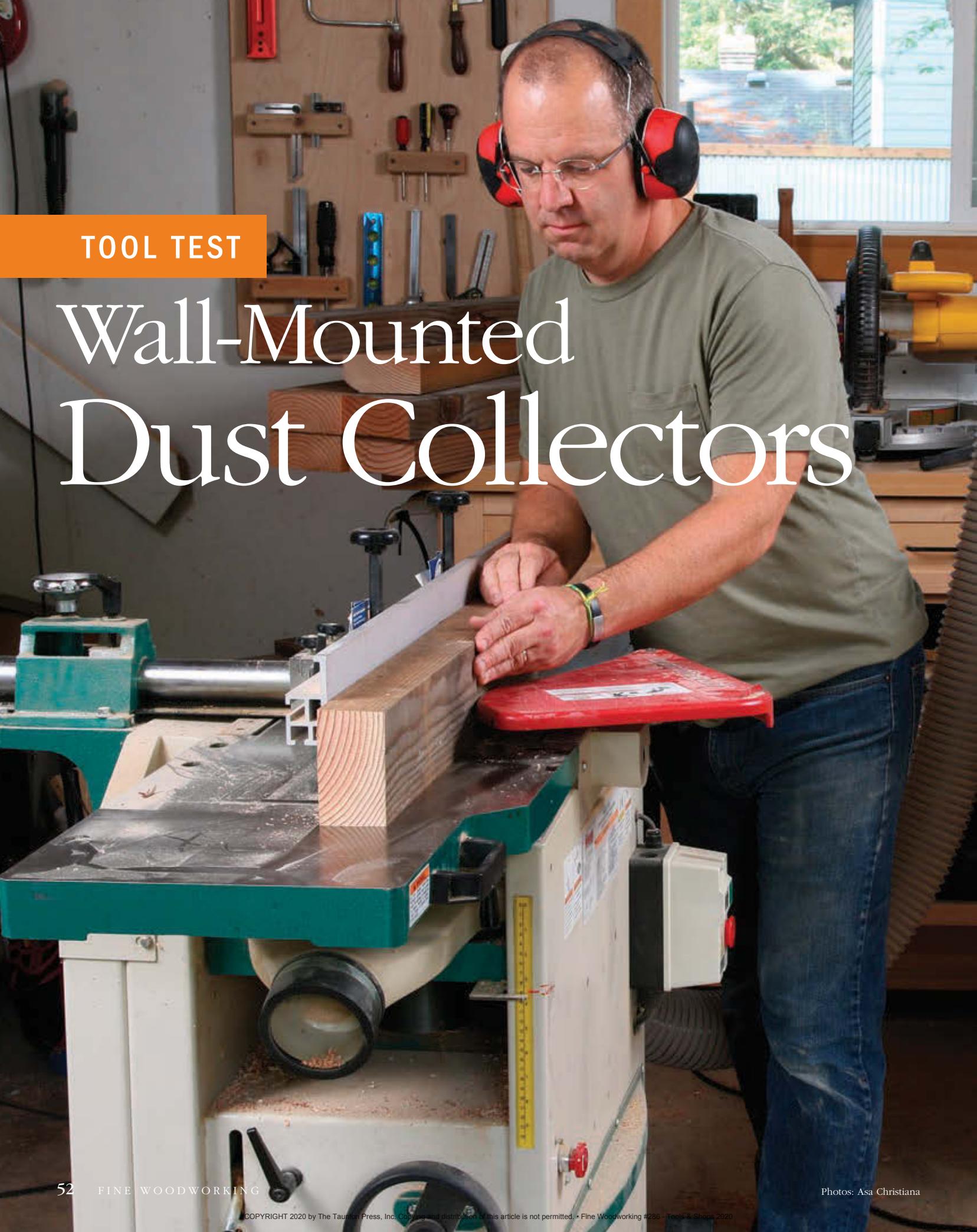


TOOL TEST

Wall-Mounted Dust Collectors





When woodworkers are considering dust-collection options, wall-mounted models often get overlooked. Designed to save valuable floor space in tight workshops, these come in a range of sizes, with smaller units best dedicated to one machine or two, and larger ones capable of pulling chips at a distance from four or more.

I recently took a close look at six of these units to see how they stacked up. While there are more than six on the market, I limited the field to those with filtration of 3 microns or better. That left in dust collectors with pleated cartridge filters and heavy felted bags, and left out the thin, frankly outdated bags that only grab larger chips and particles, while emitting clouds of fine dust at head height.

I also eliminated cyclone collectors, some of which can be mounted on the wall but are much larger and generally cost much more than these small, single-stage units.

These space-saving units have the power to get the job done

BY ASA CHRISTIANA

Of the six I tested, five are similar in size and power—at $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hp—and allow a measure of portability if additional wall brackets are placed around the shop. The sixth is much larger: a heavy $1\frac{1}{2}$ -hp model designed to stay put and connect to multiple machines.

To assess the portability and power of the units, and to see how each model might be used most effectively, I put them through a series of basic tests. Along the way, I looked at their overall chip capacity and what it's like to dump and reattach the bag, a frequent task that should be straightforward.

Real-world power test

The primary test for any dust collector is power, its ability to pull chips through a typical hose of a given length. While manufacturers provide airflow ratings for their units—in CFM, or cubic feet per minute—these are sometimes based on the blower motor only, without the filter attached, which significantly affects bottom-line efficiency.

Two ways to use them

Five of the wall-hung dust collectors we tested are 1 hp or less, and each will do a fine job collecting chips and dust from a machine placed a few feet away. The sixth—a much larger, heavier unit from Rockler—is capable of acting as a central dust collector in small shops.

Single-machine specialists. Use one of the smaller dust collectors as a companion to a larger collector placed elsewhere in the shop. By dedicating a wall-mounted model to one or two machines, you can avoid stretching a long hose from your main collector.



Larger model can do it all. The 1½-hp Rockler is strong enough to pull chips from 10 ft. away, letting it serve a range of machines in a compact shop on its own. Keep in mind, though, that while wall-hung collectors save space compared to floor models of similar power, they have smaller bags, which means more frequent emptying.



So I devised my own power test, designing it to be fair to the five smaller units but relevant to the big guy too. Using a standard 4-in.-dia. hose, roughly 6 ft. long, I connected each wall-hung collector to my jointer-planer combo machine, and made 100 passes over the jointer with large fir timbers, 2½ in. thick by 30 in. long. The jointer directs chips into the semi-closed chamber between the cutterhead and planer bed where the dust port is located. After each set of passes I could compare how many chips remained uncollected by each unit.

In general, while I could discern power differences between the five smaller units, they were minor. Each one collected more than 95% of the chips and dust produced—the same result I get with my large 1½-hp rolling dust collector, albeit with a longer hose. So I can say with certainty that each of these smaller wall-mounted collectors will do a fine job in your shop, provided that you keep hose runs shorter than 6 ft. or so.

The big unit from Rockler was a different animal, sweeping the jointer chamber almost clean throughout the test, meaning it could handle a much longer hose than the 6-footer in my test—no doubt up to 10 ft. or more—and therefore act as a central unit connected to three or four machines with a system of blast gates.

Bag capacity and attachment are important too

Five of these units have canister-type filters, dropping chips into clear plastic bags that hang below. One Shop Fox model gathers

Real-world testing

To compare the power of the units in use, Christiana hooked up each collector to his jointer-planer with 6 ft. of hose, and made 100 passes over the jointer with a 2½-in.-thick, 30-in.-long fir timber. In the process he noted bag capacity, and assessed the ease of emptying each unit.



Joint and check.
The combination machine directed chips into a semi-closed space under the jointer table, which has a 4-in. dust port. He lifted one jointer table after 40, 80, and 100 passes to document the chips left uncollected.



Capacity and bag changes. Five of the six bags are equal in size, and easily handled the 100 jointer passes. Ease of bag changes varied between units.



chips and dust in the same felted bag that serves as its filter. The five smaller collectors, including the Shop Fox with the felted bag, have nearly identical capacity, with each comfortably accommodating the 100 jointer passes before they had to be emptied.

Strangely, the big Rockler 1250 had the smallest bag, which overflowed with chips before the jointer test was over. However, the taller bag from the Rockler 650 unit happens to fit the 1250 even better, and packs of five are available from Rockler for \$10.

As for emptying and reattaching the bags, the best plastic ones stayed stretched over the bottom of the canister when empty, freeing up both of my hands for re-attaching their long band clamps. The felted bag was more troublesome to deal with.

Reality check on portability and best uses

While some manufacturers suggest that users buy additional hanging brackets and move the smaller models around the shop as needed, I'm not buying it as a solution to whole-shop dust collection. Even the lightest unit is 40 lb., and the models with cartridge filters are all 50 lb. or more. Moving any of those regularly would be a pain in the back for all but the burliest lumberjack. This reality became very clear as I shouldered the units on and off their brackets during testing.

That's why I would consider all of the wall-mounted units I tested as stationary fixtures, with the key differences being the hose runs each can support while delivering effective suction to the end of the hose.

In small shops like mine, one of the five smaller models would make a great companion to a larger dust collector. I probably would put the wall-hung unit near my tablesaw, saving me from dragging a long flexible hose across the floor from my rolling 1½-hp dust collector, which sits near the other major machines. And I wouldn't lose a foot of floor space. So think of the smaller units as companion collectors for out-of-the-way machines.

For even smaller shops, with too little floor space for a rolling unit, the Rockler 1250 could serve as a main dust collector, hung in a convenient spot and connected to multiple machines with blast gates.

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Wall-mounted dust collectors, head to head

The “good” suction ratings on the five smaller collectors are relative to hose length. If each is kept close to a tool or machine, the efficiency rises to excellent. Chip capacity was virtually equal on the smaller units.



GRIZZLY G0785

Price: \$325 with canister
Motor: 1 hp
Weight: 54 lb.
Filtration: 1 micron canister
Suction: Good
Chip capacity: Good
Emptying bag: Very good



RIKON 60-101

Price: \$450 with canister
Motor: 1 hp
Weight: 54 lb.
Filtration: 1 micron canister
Suction: Good
Chip capacity: Good
Emptying bag: Fair



ROCKLER DUST RIGHT 650 CFM

Price: \$500 with canister
Motor: 3/4 hp
Weight: 57 lb.
Filtration: 1 micron canister
Suction: Good
Chip capacity: Good
Emptying bag: Very good

Seemingly identical to the Shop Fox W1844, the Grizzly G0785 collected a few less chips in our test—but was still roughly average among the five small models. Emptying was easy, thanks to a bag that stays in place on the canister while you operate the band clamp, which also works well. Both units hang well on their brackets.

The Rikon's power and capacity are comparable to the other smaller models, but a few issues held it back. Because the chip bag hangs a bit loosely on the canister, it tends to slip off during changes. On the plus side, it's the only small collector with a 5-in.-dia. intake, so if you discard the Y-junction with the 4-in. ports, and run a 5-in. hose closer to your machines, you'll add efficiency.

While all five of the smaller units will collect chips efficiently when deployed properly, the 3/4-hp Rockler was just a bit more powerful in our suction test. Bag changes were very easy too, thanks to a lip on the lower edge of the canister, which holds the bag in place while you operate the clamp. The Rockler 650 also hangs very solidly on its bracket, which helps when you turn the filter-cleaning crank.



Easy bag changes. The Grizzly's plastic bag wraps tightly over the canister, freeing up your hands for the band clamp.



Tricky bag. The Rikon bag tends to slip off its canister while you are positioning the band clamp. Practice helps.



Easy bag changes too. A handy lip on the bottom of the canister keeps the bag tightly in place while you operate the clamp.



**BEST OVERALL
CHOICE**

ROCKLER DUST RIGHT 1250 CFM

Price: \$830 with canister
Motor: 1½ hp
Weight: 78 lb.
Filtration: 1-micron canister
Suction: Excellent
Chip capacity: Fair with standard bag
Emptying bag: Fair with standard bag



SHOP FOX W1844

Price \$450 with canister
Motor: 1 hp
Weight: 54 lb.
Filtration: 1-micron canister
Suction: Good
Chip capacity: Good
Emptying bag: Very good

**AUTHOR'S
BEST VALUE
CHOICE**

SHOP FOX W1826

Price: \$230
Motor: 1 hp
Weight: 40 lb.
Filtration: 2.5 micron felted bag
Suction: Good
Chip capacity: Good
Emptying bag: Fair



The big motor on this collector left the chamber under my jointer very clean. You'll need help to get this heavy unit onto its bracket, but if you're looking for a central dust collector that won't gobble floor space, this may be the unit for you. Strangely, this huge unit comes with the smallest plastic chip bag, but you can replace that with a taller one from Rockler.

Although seemingly identical to the Grizzly G0785, the Shop Fox W1844 delivered slightly better suction than the Grizzly. Bag changes are easy on both machines, thanks to a nice-fitting bag that stays in place while you operate the band clamp. And both units hang solidly on their brackets.

The thick, felted bag on this Shop Fox is a plus and a minus. On one hand, it makes the unit much less expensive than collectors with canister filters, and also lighter and easier to hang on the wall. Without a separate plastic bag to catch chips, however, they stay in the felt bag, and the shortish zipper on the bottom makes it tough to shake them out. Otherwise, the W1826 is an excellent value.



Handy remote.
The big Rockler is powerful enough to serve as a small shop's main dust collector, and comes with a remote.



Replace the bag.
The small bag on the Rockler 1250 is easily replaced with the taller type from the Rockler 650.



Good power. Barely edged out by the Rockler 650, the Shop Fox W1844 demonstrated admirable efficiency after 100 passes.



Head outside to dump it. Packed chips come out slowly at first so it's a good idea to empty this thick bag outdoors.