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AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS

The Annual LCWW BBQ in July brought us wonderful food from the skill of Brent Evans. His baby back ribs melt in your mouth. The chicken and sausage was also wonderful. It also brought us the annual magazine/book swap and we reduced the stack of Fine Woodworking, American Woodworker and others at my home to a manageable pile. Of course, we also brought home a few replacements.



Saw Mill). The toy boats were made from cypress for a child he knows.

John Leonard Fontenot brought a boxed and framed tribute to American POW/MIAs. Eltee Thibodeaux brought a great little jig he made for sharpening chisels and plane irons. It featured a variable angle for different bevels.



The annual BBQ is also a time to bring some show and tell and we got lots of wonderful examples of members work to see. In fact, the door prize this month was a CD containing all of the photos of LCWW projects we had — nearly 300 photos were included.

The largest project on display was an outdoor bench built by Leonard and Theresa Wilfret. Made of select mahogany, Theresa described the construction as well as their experience at the American Sycamore Retreat in Cloverdale, Indiana. The Wilfret's built the bench over the week woodworking vacation they took. The bench was not quite complete as they still had final sanding and finishing to do.

Gary Rock brought both bowls and boats. The bowls were turned from gum and cypress (some of which were from the cut-offs he gets at the DeQuincy

See all of the items shown at the web site. Brent Evans brought his wonderful skill at making baby back ribs (and still won't share the secret recipe). We also had his bacon beans, corn, a vegetable platter and great deserts.

Coming Up . . . Saturday, August 9, 9:00 a.m. A discussion on Shop Safety at the shop of Leonard and Theresa Wilfret.

TUNING A BLOCK PLANE

As a block plane is often used to plane end grain and other hard-to-plane wood, it's critical that the plane is well tuned. This involves flattening the sole, sides, and bed under the iron, adjusting the throat, sharpening the blade, and tuning the lever cap.

A flat sole for a block plane isn't as critical as it is for the longer-bodied planes, but it's important to ensure full support around the blade. Just as with a longer plane, the parts that need to be flat are the toe, the heel, and around the throat opening. The area around the throat opening is the biggest concern, since this is the area that will ensure solid support for the blade as it cuts. The quickest way to do this is by using progressively finer wet/dry sand paper on a piece of glass or other hard flat surface.

Since block planes are occasionally used on their sides, it's a good idea to check them to make sure they're 90 degrees to the sole. Use an engineer's square for this; if you find any deviation, flatten the sides as you did the sole. Stop often and recheck with the square. At the same time, you can soften the edges of the sole by filing a slight (1/16") chamfer all the way around the body. This makes the plane fit more comfortably in your hand and helps prevent dings on the workpiece.

The bed that the plane iron rests on is rarely flat, and this is a leading cause of chatter. The easiest way to flatten it is with a paddle-style diamond or a fine bastard file. Use firm pressure to keep the file flat, and continue honing until the bed is flat over its entire surface.

If you have an adjustable-throat block plane, you can fine-tune the throat opening by loosening the adjustment knob and pivoting the lever to open and close the opening. The mating surfaces of the adjustable throat plate and plane body will also benefit from a stroke or two by a diamond hone or fine file.

A razor-sharp blade is essential for a block plane to do its best. I generally grind a bevel on the blade using progressively finer wet/dry sand paper on a piece of glass and then hone a microbevel using a Veritas jig on a double sided water stone. You could do the entire job on water stones, but it takes more time. The advantage of the microbevel is it's the only thing you need to re-sharpen.

Fine-tune the lever cap. The lever cap on a block plane combines the functions of the cap iron and the lever cap on a larger plane. It has to press the blade securely into the plane body (while still allowing for adjustment), and it has to hold it rigid to prevent chatter.

Again, it's important that the front edge of the lever cap make full and continuous contact with the plane blade. The best way to ensure this is to flatten the edge on an oil stone or water stone. You'll need to experiment a bit to find the optimal angle; hone a little and then reassemble the plane. Check for gaps by trying to slip a feeler gauge between the lever cap and the blade.

Using a block plane. Even though block planes are designed to handle difficult end grain, you still have to be careful when you're planing near an edge. That's because the unsupported end grain near the end of a board will easily splinter and chip out. Fortunately, there are a couple of simple ways to prevent this.

Plane toward the center. One common method to prevent chip-out when planing end grain is to plane only toward the center of the board. This way, all the wood fibers are supported by the fibers in front of them. Simply plane about halfway from one side, then reverse the plane direction and plane from the other side. The downside to this method is it can be difficult to create a truly flat surface.

Support the end with a scrap. A more reliable way to prevent chip-out is to clamp a waste or "sacrificial" piece to the end of the board you're planing. This fully supports the end grain and permits a full stroke across the edge. The scrap piece will chip out, but that's what it's there for.

Trimming small pieces. When you need to take just a bit off the end grain of a small piece, such as when fine-tuning a mitered piece, hold the block plane firmly in one hand and pass the workpiece over the blade with the other. It's surprising how much control you have this way, especially if you tuck your elbows into the side of your body. Take light cuts and check the fit often.

Another way to trim small parts-and this is especially useful when you need to take just a bit off the length-is to clamp the plane upside down in your workbench and then pass the workpiece over the blade. *Barry Humphus.*

JAPANESE SAWS

If you haven't already tried one. Japanese saws are another one of those must-try tools. Unlike Western saws, which cut on the push stroke, Japanese saws cut on the pull. Many woodworkers (including myself) feel that this affords better control. Because the blade is pulled through the cut, there's less chance of

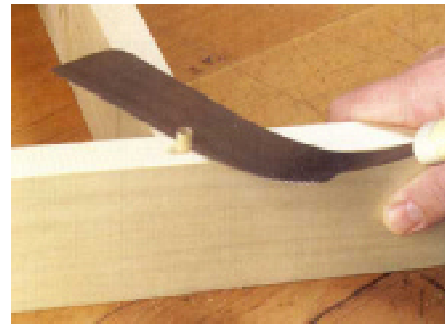


crimping the blade. This means the blades can be thinner, which results in a thinner kerf. The metal used for Japanese saws is harder and the teeth are tempered to a high degree. This keeps them sharper longer, but makes them almost impossible to re-sharpen. This isn't a negative, since the tooth geometry is complex, and with many of these you can replace the blade when it dulls.

Of all the Japanese saws, the dozuki (pronounced DOZE-oo-key) is our favorite. It's the Japanese equivalent of the Western back saw, and since I started cutting dovetails with one of these, it has earned a special place in my shop. Dozuki means "shoulder" in Japanese, and this saw was originally intended to cut the shoulders of a tendon. But I've found that this thin but rigid-backed blade is perfect for almost any hand-cut joinery. Typically, this saw has around 26 teeth per inch and can vary from 8" to 12" in length.

The ryoba saw (pronounced Ree-OH-bah) is a terrific saw to have on hand, as it combines the functions of a Western crosscut and rip saw in one tool (bottom photo). Ryoba means "double" in Japanese, and this saw has cross teeth on one side of the blade and rip teeth on the other. These saws come in blade lengths varying from 7" to 13". The smaller saw works well for joinery, and the larger versions are excellent for "general" purpose cutting.

The azebiki saw (pronounced Eh-zeh-BEE-kee) is a special type of ryoba saw (crosscut teeth on one side, rip teeth on the other) that is designed specifically to make plunge cuts, such as a mortise or tendon in the center of a board. The blade is curved to let you easily start a cut in the middle of a workpiece. Its diminutive size makes it handy for getting into places other saws can't. The curved blade — also makes it easy for you to clear sawdust from the kerf by simply using a rocking motion as you cut.



The kugihiki saw (pronounced COO-gee-REE-kee) is another specialty saw that you might find useful. In Japanese, kugi-hiki means "to cut

nails" as in wooden nails or dowels. The super-thin blade does not have a back like the dozuki, so it's extremely flexible, but also prone to kinking. And just as important, the teeth on this style saw have no set. This means that the blade can rest on a surface without scratching it. The downside to this is that binding can occur if you're removing a lot of wood, such as when cutting off a through tendon, so I mostly use it as a cutoff saw.

If you examined the teeth of a Japanese saw with a magnifying lens, you'd find a complex tooth geometry—the teeth are longer and thinner and have more faceted surfaces than Western-style teeth. This is particularly true of the crosscut teeth. Unless you're willing to devote many hours to practicing sharpening these complex grinds, I suggest sticking with saws that have replaceable blades. *Barry Humphus.*

