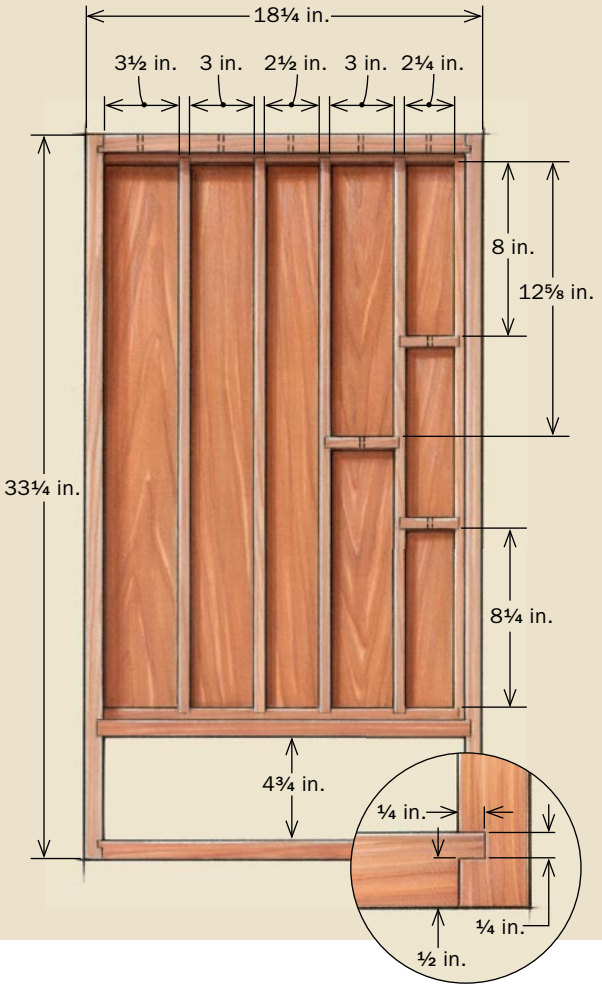
Keep Planes

Planes go in and out in seconds

BOOTLACES ARE THE SECRET

Planes rest on the angled back panel and are held in place with sturdy bootlace loops. The rack hangs on a hidden french cleat, screwed into studs.



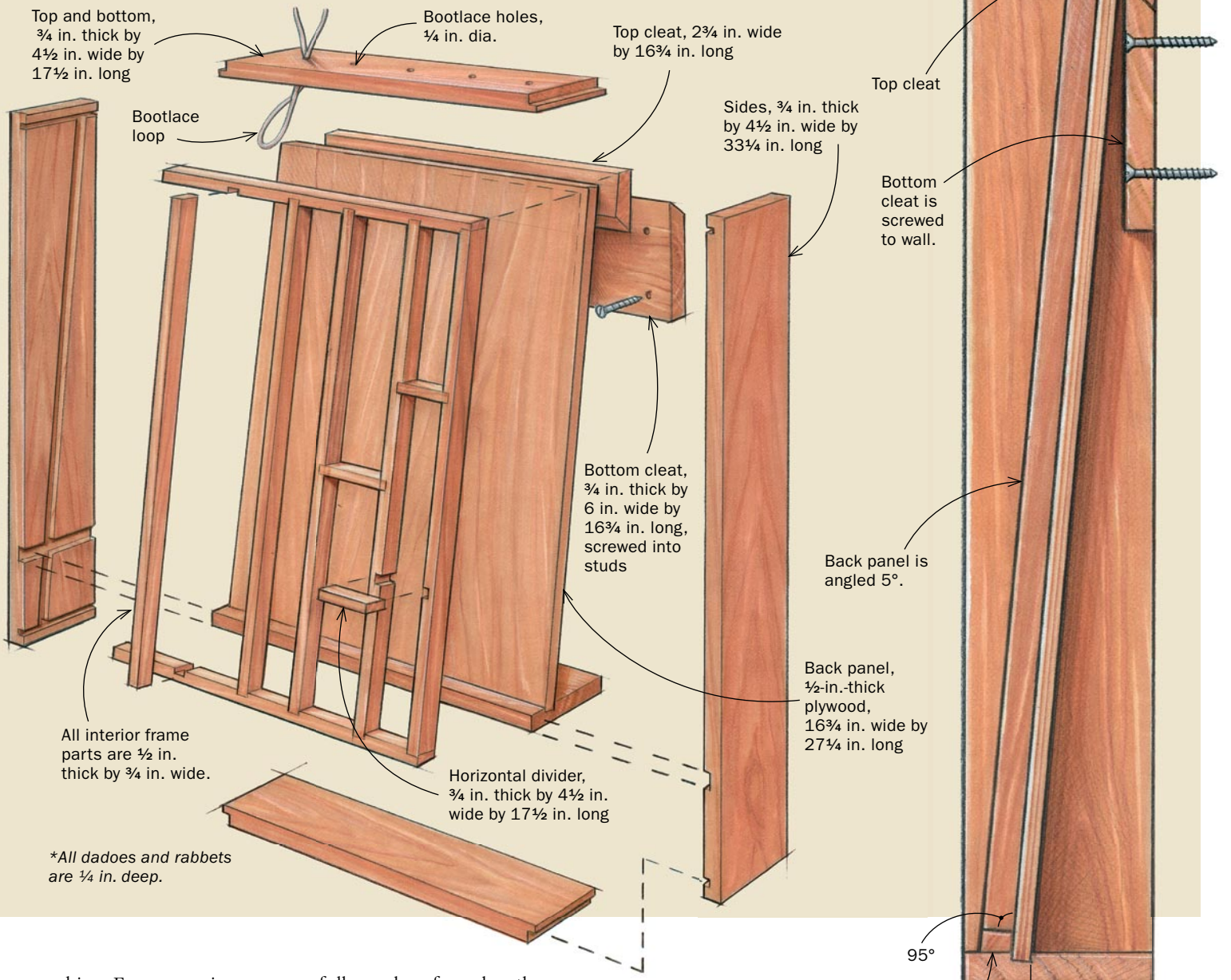
BY CHRIS GOCHNOUR

Let's face it. Handplanes are expensive, costing as much as or more than a benchtop power tool. To keep these investments safe, many woodworkers tuck their planes inside drawers or cabinets. Though the tools are safe and sound, it's a nuisance to keep opening a door or drawer to access the planes while they're

Photos: Thomas McKenna; drawings: Bob La Pointe

Close at Hand

with this easy-to-make rack



SIDE-VIEW DETAIL

working. For convenience, many folks end up keeping their most-used planes on top of the bench.

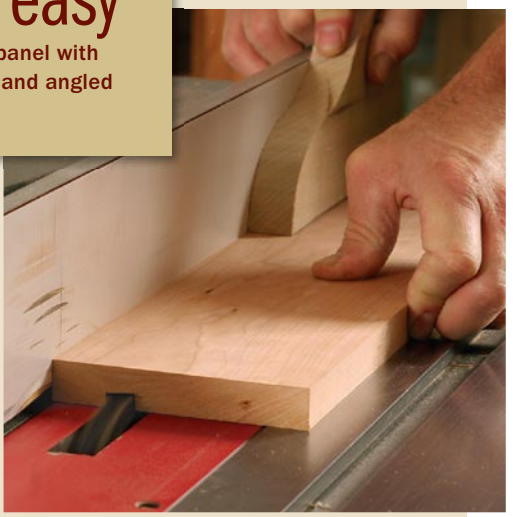
That method is not so convenient, however, because the planes can get in the way, and they're just inches from getting knocked to the floor accidentally. My plane rack solves all of those problems.

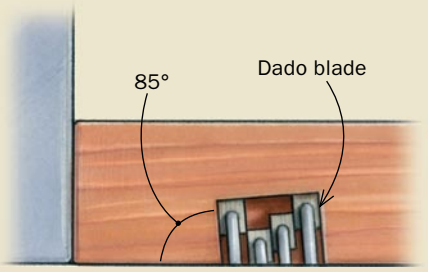
Though simple in design, the rack has a unique way of holding the planes. The knobs are suspended from loops made from bootlaces, and the soles rest on an angled panel. The system is strong and stable, and the bootlace hangers allow me to grab and store planes with ease.

This rack holds what I consider to be a full set of handplanes—a jointer, fore, jack, two smoothers (Nos. 4 and 4½), three block planes—with room below for some specialty planes, such as a shoulder plane. But the rack can be modified to fit

Angled cuts made easy

Cut the top and bottom grooves for the back panel with a tilted dado blade. Then use a plunge router and angled fence to make the grooves in the sides.





Tilt a dado. *Cut the grooves in the top and the horizontal divider at 5°.*

more or fewer planes, or planes of different sizes.

Joinery is straightforward

The case is assembled with simple dadoes and rabbeted dadoes. After cutting these joints, you can take on the trickiest part of the assembly: cutting the grooves for the angled back panel. Start by making the grooves in the underside of the top and in the top of the horizontal divider. These through-grooves are cut on the tablesaw using a dado set tilted to the panel angle (5°). Then, dry-assemble the case. Place a spacer, the same thickness as the back panel and about 1 in. wide by 3 in. long, into the grooves in the top and divider. Knife around the spacer to locate the grooves in the sides.

Clamp the sides together and to the benchtop and clamp a long plywood fence to one side, aligned with the groove marks. Rout the groove using a plunge router and a ½-in.-dia. pattern bit. Rout the groove in the other side piece in the same way. With all the grooves made, cut and fit the plywood back panel and glue up the case. Then make and fit the french cleat. Note how it is angled to sit flat against the back panel.

Cut and fit the interior frame

Start by making the top and bottom pieces of the frame. Cut them to length, then bevel one edge 5° so that the inward facing edge is at a right angle to the back panel (see drawing, p. 83). That means you bevel the top edge of the top piece and the bottom edge of the bottom piece.

Layout blocks ensure that all the grooves meet. *With the case dry-assembled, use offcuts from the back-panel stock to lay out the side grooves. Place these blocks in the top and bottom grooves and scribe around them with a knife.*

Rout the sloping side grooves. *Clamp a fence aligned with the scribe marks, and use a plunge router and ½-in. pattern bit.*

Assembly's a cinch

Gluing up the case won't be hard. Assemble the carcase first. Once that's done, make the french cleat, then cut and assemble the interior frame.

Build the box first. *The plywood back panel is glued into its grooves, making the cabinet rigid.*

Glue in the interior frame. *Install the top and bottom frame pieces first, then attach the vertical pieces. You can glue them to the back panel without clamps, but the joinery must be tight. Drill the bootlace holes in the short horizontal pieces before gluing them in.*

Next, cut the dadoes for the vertical frame pieces in the top and bottom of the frame. Fit the vertical pieces, then cut the dadoes in them for the short horizontal frame pieces. After cutting and fitting the shorter pieces, drill ¼-in.-dia. holes in them for the lower bootlace hooks. Now glue the interior frame into the case. These tight-fitting parts require only spring clamps to hold them while the glue cures. After the interior frame has been installed, drill holes through the top of the case for the top bootlace hooks. Clamp a backer board to the opposite side to prevent tearout.

Finish the rack and tie up loose ends

I finished the rack with three coats of Watco Danish Oil, which brings out the beauty of the wood, protects it from grime, and touches up easily if needed. Once the finish is dry, make the bootlace hooks. It will take some tries to get the right-length loop for each compartment. Don't get frustrated. As long as you can hook the knob of the plane through the loop and the plane sits in its compartment, you're good to go. Singe the ends of the loops to prevent fraying.

It won't take long to get the hang of this rack. Soon you'll be removing and replacing the planes with just one hand. □

Chris Gochnour is a furniture maker near Salt Lake City.

HANG TIME

Holes for the hooks. *Once the case is glued up, drill holes through the top piece for the bootlace hooks. Clamp a backer board underneath to prevent tearout.*

Custom hooks. *Make a loop using a square knot (top) and thread it through its hole (above). Experiment to get the right-length loop for each plane.*