

how they did it

Tools drive the design

DEDICATED WORKSTATIONS
MAKE A MODEST SPACE EFFICIENT

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

Jim Tolpin designed his 18-ft. by 11-ft. shop, he says, “to create the most efficient workspace possible for hand-tool woodworking.” He divided the snug shop (see the back cover) into workstations—planing and boring on one bench, fine joinery on another, sharpening on a third—customizing the height, size, and workholding devices at each bench to their intended uses, and creating storage for the appropriate tools within arm’s reach.

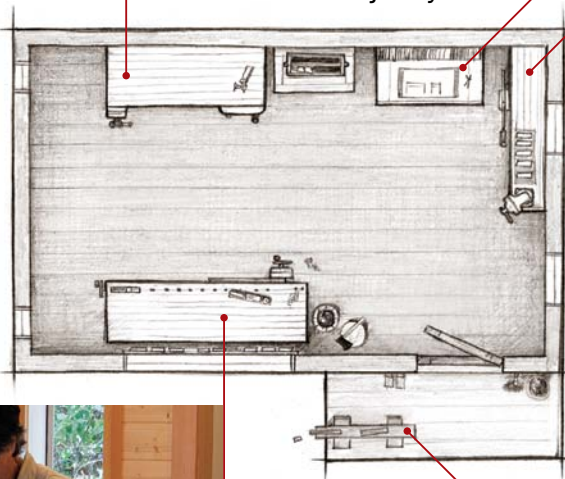
The shop’s design was inspired in part by many visits to Colonial Williamsburg, where, Tolpin says, “I was always impressed by the beauty and simplicity of the shop buildings—and of the work the craftsmen were doing.” He also noted that four traditional craftsmen could work efficiently in a very small space.



Finer work at a greater height. The tall shoulder vise at Tolpin’s joinery bench brings fine work up close. The benchtop is also elevated to suit joinery work.



Draw and drop. To conserve space, Tolpin built a stand-up drafting table that folds down when not needed.



Get sharp. Along with his ceramic stones and diamond plate, which live on a rubber mat, Tolpin’s wall-mounted sharpening bench features a saw-sharpening vise and a task lamp with a magnifying lens.



Perfect height for planing.

Tolpin placed his heavy-duty workbench, with its low height suited for sawing, chopping, and planing, beneath the large front window for maximum daylight on the work. By setting the bench away from the wall, he gained hanging space for a range of handsaws.



Outdoor sawing. A saw bench on the porch is where Tolpin cuts raw stock to rough size before taking it into the shop. The bench is also useful for roughing stock with a hatchet.

