All the News that fits

Lake Charles Woodworkers Club, Inc. March 2018

Mentoring Program - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volenteered to help. Give them a call. Jeff Cormier: 582-3278; John Marcon: 478-0646; Gary Rock: 433-1679; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Dick Trouth: 583-2683. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

February Metting Highlights

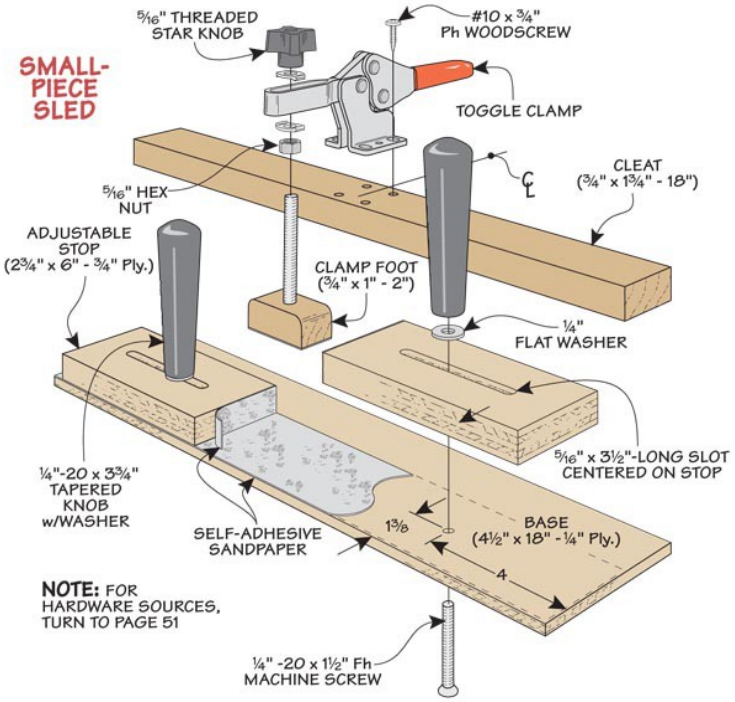
This month, Barry could not make it to the meeting so we don't have any notes nor photos of the wonderful work our members do each month. However, and as always, it is a great opportunity to meet at the Nelson Road Stines. Members and guests should always thank the folks at Stine's when they check out after the meeting.

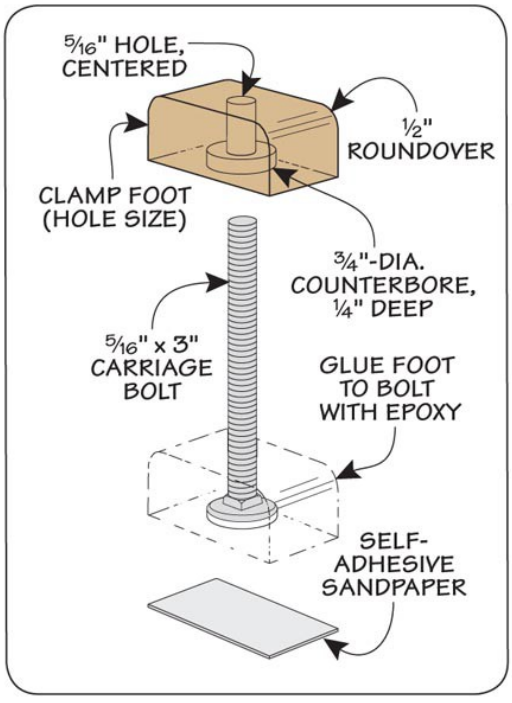
We recently came across a great jig (from Woodsmith) for your router table that makes it even easier to do profile and joinery work. The router table in my shop, is not actually a table top but a horizontal Shop-Smith unit. While it is not as versital as most table top units, it is the go-to tool for all kinds of profile and joinery work. The reason is because it has a great hold-down mechanism complete with a precision slide that permits precise and careful feeding of the workpiece.

With a large table and a flat fence, the unit described can handle just about any size workpiece. However, one place where most router tables have trouble is routing small workpieces. The problem is large openings in the tabletop and fence can cause a small part to catch or dip in. This can spoil the cut and be unsafe. But that doesn't mean you need to give up on routing small parts. A simple shop-made sled can help you make top-notch cuts safely.

Basically, the sled holds the workpiece so that it acts like a larger workpiece. The larger size of the sled makes it easier to push the workpiece past the bit. Best of all, the sled keeps your fingers well clear of the bit. Stops. The workpiece is captured between stops and then clamped securely to a long base. The stops are adjustable to accommodate a wide range of parts. This way, you can rout the edge of the part or the end. The tapered knobs that lock the stops in position serve as handles to keep your hands clear. You can also added some sandpaper to the base to provide extra grip.

To hold the workpiece against the base, You can use a toggle clamp. Replace the small rubber end of the clamp with a wide wood "foot," as in the detail drawing on this page. This added surface area gives the clamp a firmer grip. You also replaced the upper nut with a star knob to make adjusting the height of the foot a quick and easy process. See the design notes.





Coming Up . . . Saturday, March 10, 2018 at 9:00 A.M. at the Stine's Store meeting room at the Nelson Road location in Lake Charles.

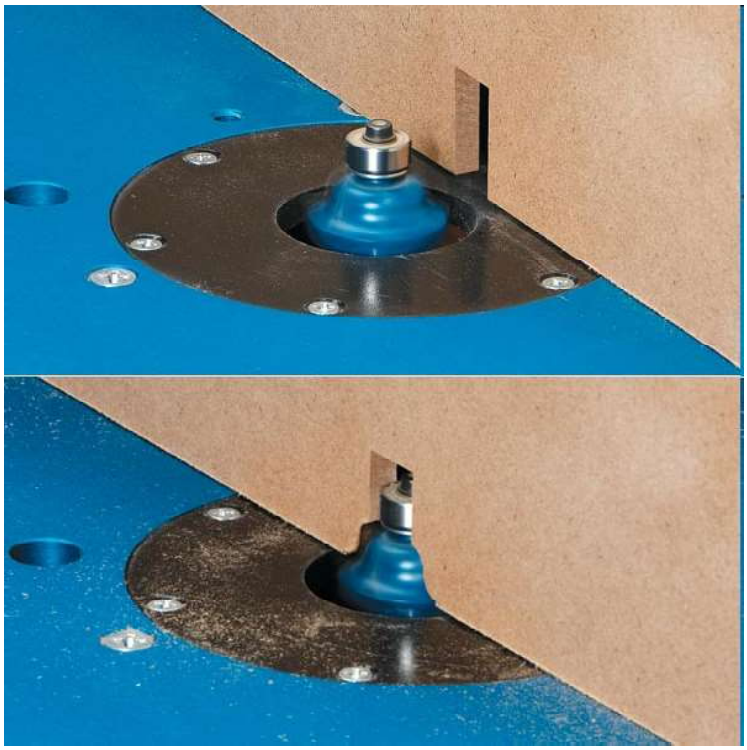
More Router Table Small Parts Techniques

As mentioned in the opening page of the Newsletter, there are good and safe ways to use a router table to form smaller parts safely. So we've added another method here.

There are a couple of ways to modify your router table to better deal with small parts. Here you have a couple of goals. The first is to minimize any openings where a piece can shift. The second is to create a smooth surface for the workpiece to ride along without catching.

You should start with the router table fence. If your fence has adjustable faces, the simplest solution is to position them as close to the bit as possible. However, for fences with a fixed bit opening, you need to find another solution. You can attach an auxiliary hardboard face with double-sided tape.

The fence has a pre-cut notch to accommodate the bearing on the bit. Then to create a zero-clearance opening, simply pivot the fence into the spinning bit. Since only a small part of the bit is exposed, the workpiece will always be fully supported.



Many times, adding an auxiliary fence is enough. But you can also create a smooth, seamless tabletop and eliminate any gaps here as well. After positioning the fence, you clamp a larger piece of hardboard to the tabletop tight against the fence.

The spinning bit will create a small, perfect-fitting notch. Now you have a customized setup that's safe and accurate.

Finally, it's a good idea to use a push pad to guide the workpiece. These solutions take the hassle out of routing small parts. And they let you concentrate on getting smooth, crisp profiles and tight-fitting joints.

How Do You Sand?

Sanding is a task that's all too easy to rush through. I've certainly done this to get a job done, skipping a grit before a final finish. Every time I've done this, the finish result was not to my liking and I had to start over.

Maybe it's because sandpaper seems like such a basic "tool." Or the task can sometimes feel tedious. However, a good sanding can really bring out the best look in any project. The key to sanding a project efficiently by hand is having the right sandpaper and sanding supplies close by. Over the years, I've found that a basic kit of essential tools and accessories that easily handles most of my hand sanding jobs.

I like to purchase rolls of self-adhesive sandpaper for hand sanding. The adhesive backing makes it easy to apply the sandpaper to a sanding pad of almost any shape. You can even attach long strips to your table saw to act as a large surface sander for flattening boxes, drawers, and other small parts. I also like that I can tear off just as much as I need for the task at hand. So there's much less waste.

As for the grits, my kit only includes four. The first is 100-grit. This coarse grit is what I turn to for shaping wood. With just a few strokes, it's easy to create a quick chamfer, roundover, or remove blade marks.

The next grade is 120- grit. It strikes a "just-right" balance between removing material quickly and leaving a smooth surface behind. One common task that I use this grit for is leveling hardwood edging with a plywood panel.

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Sanding Continues . . .

After any major shaping or heavy material removal, the goal is to smooth the wood and get it ready for finishing. That's where the remaining two grits come in. The first is 150-grit paper. It cleans up the marks left by the coarser grits. Plus, it allows the grain of the wood to really stand out. If the project is going to get a stain or a film finish, I stop after using 150-grit. Otherwise go to the next level with a 220 or higher grit should need a very fine finish on your project.

For projects that get an oil finish or for sanding end grain, I turn to 180-grit or higher paper. This way the appearance of the face grain and end grain will match.

Sandpaper is the main tool for getting a smooth surface. But for the best results, you need to back it up with some kind of support.

The tool I reach for most often is a cork block. The relatively soft cork provides a cushion that helps extend the life of the sandpaper.

If a part needs crisp, square edges, I use a hardwood sanding block. The face won't deform and you can sand right to the edge without worry.

By applying sandpaper to just the narrow edges, you can smooth a rabbet or fine-tune the fit of a tenon.

One sanding challenge is getting into tight places. For example, sanding the inside corner of a frame and panel door. In this situation my sanding "block" of choice is a putty knife.

You can flex the long thin blade to get right where you need to sand. Simply wrap the adhesive backed paper around the knife and go after that tight space.

Not all the sanding you do is on flat surfaces or edges. To handle curves and profiles, you can keep an assortment of dowels on hand. You can use them to smooth routed profiles. Simply wrap sandpaper around a matching diameter dowel. Or you can attach a piece of sandpaper to one end of a dowel and use it like a file to sand curves. Sanding shouldn't be an afterthought. With the tools you've gathered in your essential kit, you can quickly create profiles and flat, smooth surfaces.

Great Miter Cutting

You'll find a miter saw in just about every woodworking shop. But I've found that most people use the saw mainly for roughcutting long boards to length. This is also true of radial arm saws as well. The truth is a miter or radial saw can make clean, square crosscuts just as accurately as your table saw. All it takes are a few, simple techniques and these tips.

Getting great crosscuts from your miter saw begins with making sure the saw is set up for the task. First, the fence should be flat and square to the table. Next, the blade needs to be set square to the fence. Finally, check to see whether the blade is square to the saw table. (Follow the directions in your owner's manual to make any necessary adjustments).

With the miter saw set up, you're ready for a few upgrades. One of the biggest things you can do to improve how your saw cuts is to get a fine crosscut blade. Depending on its size, a top-quality crosscut blade will have 60-100 teeth. And the shape of those teeth means almost as much as the quantity. To start with, the top of the teeth are beveled to score the edges of the cut. Another thing to look at is the hook angle — how much the blade leans into the cut. Low or even negative hook angles are best. The teeth will slice cleanly into the wood and are less likely to cause chipping. This also prevents the blade from grabbing the workpiece.

In order to get the cleanest cuts from any saw blade, you need to prevent tearout. This happens when the fibers of the wood are unsupported where the blade exits the workpiece. And there are two primary places where this happens when cutting with a miter saw — along the bottom face and back edge of the workpiece. To stop tearout in its tracks, you need the table and fence of the saw to back up the workpiece right next to the blade. However, most saws aren't set up this way.

To create a zero-clearance opening in the table, you can make a new insert just like you would for a table saw. To close up the large gaps found in the fences of most miter saws, you simply attach an auxiliary fence made from 1/4" hardboard. You can face the hardboard with adhesive-backed sandpaper. This keeps the workpiece from creeping during a cut. And you can cut a small rabbet on the bottom edge for dust relief. Use double-sided tape to make it easy to replace.

One accessory I've added to my Delta Sliding Compound saw is a laser guide. While some new saws come with these, there are several avauilable to fit almost any miter saw. At less than $25, these make precision cuts as easy as you can imagine. Barry Humphus

March Meeting Location

We have the wonderful opportunity to meet at the Stines Lake Charles kocation at 4501 Nelson Road Please enter the store and go to the back left in the store to the meeting room.

To get there go South on Nelson Road in Lake Charles going from I-10 or I-210 and tuen into the parking lot. Go to the back of the main entrance to the very back to the meeting room to find us.

Please take an opportunity to explore Stines before you leave to find the items for your shop or home that you may need. As always, thank the folks at Stines as you check out.

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