

# 3 Paths to a Stand-Alone Shop



Smart designs for a detached, dedicated shop that fits your work and your budget

BY MATT KENNEY

It's possible to build furniture just about anywhere—I've done it in an attic and on a narrow balcony—but it's more enjoyable and easier in a shop dedicated to woodworking. You don't have to pack up your tools and projects at the end of the day or work around a lawn mower, bicycles, or cars.

The good news is that it's not as difficult as you might think to have a dedicated shop. The three shops featured here are great examples of how it can be done on a variety of budgets. And all of them are detached from the house, which minimizes the amount of dust and noise that make it into the living space.

*Matt Kenney is an associate editor.*





# 1 Convert a garage



**No cars allowed.** A single overhead door is the only hint that Burkin's shop was once a two-car garage. He kept it because it's great for bringing materials into the shop and furniture out.

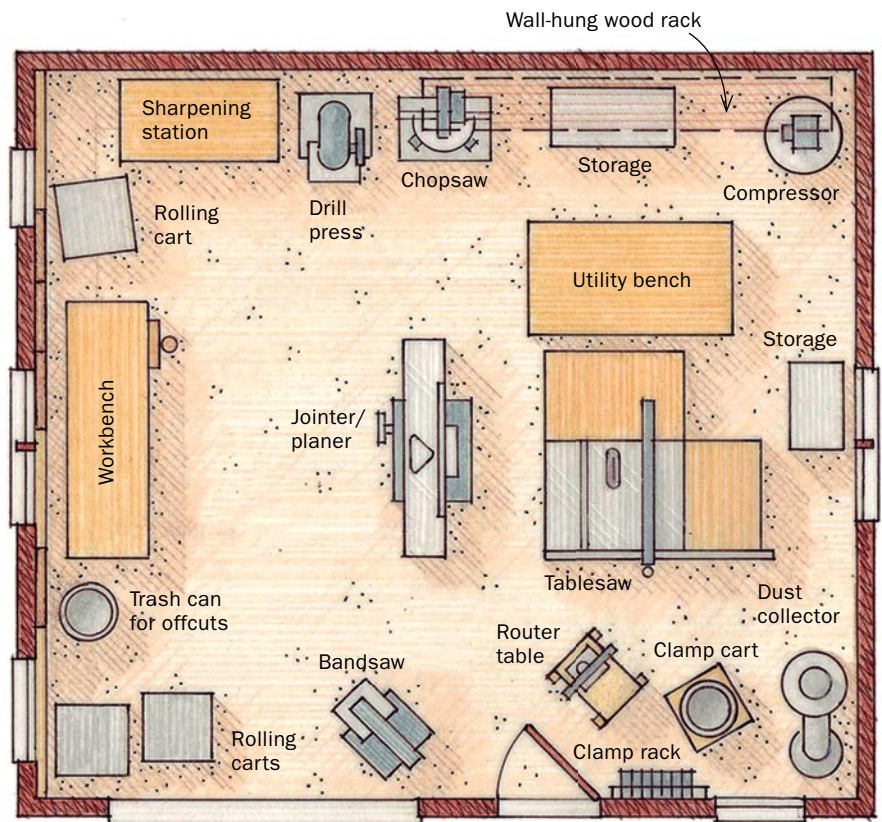
**W**hen looking for a new house, Anatole Burkin found one for sale that had two garages: one attached to the house for the cars, and a detached garage, which he knew would make a great shop. He jokes that he was sold on the house before he was even taken inside.

By using an existing structure for his shop, Burkin avoided the cost of constructing a new building. The only structural changes he made were to remove one of the overhead doors and replace it with an entry door and window. He also insulated the roof, hung a ceiling, and laid prefabricated wood tiles on the floor. All these changes help keep the shop warmer in the winter. At 440 sq. ft., Burkin's shop is cozy, but by paying close attention to workflow he was able to arrange all of his tools and workstations to make it feel bigger.

## COMPLETE SHOP IN A SMALL SPACE

Although this shop is less than 500 sq. ft., Burkin laid out work areas in a smart way so it holds every tool a furniture maker needs.

**Efficient workflow maximizes space.** Grouped machines also save Burkin time and allow him to keep the dust hoses and duct-work together and out of the way.







**Rolling racks are versatile.** To make the most of the shop's wall space, Burkin used inline-skate wheels to create four rolling tool racks. They allow him to use the space in front of the windows without permanently blocking them.



**Mobile tools are there when he needs them.** When he doesn't, he pushes them against the wall to open up floor space.



**A place for bench work.** One side of Burkin's shop is reserved for his bench and hand tools.



# 2 Build a garage shop with resale in mind



**Easy conversion back to a garage.** Paolini knows that as his business grows, he might outgrow his home shop or sell the whole property. The oversize garage he built will easily house cars when it no longer houses his business.

**G**reg Paolini wasn't a full-time professional woodworker when he built his shop, but he knew that one day he would be. He needed a shop that would be big enough to run a business from, but didn't want to be burdened with a limited-use building if he ever outgrew it. That's why Paolini built an oversize two-car garage tailored to fit the needs of a professional furniture maker.

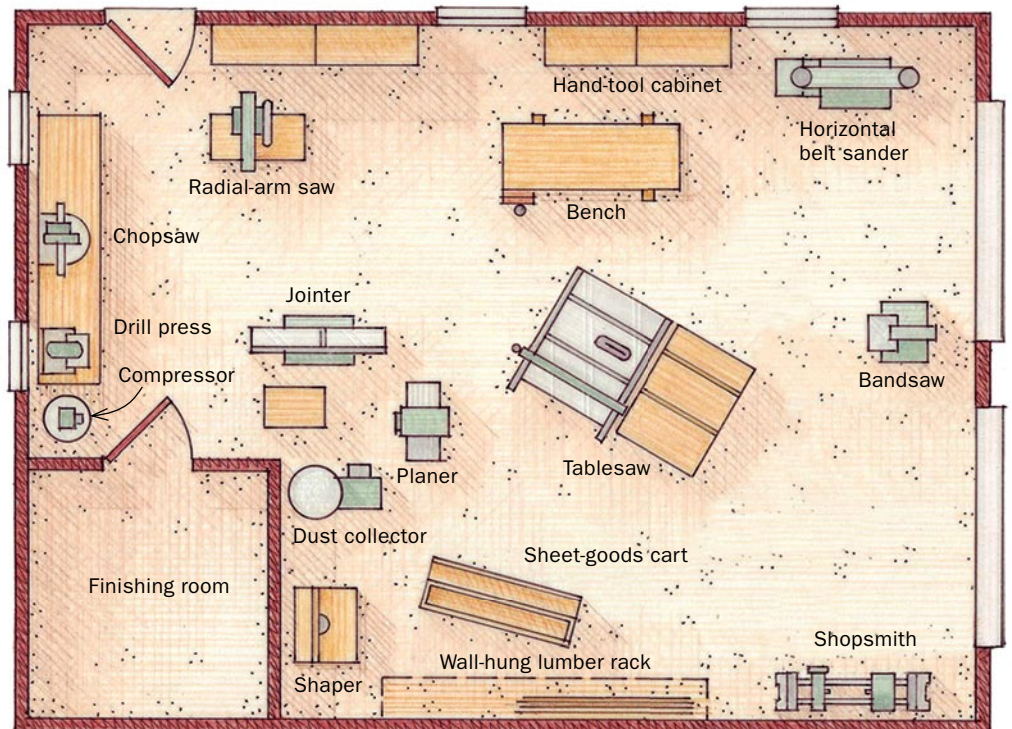
New construction is always expensive, but Paolini cut down on the expense by building a garage 24 ft. wide by 32 ft. deep, with studs 16 in. on center, which meant he didn't need to cut down any sheathing, insulation, or wall covering. He used attic trusses in the front for overhead storage and scissor trusses on the back half to get 11-ft. ceilings, space he needs to assemble large cabinets. But if Paolini ever moves his shop or sells the whole property, he would only need to remove his tools, and the garage would be ready for cars, bikes, and a lawn mower.

## VERSATILE GARAGE SHOP

Spacious and filled with carts and tools on mobile bases, this shop can be reconfigured quickly to meet the changing needs of a professional cabinet maker.



**A place in the sun.** Paolini placed his bench alongside two south-facing windows, which let in light year round. Living in the South, he can open the overhead doors most of the year to let in an extra flood of light.







**Tablesaw takes center stage.** Paolini uses his tablesaw all the time, so it needs a central location and lots of space. He keeps just about everything on rolling carts so he can quickly clear out the area around it for cutting large pieces and assembling big cabinets.

**Tall work is no problem.** Paolini used scissor trusses on the back half of his shop. The extra height they provide lets him assemble very tall pieces.



**Sheet goods go on a rolling rack.** Offcuts are stored in bins to keep them organized and easy to find. Full sheets are stacked together, making it easier to sort through them and pull one out.



**Clamp cart rolls, too.** Paolini saves time by always having clamps close at hand, rather than walking back and forth to a wall-hung rack.



# 3 Or make no compromises



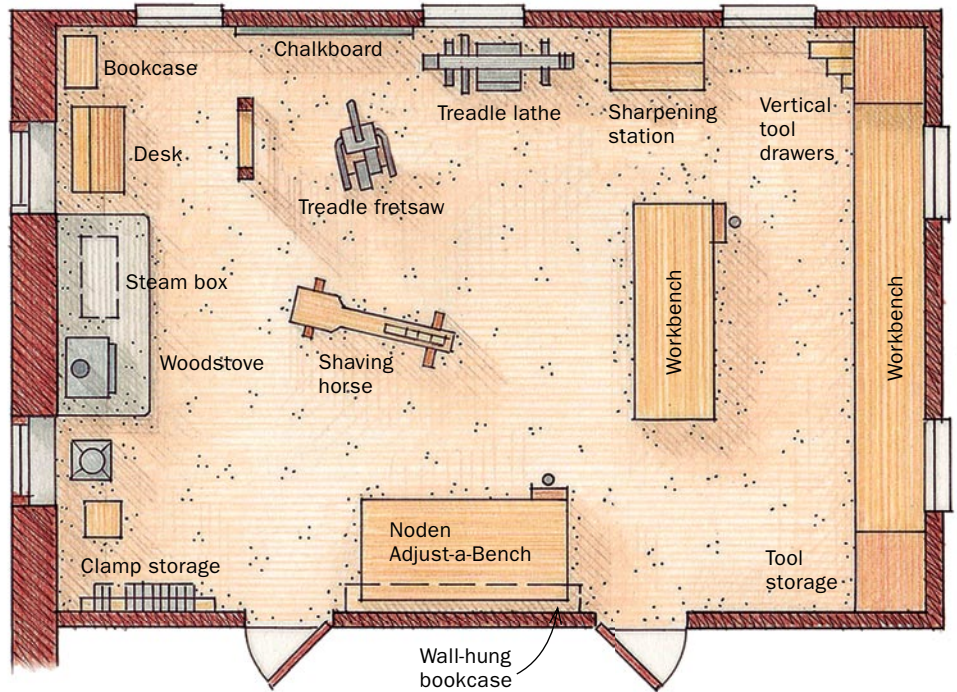
**Timber frame creates dream shop.** To complement the pre-industrial charm of his home, Waters designed his timber-frame shop to look like a horse barn. The inside is beautiful, too.

**S**unny Waters lives in the Pennsylvania countryside. His home is an accurate reproduction of a classic three-level home, down to the interior plank doors with wooden latches and leather pulls. That's the perfect setting for his woodworking, as he makes period chairs using traditional techniques and doesn't use any power tools.

When Waters set out to design his shop, he was less concerned about the budget than he was that the shop not conflict with the historical accuracy of his home, the idyllic countryside, and the pre-industrial bent of his woodworking. That's why his shop appears to be a two-horse barn, why its bones are a timber frame raised by local Amish craftsmen, and why he built the interior of the shop over three years, using hand tools whenever possible. But that doesn't mean he completely shunned the modern world. The walls, floors, and ceiling are insulated, and although the primary means of heat is a woodstove, Waters installed a propane heater for really cold mornings. And he took advantage of full-extension drawer slides in a clever way to make his tools easy to store and easy to reach.

## HAND-TOOL HAVEN

An emphasis on hand tools and man-powered machines led to this uncluttered but well-outfitted shop.



**Take the lathe for a spin.** Waters likes to make chairs, which need turned parts. A treadle lathe allows him to stay true to his love for traditional, human-powered tools.





**A few modern conveniences fit in fine.** The Noden Adjust-a-Bench isn't out of place in Waters's hand-tool shop, and its versatility allows Waters to carve without bending over.



**Beauty and warmth.** A wood-stove is the primary source of heat in winter. It looks perfect set against a wall made from local stones.



**Turn drawers on end.** Vertical panels, mounted on full-extension slides, pack Waters's large collection of hand tools into a small space, and the setup makes it easy to reach them.