

designer's notebook

FOUR LAYERS OF TOOLS

Smith stores large and heavy tools in the deep outer doors. The shallow inner doors hold frequently used smaller tools. The carcase is solid ash with mahogany plywood panels. Interior fittings are solid mahogany with oak plywood panels.

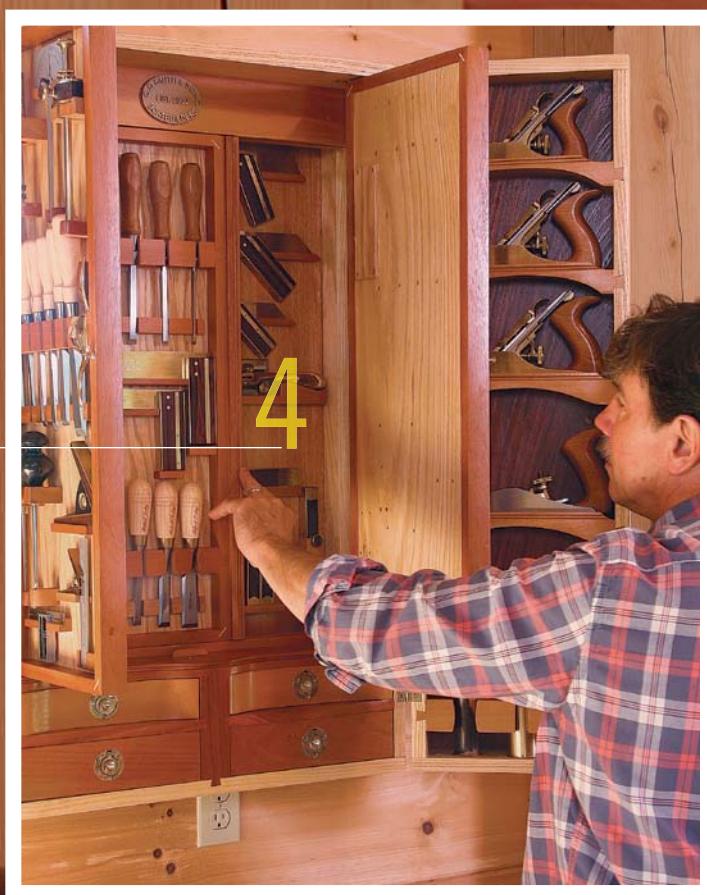


Tool chest with surprise storage

BY C. DANIEL SMITH

Fifteen years ago I built a wall-hung tool chest much like this one. But in the meantime my collection of hand tools had outgrown that chest, and I decided to build a larger one.

My original chest had storage in three layers: in the deep main doors, on a pair of shallow inner doors, and on the back board of the cabinet. But for this version, I increased its capacity with a fourth layer of storage, a shallow tray that sits behind the inner doors and in front of the back board. To keep access quick and straightforward, I made the tray so that it slides side-to-side in dovetailed tracks. When you open the chest's inner doors, you can access any of the tools on the sliding tray. Or, using the wooden handle at the middle of the tray, you can slide the tray aside to reach the tools on the back board.



SLIDING STORAGE

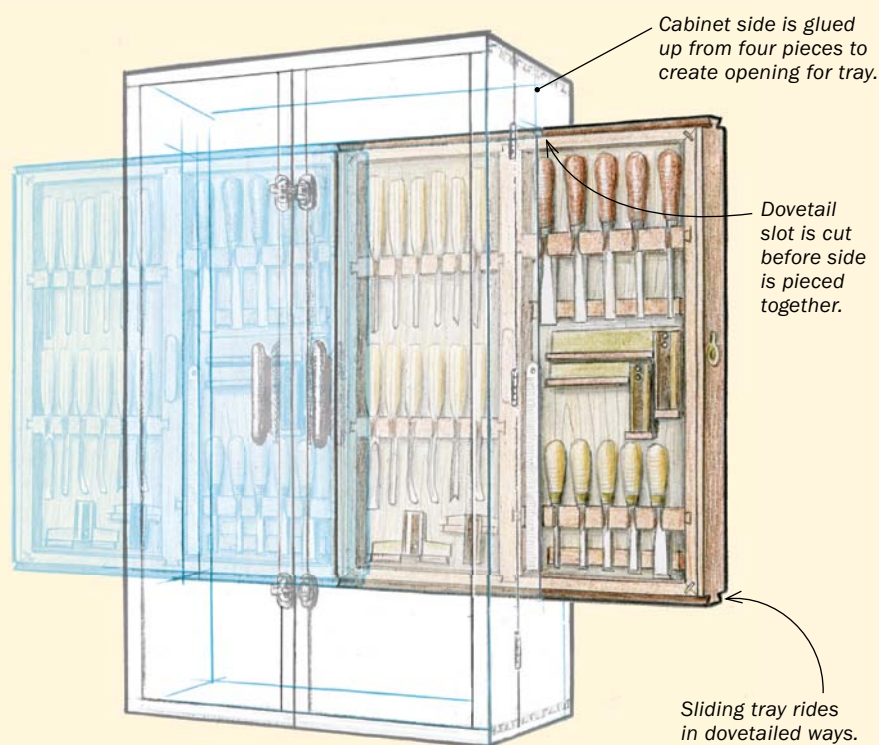
The third layer of storage in Smith's tool chest is a tray that slides sideways. It can be accessed from outside the chest even when the doors are closed, or from the front when both sets of doors are open. Behind the sliding tray is a fourth layer of storage, reserved for larger tools that are used less frequently.

Online Extra

For a video visit to Dan Smith's shop and a look inside his tool chest, go to FineWoodworking.com/258.

When you do slide the tray aside, it travels right out the side of the chest. This means you can also access the tools in the tray without ever opening the doors: Just pull the brass ring on either side of the chest, and the tray slides out. The wooden handle on the front of the tray acts as a stop, so the tray slides just halfway out either side of the chest.

To determine the placement of tools, I cut scraps of plywood to the size of the various components and laid out the tools until I had arrangements I liked. I placed the heaviest and deepest tools in the front doors. I put some of my most frequently needed tools on the shallow inner doors. The sliding tray, with no extra depth to spare, became home to carving and



bench chisels and some layout tools. I reserved the back board for tools that I use less frequently.

Knowing how my tool kit continues to grow and change, I built the chest so its main components can be disassembled, and I made all the tool mounts removable—screwing them in from behind—so I can alter their arrangement when I need to.

I made the handle on the front of the sliding tray removable too, (above left) so the tray can be slid right out of the chest if need be. I used French cleats top and bottom in the back of the carcase to secure the chest to the wall. □

Orthopedic surgeon C. Daniel Smith works wood in Missouri and Maine.