



Haven for Hand Tools

Jim Tolpin spent 30 years working wood to the buzz and whine of routers, sanders, tablesaws, and other implements essential to the efficient operation of the small production cabinet shop he ran in Port Townsend, Wash. Eventually, though, the noise and dust took the pleasure out of the profession, and Tolpin quit. It was a reacquaintance with hand-tool skills, which he'd first tasted during his days as a boatbuilder in the 1970s, that rekindled his desire to work with wood. The new pleasure also revived an old idea: "For years," he says, "I'd carried it around in my head that one day I'd have a shop that was quiet and clean and freestanding." That's just what he has now in his leafy side yard: a shop

built expressly for using hand tools, with dedicated stations for sawing, planing, boring, and chiseling, and no space for power tools. Abel Dances, a carpenter who teaches at the Port Townsend School of Woodworking, where Tolpin is a co-director, built the shop with help from Tolpin and some recent graduates. They did much of the work with hand tools, right down to planing the exterior moldings with hollows and rounds. Since moving his tools into the shop a year ago, Tolpin has built, along with some furniture projects, the divided-light shop windows as well as the Dutch door, which he made with a stash of prime Honduras mahogany and a porthole, both remnants of his days building boats.

—Jonathan Binzen

Photo: Jonathan Binzen

How They Did It Turn to p. 90 to see how Tolpin divided the interior space into workstations.

Audio Slide Show For a full tour of the shop with Tolpin describing all its features, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

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