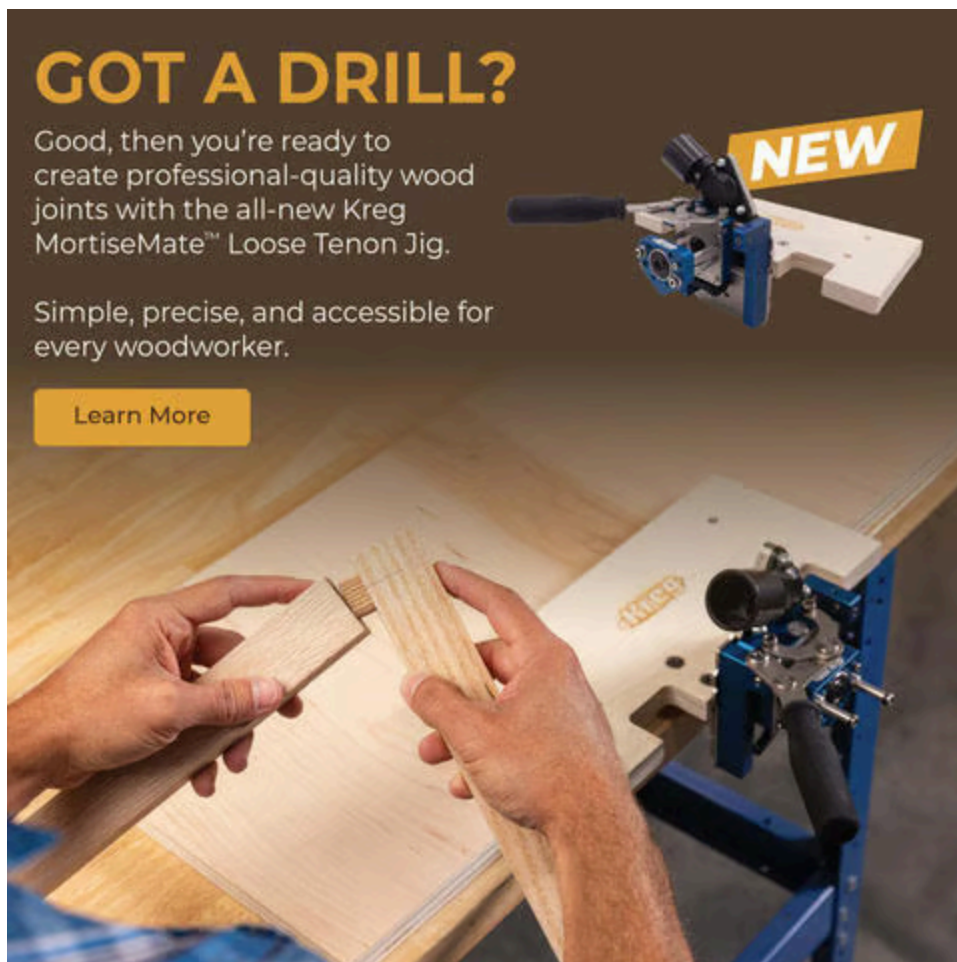
Hope you have a lovely November. Be sure to check out next month's **Annual Holiday Extravaganza** issue, filled with warmth and reflections. And probably really dumb jokes. That will show up in your inbox on Friday, December 6. (Here's what [last year's](#) looked like.)

Also, be sure to follow me over on [Instagram](#). I love the casual nature of Stories and post there almost every day...photos, videos, music, haikus, and even some woodworking. I'll also let you know whenever I post a [new movie review at Shade Studios](#), my hobby job.

Finally, check out the new [MortiseMate Loose Tenon Jig from Kreg](#). It just **launched today**. Super cool way to make **mortises with just a drill**. I'm super excited to try this out!

—Steve

Kreg MortiseMate just launched!



GOT A DRILL?

Good, then you're ready to create professional-quality wood joints with the all-new Kreg MortiseMate™ Loose Tenon Jig.

Simple, precise, and accessible for every woodworker.

[Learn More](#)

NEW

The advertisement features a dark background with a yellow 'NEW' tag. It shows a close-up of a person's hands holding a wooden tenon and a mortise, with the Kreg MortiseMate Loose Tenon Jig visible in the background. The jig is a blue and white tool designed for creating precise wood joints.

[The Kreg® MortiseMate™ Loose Tenon Jig](#) will change the way you think about traditional wood joinery. This innovative tool allows you to create loose tenon joints with ease, combining the precision of a router with the simplicity of a drill. With an auto-indexing step-down mechanism, micro adjustment screws, and integrated mini work surface, the MortiseMate makes it easy to create professional-quality hidden joints with just a drill — no router needed.

The MortiseMate's exclusive auto-indexing step-down mechanism enables precise mortise cutting with just a drill, eliminating the need for complex setups. Each pass automatically lowers the cutter by 1/16", ensuring flawless, accurate joints every time. Achieve the perfect fit with the MortiseMate's micro adjustment screws, allowing you to customize mortise width for tight or loose tenon fits.

The integrated Mini Work Surface allows for quick, easy clamping with trigger-style clamps, making it ideal for both permanent setups and mobile applications. With the MortiseMate, you can effortlessly take on woodworking projects that demand the highest standards of precision and strength, all while saving time and effort. Elevate your craft with a tool that redefines what's possible in joinery. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Annual Halloween Video

I hope you enjoyed Halloween yesterday! In case you missed it, my Annual Halloween Special was very meta this year lol. [Check it out.](#)



Creative Culture Conversations

Creative Culture is my podcast about art and creativity. It is available on all podcast platforms, [YouTube](#), and on the [Creative Culture website](#).

Reader Mail

“I just wanted to share my creation of the skull vending machine. I saw your post on YouTube last year and I thought that would be a fun project to make finally. So I decided to make a similar one like yours. I never make a plan myself, but if I do it's just a quick sketch. I just have something in mind and I make it but to be honest, I don't take the time to make a complicated plan on paper or to use a proper program as SketchUp, although it does look neat when I see you using it.

Steve, you are actually the person that brought me back from years of doing nothing with woodworking to be back into woodworking and making small projects. I really enjoyed your series of lockdown videos you made (well I like all your videos actually) and because of that I decided during lockdown to start pickup woodworking again.

I believe my skull version is a little bit bigger 14x19 inches and I even made a 90 sec video on my instagram page.

Thanks for your inspiration and all your videos you have been making.”



Oh wow! This is stunning! I love the colors and the tongue on your version! Very Day of the Deadish. —Steve

Steve, I look forward to your newsletters, not because I'm a woodworker, but because I enjoy seeing other people's creativity in this art form. I do some lathe work and have produced some pens, small bowls, decorative twig pots, and tea-light candle holders, but most of that stuff just becomes dust collectors at some point. I am 76, so putting together a functional shop to actually produce larger items is probably not in the cards due to lack of room, money, and other interests. However, that does not stop me from enjoying your great writing style and sense of humor, and your ability to delve into the thinking behind the craft. Kudos for keeping a lot of folks entertained. —Ron P

Thanks Ron! And congratulations on publishing your book of poetry! —Steve

“Hi Steve, I’ve been a long time follower and I would like to share with you my project I’ve been working on. A recycle shack made from pallets” —Eric (D)



OMG that’s amazing. That’s next-level pallet project! —Steve

Thoughts on this month’s newsletter? Got a story to tell? Just want to say hi? Drop me a line by simply replying to this email.

Member Projects

"Made Steve's keepsake box. A lot harder then it looks." - Bill M.



I love this project so much. I've made a couple of these and yeah, it takes a little patience. — Steve

"Just Joined the group and signed up for the course. Really enjoyed making the BMW. Covered top with 1/4" hardboard that I'll seal and stain. Couldn't hit it with a hammer tho." - Colin O.



I never get tired of seeing people's new BMWs! Now go hit it with a hammer. 😄 — Steve

"After 4 years of starting the course, I've completed my longest project to date. 8 months. For my wife, I'm so pleased. Utile top and shelf with a painted maple and plywood carcass. She picked out the drawer pulls 😊 Lot of new techniques and challenges on this one." - David B.



What a stunning piece! I love everything about it...bold color and beautiful finished top. — Steve

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.

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