

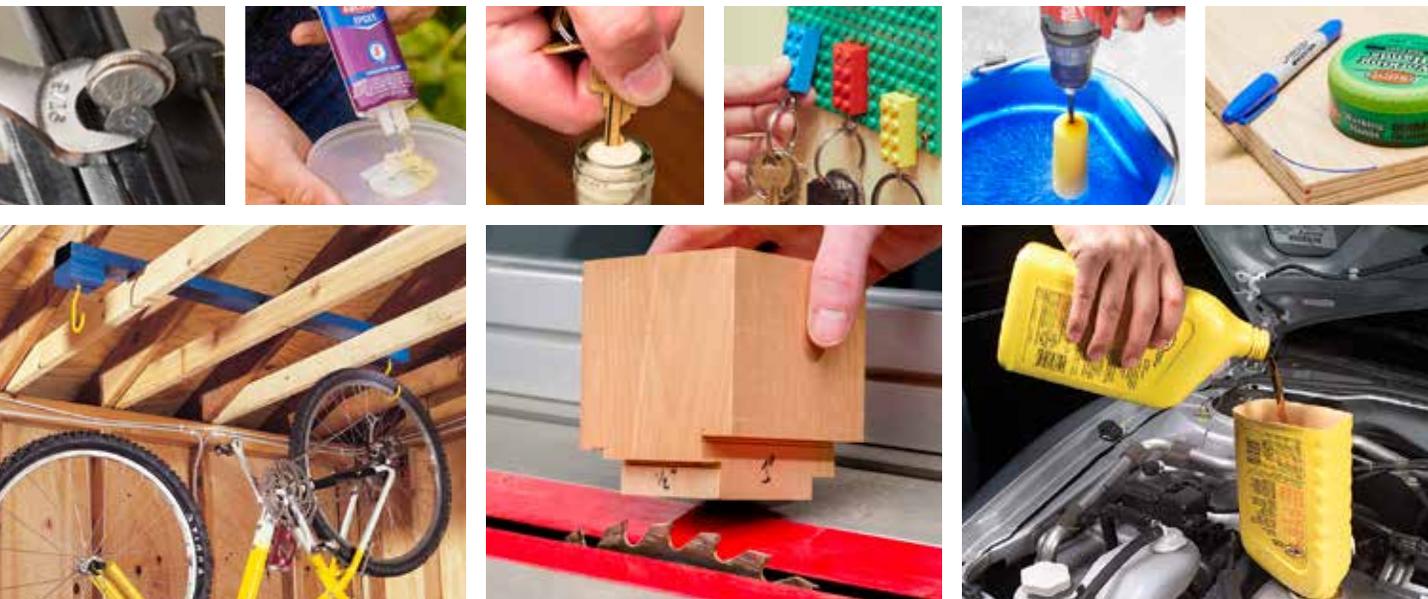


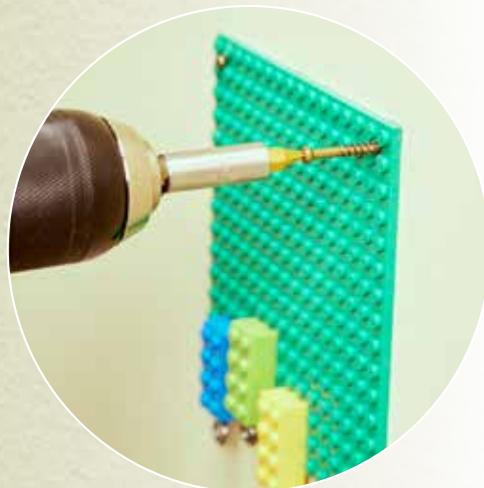
**family  
handyman**

# 1001

**FAVORITE**

# Handy Hints<sup>®</sup>





## COLORFUL KEY STATION

When my kids outgrew their LEGO bricks, I repurposed a few of them to make this handy key station. I predrilled holes in the small bricks to thread in eye screws, and then slipped the key rings onto the eye screws. Fasten the base to the wall with screws.

**JANET RODRIGUEZ**





## NO-WAIT GLUE

I don't like waiting for the glue to reach the bottle's tip when I'm in the middle of a big glue-up. To make sure the glue is ready to flow immediately when I pick up the bottle, I just turn the bottle upside down in a can that sits on my workbench.

**BRAD HOLDEN**



## UNDER-THE-HOOD MAINTENANCE RECORD

My truck's air filter cover makes a perfect blackboard for my maintenance schedule. I use a chalk marker to write down the dates I last changed the oil, air filter, spark plugs, etc. The chalk marker isn't affected by water but is easily cleaned off with an ammonia-based cleaner (such as Windex). For me, this is much simpler than recording everything in the owner's manual. It's right where I need it!

**HANK HUFF**



## MEASURING STICK FOR FIREWOOD

For a tidy stack, I like my firewood to be all the same length. The simplest measuring device I've found is my chain saw's bar.

**TRAVIS LARSON**



## CARRIAGE-BOLT LADDER HOOK

Sometimes there isn't room to set all the stuff I might need at the top of my ladder. So I attach a bolt to the top surface through one of the existing tool holes. You'll need a nut and washer on top and underneath. It's perfect for hanging an extension cord, a tool belt or even a bucket.

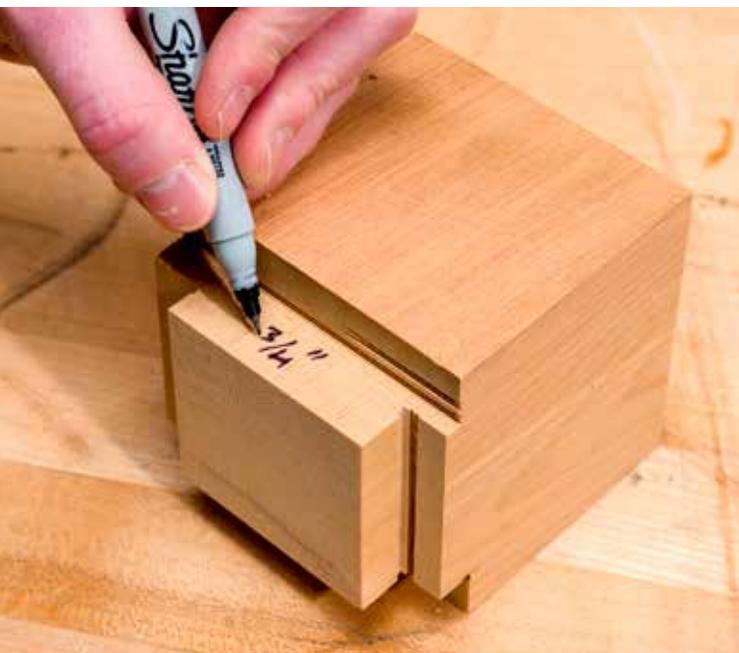
**MARK AMMONS**



## AROUND-THE-SHOP CURVE GUIDES

When I need to draw a curve on a project, instead of reaching for a ruler and a compass, I start looking around my shop. There are dozens of round objects available for tracing a perfect curve or radius—anything from a 5-gallon bucket to a roll of tape to the dime in my pocket.

**BOB TURNER**



## BLADE-HEIGHT GAUGE BLOCK

Here's a quick way to set the height of a table saw blade. I cut notches on the end of a 4x4 block at the blade heights I use most often: 1/4 in., 3/8 in., 1/2 in. and 3/4 in. To use the block, position the desired notch over the blade and raise the blade until its highest point just touches the block.

**VERN HAUSER**





## SAWDUST FOR OIL SPILLS

Sawdust won't remove the stain from an oil spill, but it can quickly get rid of the puddle. And if you have power tools, you've got a ready supply. Sprinkle a generous amount of sawdust over the oil and let the pile sit for about 20 minutes.

Using a stiff broom, sweep the sawdust over the spill a few times to soak up as much oil as possible. Scoop the oily sawdust into a plastic bag, tie it shut and toss it in the trash. You may need to use a degreaser to remove any oily residue.

**Note:** In most states, it's acceptable to throw oil-soaked sawdust in the trash (as long as the oil is no longer in liquid form). However, you should check your local regulations before doing so.

**TRAVIS LARSON**



## MAGNET DRAGNET

After you've had remodeling or roofing work done on your home, it's not unusual to get a flat tire from old nails or other hardware left behind. As soon as the roofing contractors' taillights were out of my driveway, I rigged up this drag using rope and a 24-in. magnetic bar tool holder (No. YA161; \$40 at [store.snap-on.com](http://store.snap-on.com)). I drag it everywhere I'll be driving. It picks up much more metal debris than the wheeled type, which doesn't actually touch the ground. It sure beats the cost and hassle of a flat tire.

**STEVE RODGERS**



## HANDY SANDING DISC CLEANER

Sandpaper loses its effectiveness when it's clogged with sawdust or pitch. Gum eraser-type sandpaper cleaners work really well, but if you don't have one, the sole of an old sneaker works too. Turn on your sander and slide the rubber sole along the disc or belt, using just enough pressure to remove the sanding debris.

**LEE WRIGHT**



## FLY YOUR OWN FLAG

Home centers and lumberyards typically have red plastic flags and twine or staples to fasten the flags to your extra-long load. But it seems like they're almost always out of one of the above. Also, staples and twine usually come undone, liberating the flag before I've reached my destination. So I keep my own flag in my truck. It's a red shop rag with a bungee cord run through a hole in one corner of the rag. I've never had this fly off, and it's always there when I need it.

SAUL CARVAJAL

## NO CORKSCREW? NO PROBLEM!



### Insert a key

Push a key into the cork at a 45-degree angle until the key's teeth are all the way in the cork. Then twist and pull the cork up and out.

TINA WATRUD



### Thread a large screw hook into the cork

Then just slip your finger through the hook and pull out the cork.

JIM FERGUSON



## POCKET MAGNET

Here's a tip I discovered by accident. I'd been installing some rare earth magnets in a project, so I had a few in my pocket. When I stepped away from my workbench, I looked down and saw my 12-ft. tape measure attached to my pocket! It's not a lot of trouble to use the tape's clip, but having the tape measure stuck to your pocket is even easier.

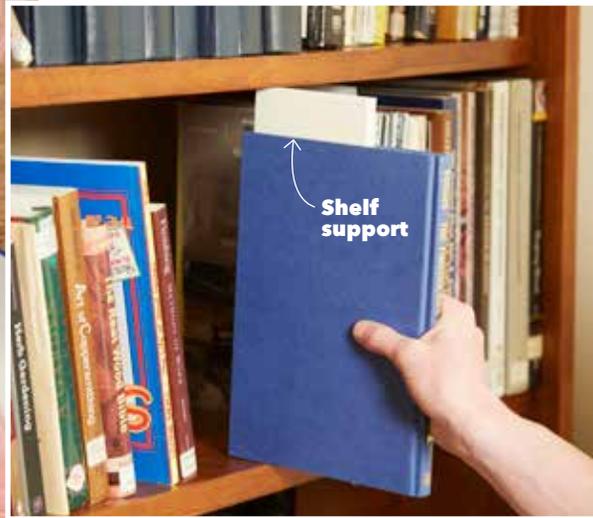
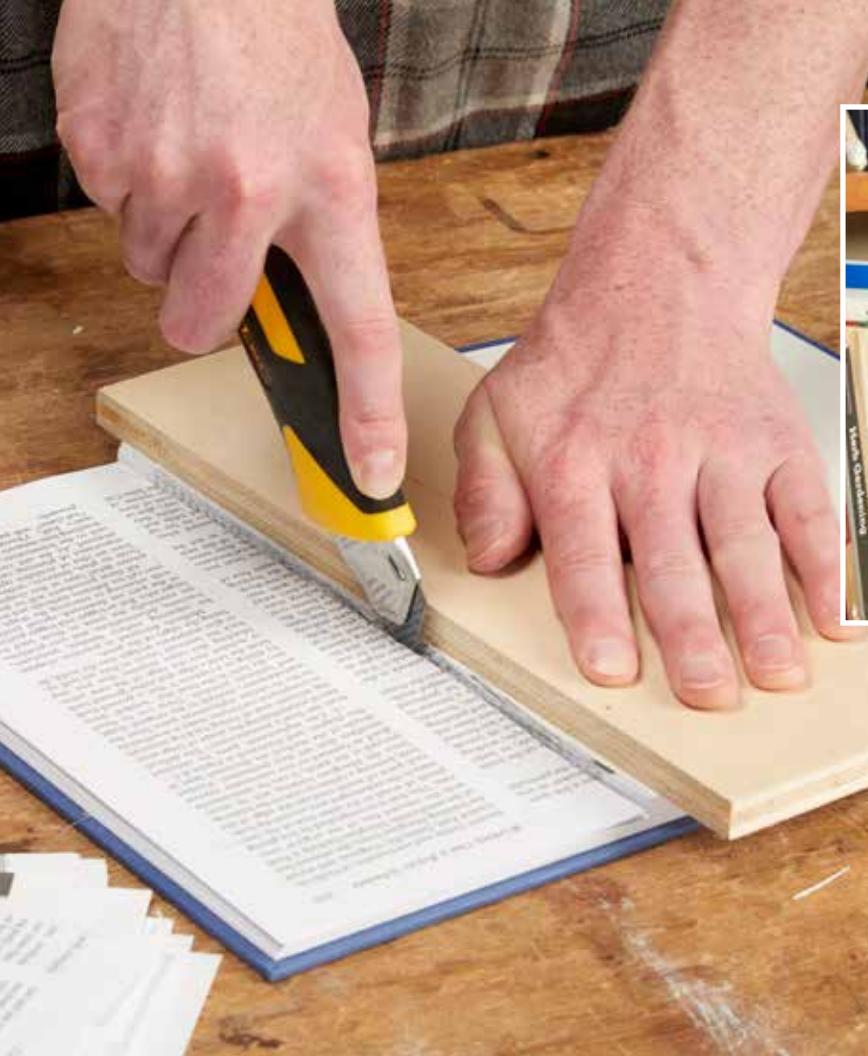
I keep a few magnets stuck to my tape measure's clip so I don't lose them. This won't work with a 25-ft. tape; it's just too heavy. And don't put the magnets in the same pocket as your phone or credit cards.

## CONVENIENT BENCH CLAMPS

Trigger-style bar clamps make perfect workbench hold-down clamps. First, punch out the split-tube stop at the end of the clamp's bar and then slide the trigger head off. Slip the bar through a bench-dog hole and reinstall the trigger head. If your bench doesn't have dog holes, just drill a hole wherever you need it.

**WILL LEIGHTON**

**BRAD HOLDEN**



## FIX FOR SAGGING SHELVES

Here's a clever way to keep shelves from sagging. Cut a piece of plywood the height of the space between the shelves and just wide enough to provide support for the shelf. Cut enough pages out of an unwanted book to accommodate the plywood brace. Glue the plywood into the book and tuck it in with your other books, near the center of the shelf.

**WALT MORRISON**



## QUICK MIXING SURFACE

Instead of using a container to mix a little epoxy, make a mixing surface on your workbench using painter's tape. Lay down several strips, overlapping the edges so the epoxy doesn't get on your bench. When you're done, peel off the tape and throw it away.

**CHRIS WHITING**



## HOOK-BLADE STAPLE PULLER

I've found the easiest way to pull staples is with a hook blade in my utility knife. A quick jerk in the middle of the staple usually does the trick. Once in a while, the staples snap in two and I have to pull them out with pliers. But that's better than pulling every single one that way.

**NEIL LONG**



## CHIMNEY FLUE PLANTERS

To make these terra-cotta planters, go to a brick supplier and buy 3-ft. lengths of clay chimney flue liner (\$15 each). Cut them to different heights using a circular saw fitted with an abrasive cutting wheel. You can put them on a deck or patio, or accent your yard wherever you like—just pick your spots and bury the ends in the soil a little.

Fill the liners with gravel for drainage, leaving 8 in. at the top for potting soil. Since the water can drain, the liners won't crack if they freeze. Or just set pots on top of the gravel and bring in the plants for the winter.

**NANCY BELMONT**



## COMPRESSOR CREEPER

Air compressors are heavy and cumbersome to haul around a shop or garage, so I put mine on wheels. I picked up this mechanic's creeper at a yard sale for \$15. Now it's a breeze to roll, rather than carry, my compressor wherever I need it.

**NEAL HALSEY**



## MOTOR OIL SMART SPOUT

I had a hard time pouring motor oil into my snow blower engine without spilling, so I raided the kitchen for a solution. I found that the spout for olive oil and vinegar bottles screws right onto motor oil bottles. Now I can pour without a mess, but I need to buy a replacement before my wife finds out.

**RICH GONZALEZ**



## SELF-DRAINING DEHUMIDIFIER

If you forget to empty the tank on your dehumidifier, it'll either overflow or shut off. That defeats the whole purpose of running a dehumidifier in damp areas. I didn't have a floor drain in that part of the basement, so I bought a condensate pump (\$40 to \$100 at home centers) and tubing and rigged it to my dehumidifier. Then I ran the tubing up to the ceiling, through the joist areas and down to the laundry tub. Now the dehumidifier runs full time, and I never need to empty the tank or worry about it shutting off.

**DOUG BALTZER**



## BERRY BOX SEED SPREADER

If you have just a few small bare spots in the lawn, use a berry container to spread the seed. They have small holes just right for shaking out grass seed. Just clean and dry the container, fill it with grass seed and you're ready to go.

**BRAD HOLDEN**



## GROCERY BAG SHOE COVERS

When I'm working outside, it never fails that I need to go back into the house for something I've forgotten. But I'm too lazy to take my dirty shoes off, so I keep a stash of plastic grocery bags in the mudroom. I just step into the bags to cover my dirty shoes and tie the handle loops around my ankles. I can go into the house without leaving a trace.

**LANCE WIIST**



## PREPAINTING NAIL HEADS

When you're installing pre-painted wood or engineered-wood siding, paint the tops of galvanized nail coils the color of the house before loading them into the gun. It's much faster than going back and painting them one at a time later. Use a foam brush and apply the paint sparingly so it doesn't drip over the edges of the nail heads. Let the paint dry completely before loading the coils into the nail gun.

**NATE SCHLUTER**



## MINI BLIND CLEANING TONGS

Dusting mini blinds is a pain. It's difficult to thoroughly wipe both sides of the slats without bending them in the process. A pair of kitchen tongs makes it a lot easier.

First, cut a rag into two small pieces. Then use twist ties or rubber bands to secure the rags around the tongs. You can close the tongs around each slat and wipe away the dust.

**E. REGALDO**



## C-CLAMP HANDLES

Quart-size paint cans don't have handles, but they'd be so much easier to use if they did. Here's my solution: Attach a C-clamp to the can. It actually works better than a bail because it's out of the way for dipping the brush, and it keeps the can from swinging. Your clamp will get paint on it, but cleaning it up is easy.

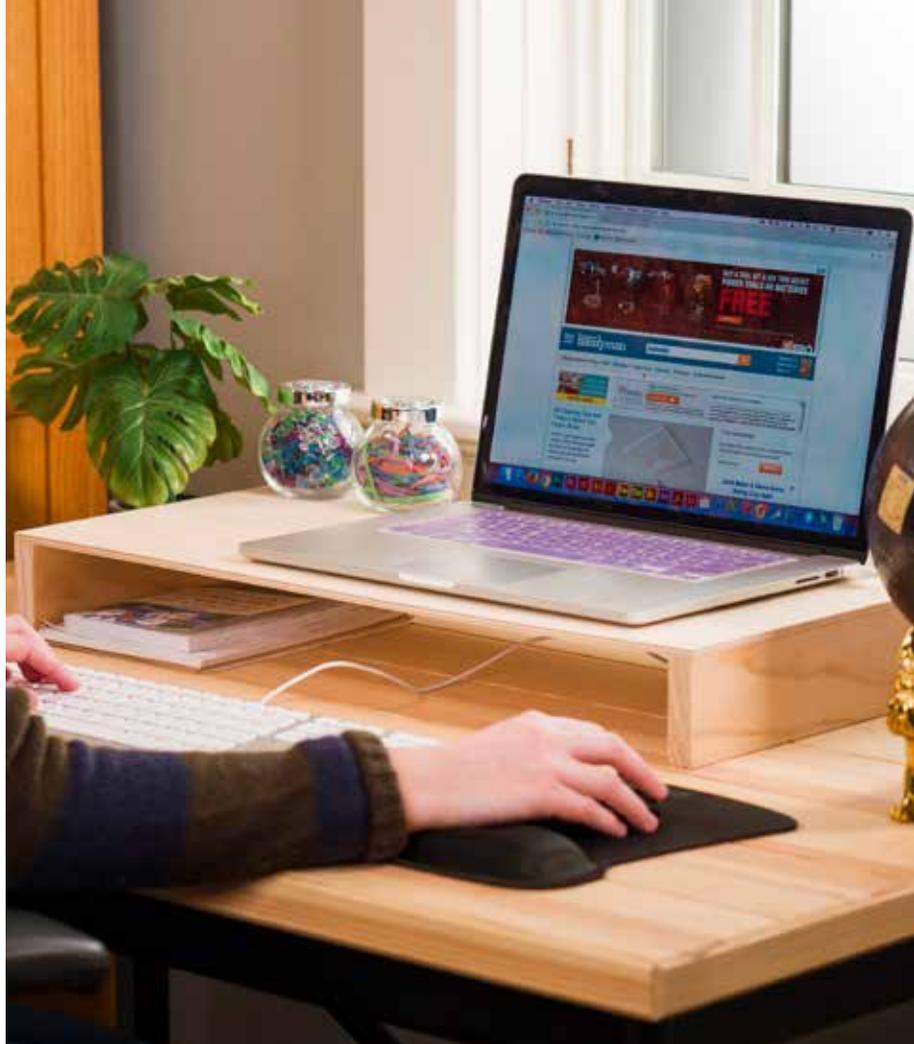
**MIKE WATT**



## TWO NAIL LENGTHS IN ONE GUN

Small carpentry projects, such as trimming a door, often require a couple different lengths of brad nails. To save time, load the different lengths you'll need into the magazine. When you need to switch, just open up the magazine and put the strip with the correct length of brads first in line. You'll also break fewer strips by loading them all at once. Nail strips tend to break when they're shoved into a pocket or dropped on a hard floor.

**TRAVIS LARSON**



## SIMPLE COMPUTER SHELF

To get my laptop at a comfortable height for working, I made this shelf for my desk with some leftover boards, glue and a few finish nails. I used a 12-in. x 24-in. piece of plywood for the platform and two 12-in. pieces of 1x3 for the supports. Attach the supports with glue and finish nails or screws. The open space is a good spot to stash a pad of paper, books or my keyboard when it's not in use.

**MARK PETERSEN**



## A PENNY FOR YOUR TOILET SHIMS

I often use spare change as shims to level a toilet. Coins provide a firm seat, and each denomination is a different thickness. Simply slide as many coins as necessary under the toilet until it's completely level. Then tighten the flange bolts and caulk along the floor as usual. The caulk will hide the coins. Washers work well too.

**LES ZELL, MASTER PLUMBER**



Wye Fitting

## EASY STORAGE FOR HAIR APPLIANCES

This PVC wye fitting looks like it was designed to store hair appliances! The 4-in. opening is perfect for a hair dryer, and the 2-in. one is just the right size to hold a curling iron or straightener. The fitting is stable enough to sit on a vanity top without tipping over. If you don't like the look, either spray-paint it or mount it inside a cabinet with a couple of screws.

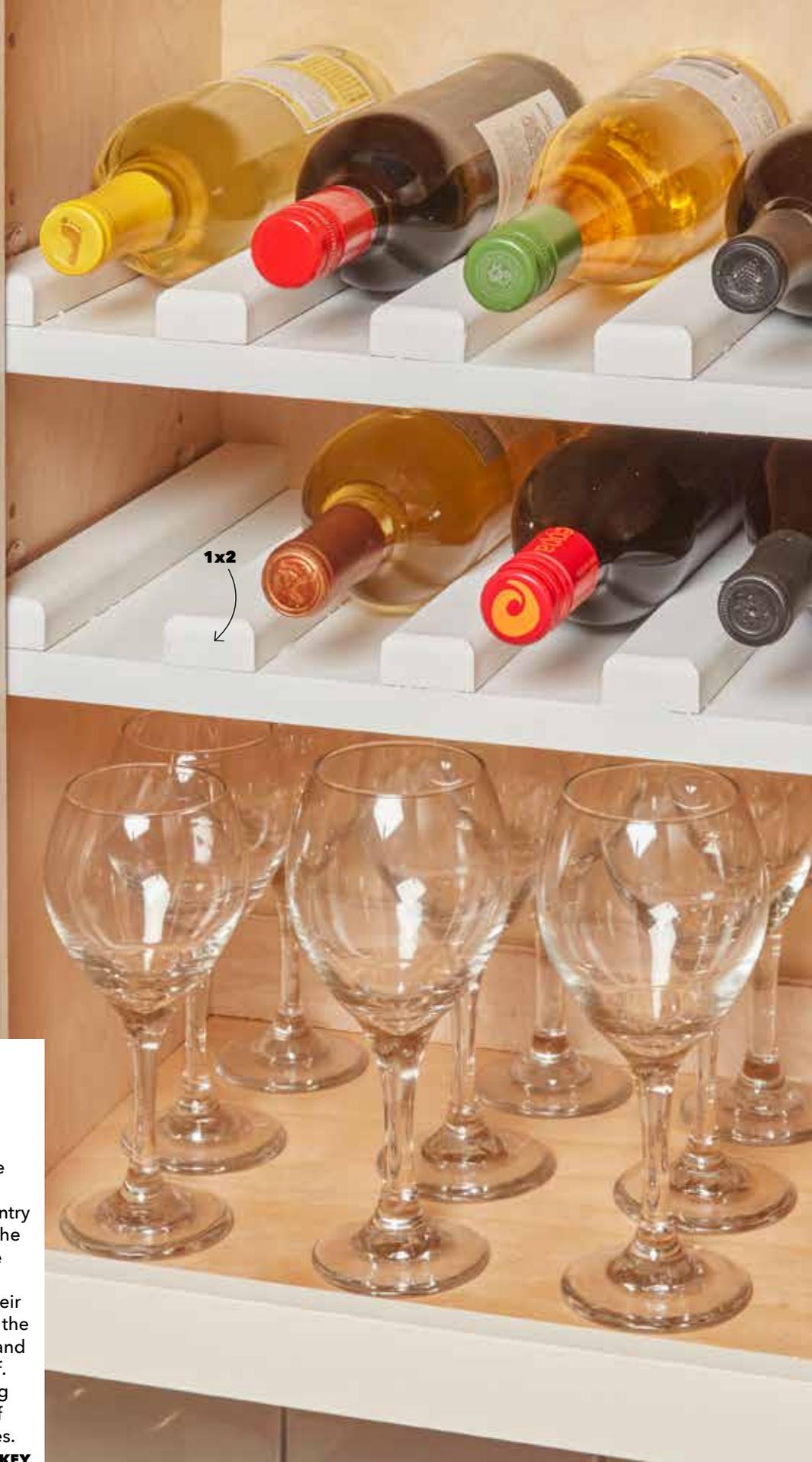
**JULIE OELLRICH**



## PAINTBRUSH PROTECTORS

After thoroughly washing and air-drying my brushes, I wrap them with the same painter's plastic that I use to mask off trim and protect the floors. The tape on the edge sticks to the metal ferrule, and the plastic is the perfect length to cover the bristles and help maintain their shape.

**JOE MARTIN**



## EASY-TO-MAKE WINE RACK

If you need more space for wine storage, make this wine rack using pantry shelves and 1x2s. Cut the 1x2s to length to fit the shelf depth and use a router to round over their top edges. Then space the 1x2s about 2 in. apart and screw them to the shelf. Adjust the shelf spacing so there's about 5 in. of clearance for the bottles.

**ROBERT LACKEY**



## SALAD BAR GREENHOUSE

The next time you hit the salad bar for lunch, save the plastic container to make a mini greenhouse for starting seeds. Wash the container and then punch some air holes in the top. Fill the bottom with potting soil, plant your seeds, add a little water and close the lid. Set the container in a sunny spot and watch your seeds sprout! Once the seeds sprout, take off the lid.

**DIANE PLOWE**



## NUT + NUT = BOLT HEAD

Hanger bolts are tricky to install. One end is threaded for wood, the other end has machine threads, and there's no head. So I thread two nuts on the end with machine threads and tighten them against each other. This allows me to use a wrench to install these otherwise tricky bolts.

**JAY NORMAN**

## SEAL OUTDOOR FURNITURE FEET

Wooden outdoor furniture rots from the ground up, and the parts that touch the ground are usually end grain, which makes matters even worse. End grain readily wicks moisture from the ground.

Moisture always wins in the end, but you can extend the life of your outdoor furniture by coating the feet with two-part epoxy. Be sure the parts you're coating are dry before applying the epoxy. Allow the epoxy to fully cure according to the instructions on the package, then put your furniture back into use outside.

**ALEX KUMMERFELD**



## PORTABLE CLOTHES PODS

Here's a cool way to pack your clothes for moving. First, cut a hole in the center of the bottom of a large trash bag. Grab a handful of clothes by the hanger hooks and slip the bag over it, pulling the hooks through the hole. Use a zip tie or wire to hold the hooks together, and then tie the open end shut. Your clothes stay clean in these easily portable pods, and you never have to take them off the hangers!

**SOPHIE REHBEIN**



## THE MONEY WRENCH TRICK

If you don't have the right size open-end wrench to fit a nut or bolt, just dig into your pocket and pull out your loose change. Shove the coins into the gap between the wrench jaw and the nut or bolt head until you get a snug fit.

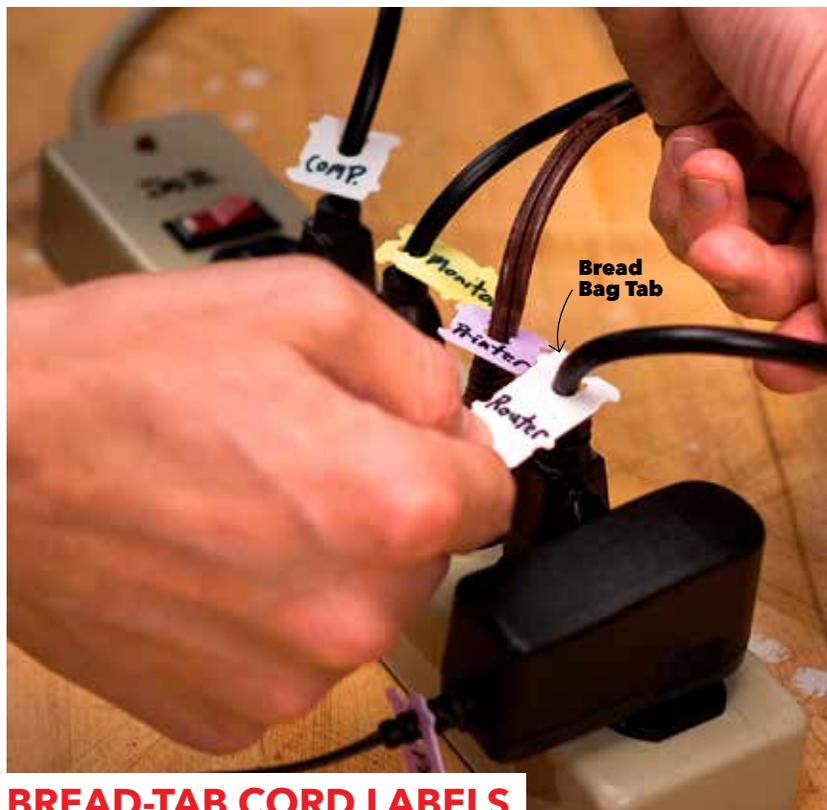
**GORDON MCKAY**



## MEDICINE CABINET MAGNETS

Nail clippers and tweezers tend to get buried in the medicine cabinet. So I hot-glued a few magnets to the back of the cabinet door to hang these small items in plain sight. I use cheap disc magnets from the hobby store; the more expensive rare-earth magnets are too strong.

**DAVID FARRAND**



## BREAD-TAB CORD LABELS

Not sure which electronic device goes with which cord plugged into your power strip? Plastic bread tabs are perfect for labeling cords. They're sturdy and big enough to write on, and you can easily clip them around the plug end of a cord.

**CHRIS JOHNSON**



## NO-MESS REFILLS FOR SINK SOAP

Crawling under a kitchen sink to refill the soap dispenser was a hassle, so I tried filling it from above. But when I did, the soap formed an air-lock bubble and overflowed, creating a mess. That's when I came up with the idea of inserting a drinking straw in the bottle to relieve "bubble block." Now when I refill the dispenser, the air escapes through the straw and the soap stays where it belongs.

**PAUL SNYDER**

## TIDY PAINT-CAN CLOSING

After you pour paint from a can, some paint always ends up in the can's rim. When you tap the lid back on, paint splatters everywhere. To avoid this, throw a rag over the lid before tapping it shut. Also, use a block of wood that spans the lid so you don't deform the can or lid with the hammer. Just tap the block a couple of times, give it a quarter turn and tap again.

**JEROME COFFEL**



## NO-TANGLE RATCHET STRAPS

Ratchet straps must have a self-tangling feature—they're always twisted up when I want to use them. I've tried bundling them with rubber bands, but the bands break

as they get old. So I bought a roll of stretch wrap and put it in a canvas bag with my ratchet straps. When I'm done using a strap, I bundle it up and wrap it tight with

a few rounds of stretch wrap. I fold back the end portion so it's easy to unwrap the next time. Now my straps are always ready to use.

**MIKE COLEMAN**



## INSTANT PAPER TOWEL HOLDER

If you need a way to hang paper towels in your workshop, find an old 9-in. paint roller, hang it on a nail and put a roll of paper towels on it. You can move it around wherever you want. And best of all, it's free!

**RAMON CHAVEZ**



## HANDY RAG CUTTER

I cut up old T-shirts and towels to use as rags in my shop. To speed up the process, I clamp a utility knife in my bench vise and make a cut to help me tear the scraps. If you're careful, you can make the entire cut with the knife.

**ISAAC RICHARDSON**



## TOILET BRUSH FRESHENER

To keep your toilet brush as fresh as possible, put a splash of pine-scented cleaner in the bottom of the brush holder. This will disinfect the brush and keep your bathroom smelling clean.

**BRI AITCHISON**



## EARPLUG TETHER

My earplugs were never around when I needed them, and too often I'd go without rather than search. I started tethering my earplugs to my cap, so there's no longer an excuse for skipping the hearing protection.

**RICK WISZ**



## SQUIRT-GUN TOILET DRAINER

When you're repairing or replacing a toilet, you need to remove all the water. Simply shutting off the water supply and flushing won't do it. A sponge works, but it's kind of slow. So I use an old squirt gun to suck the water out and squirt it into a bucket, leaving just the last few drops to sponge out.

**DALE CONKLIN**

## ROLLER SPINNER

To spin-dry a mini roller, chuck a 1/4-in. bit into your drill. Slip the roller onto the bit and pull the trigger. Centrifugal force whips the water right out. I recommend doing this in a bucket, utility sink or outdoors.

**SPIKE CARLSEN**





## FASTER FILING WITH LESS CLOGGING

When you use metal files on soft, nonferrous metals such as aluminum or brass, the teeth clog quickly. This means frequent cleaning with a file card. To keep the teeth from getting clogged, try this old trick: Rub a piece of chalk along the teeth before using the file on the workpiece.

**CONNOR WRIGHT**



## GRIT REMINDER

After remodeling my kitchen, I had a shoebox full of sanding sponges of various grits and no idea what was what. Now, before I toss the packaging, I write the grit number on the end of the sponge with a permanent marker. Also, you can reuse sanding sponges that have lost their grit by simply wrapping them with sandpaper.

**MATT OWCZARZAK**



## MITER SLOT STOP

When you trim parts with a hand plane, a board in the miter slot makes a perfect stop.

**MIKE BERNER**

**3/4" scrap  
in miter slot**

## SHOP VACUUM PRESCREEN

I use my shop vacuum for many woodworking chores, including dust collection from every power tool that features a dust port. But the filter quickly plugs with coarse dust from the table saw and finer dust from sanding. I solved part of the problem by placing window screen over the filter. Now the coarse particles are filtered out and stay at the bottom of the tank, and the filter doesn't plug as fast.

**BILL WELLS**



## DOUBLE-DUTY SANDPAPER

For some jobs, a single sheet of sandpaper is too flimsy; the paper backing wears out before the grit. My solution is to glue two pieces back to back with spray adhesive. Sometimes I use two different grits for versatility.

**BRAD HOLDEN**



## EASY I.D. FOR SWITCHED OUTLETS

I can never remember which of the outlets on my duplex receptacles are powered by the light switch and which one is always live, so I always wind up plugging into the wrong one. To eliminate the confusion, I marked the switched outlet with an "S." No more mix-ups.

**NORMAN SCHOCK**

## WASTE-FREE PAINTING

I have several rental properties that are always in need of repainting. Instead of throwing out leftover paint, I put it to use. I gather all my partial cans of interior latex—any color or sheen—and dump them into a 5-gallon bucket. Next, I mix the paint with a power-driven paint mixer to get a uniform color. It usually turns out off-white with an eggshell sheen. If the color is too dark, I lighten it by adding a can of white paint. Then I pour the paint into another 5-gallon bucket through a strainer bag. I lift out the strainer bag to remove any debris and pop on a lid to keep the paint fresh.

**TOM DVORAK**



## HOLE-SAW DEPTH MARKER

The best way to avoid tear-out with a hole saw is to drill half-way through the wood and flip it over to complete the hole. But how do you know when you've cut halfway? I mark my saw with a line that's slightly more than halfway. With 3/4-in. stock, mark the saw at just past 3/8 in. Use a pencil so you can easily wipe off the line and mark a different depth as needed. This tip also makes it easier to remove the plug; more of it extends past the saw teeth so you can grab it to pull it free.

**CHRISTOPHER JAMES**



## BOBBY PIN NAIL HOLDER

When you're hammering small nails or nails in tight quarters, keep your fingers out of the line of fire with a bobby pin. It will grip even the smallest nails.

**ED BARROS**



## DOG FOOD SCOOP

It's true that the tops of plastic jugs make good funnels. But if you keep the cap on and angle the cut, they also make handy scoops for everything from potting soil to pet food. I used a half-gallon jug for this scoop.

**RAY DEAN**



## INSTANT HARDWARE PATINA

I've found that gun bluing (\$10 for 3 oz. at sporting goods stores) gives off-the-shelf hardware an attractive, aged patina. Simply dip nuts, bolts, washers or other hardware into a cup of gun bluing. When the hardware turns black, rinse it with water and dry it with a paper towel. Be sure to wear rubber gloves and eye protection.

**BRAD HOLDEN, ASSOCIATE EDITOR**



## SIMPLE PESTICIDE

Make a solution of bleach-free dish soap and water and spray it on your plants to kill insects like aphids, mites, thrips and whiteflies.

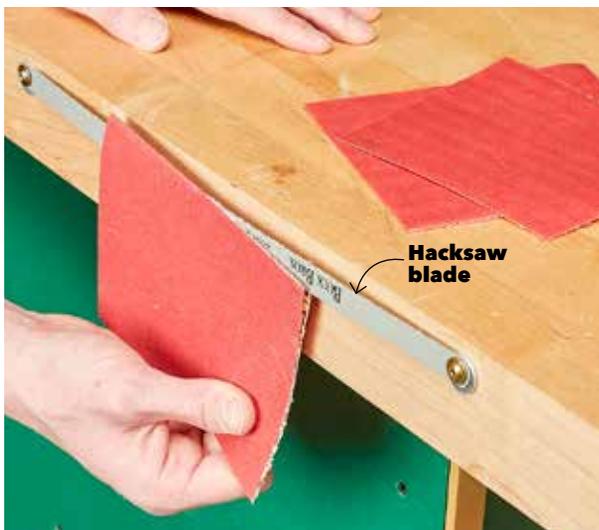
**JEFF RANALLO**



## DRYER-LINT FIRE STARTER

To build a fire properly, you need to have tinder (easy-lighting material), kindling (finger-size sticks) and fuel (logs). We all have a ready supply of tinder: dryer lint. To make fire starters, I stuff empty toilet paper tubes with dryer lint. My lint "logs" light quickly and burn long enough to ignite the kindling. And I don't have to resort to lighter fluid!

**RYAN FRANZA**

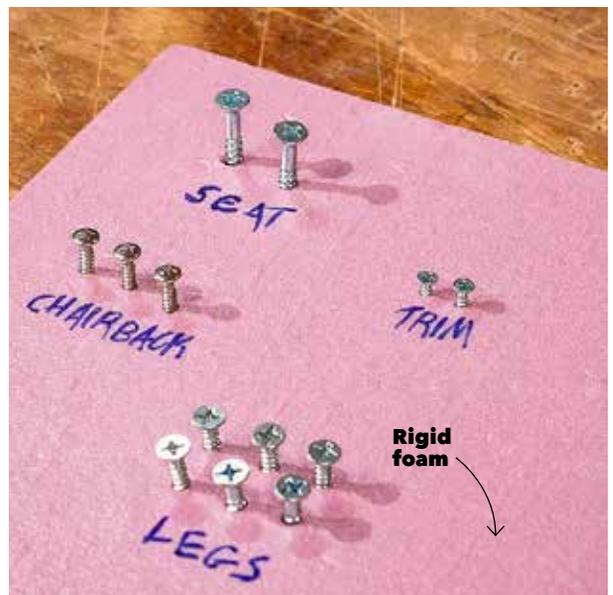


Hacksaw blade

## SANDPAPER TEARING BLADE

Cutting sandpaper will dull scissors and utility knife blades in no time. Here's a better technique: Fasten a hacksaw blade to the edge of your workbench. Slip a washer behind the blade at each of the mounting holes so a sheet of sandpaper can easily slide in behind the blade. I fold the paper to the finished size I want, then cut along the fold.

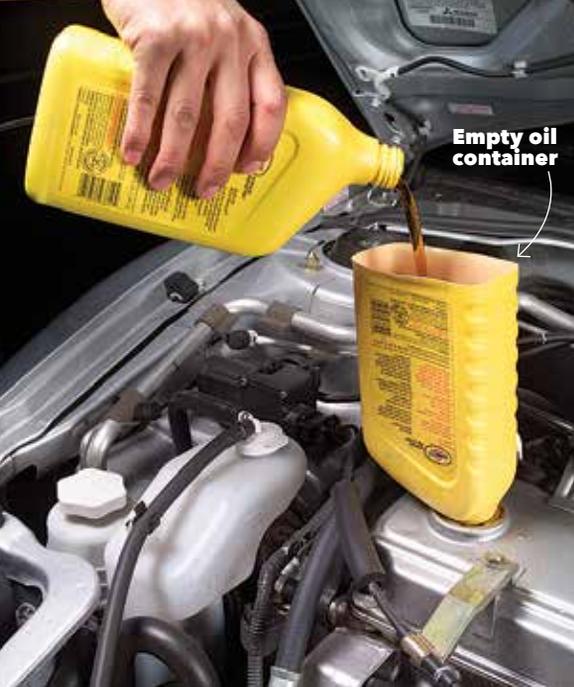
**DARRELL NOVACEK**



## SCREW ORGANIZER

When you disassemble a piece of furniture that needs to be repaired or moved to a new home, poke the screws and nails into a piece of rigid foam. Group similar fasteners together or arrange them in the order they were removed. Use a pen or marker to label the groups or make notes that will be helpful for reassembly.

**J. KRECH**



Empty oil container

## INSTANT OIL FUNNEL

Don't have a funnel handy? An empty plastic oil container will do the job. Cut the bottom out of the empty container with a utility knife. This funnel can hold an oil container snugly, so you don't have to stand around waiting for the last drop to drain.

FATHER CHRYSANTHOS



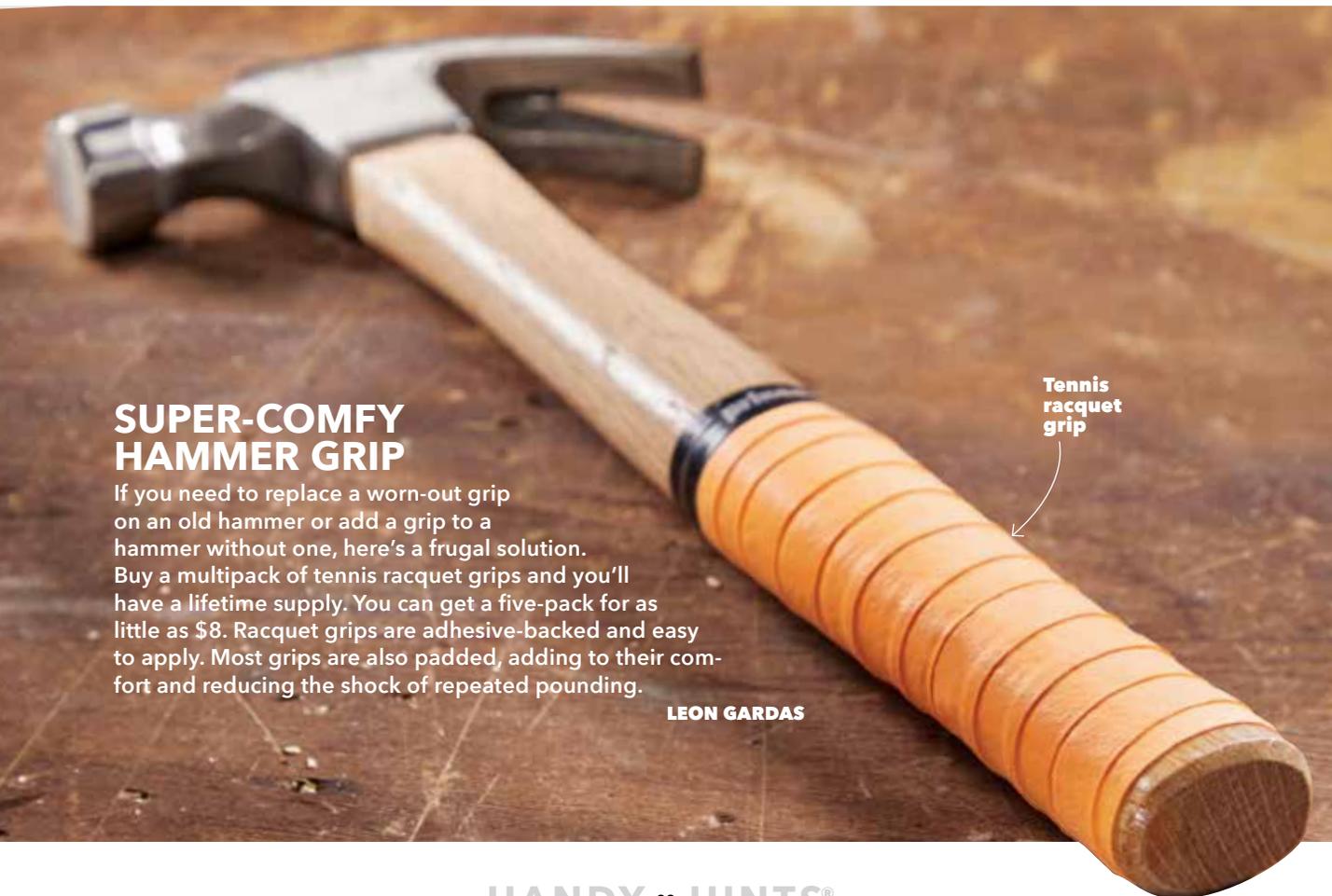
16-penny nail

Plastic jar lid

## SPACERS THAT STAY PUT

Sixteen-penny nails (also known as 16d nails) make perfect spacers when you're installing deck boards, but they often fall through the cracks. Keep the nails in place by pounding them through plastic jar covers. They're easier to move and won't slip between the boards and disappear.

DAVID R. KIMBLE



## SUPER-COMFY HAMMER GRIP

If you need to replace a worn-out grip on an old hammer or add a grip to a hammer without one, here's a frugal solution. Buy a multipack of tennis racquet grips and you'll have a lifetime supply. You can get a five-pack for as little as \$8. Racquet grips are adhesive-backed and easy to apply. Most grips are also padded, adding to their comfort and reducing the shock of repeated pounding.

LEON GARDAS

Tennis racquet grip



## BETTER BLADES IN MINUTES

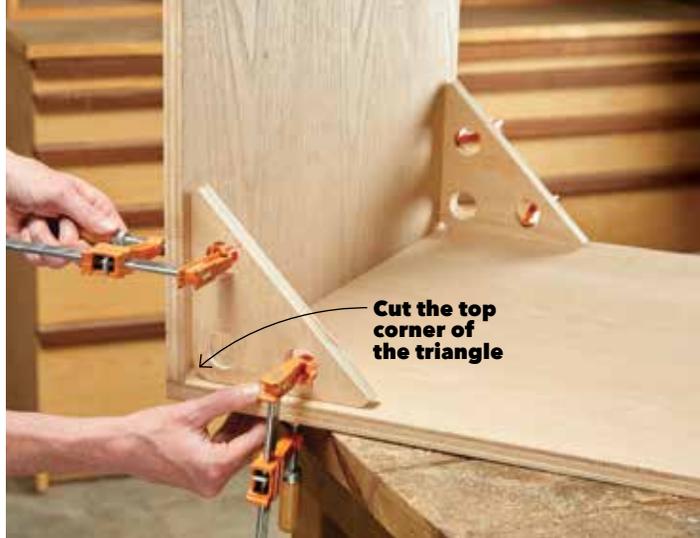
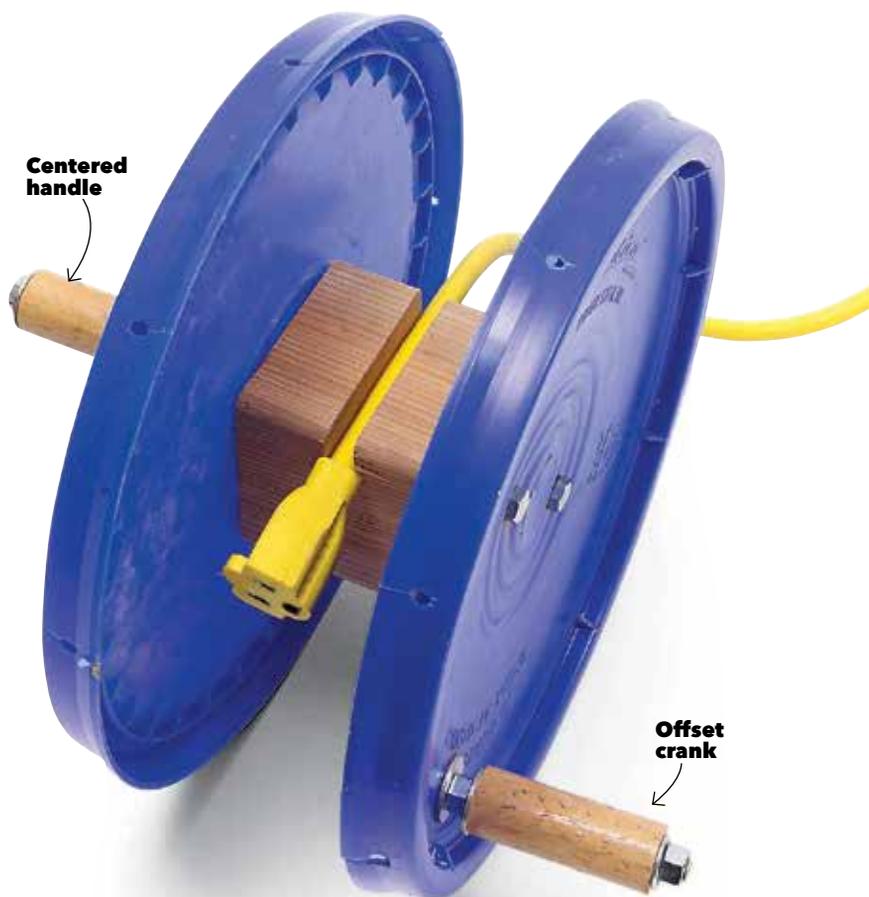
Pitch buildup on saw blades causes friction, burning and premature blade dulling. You can buy special cleaners to remove the pitch, but this easy fix uses stuff you already have around the house. Heat a pan of water to boiling, drop in the saw blade, and then pour baking soda on the blade. Leave the blade in the boiling water for five minutes or so, then carefully remove it and wipe it dry.

**EVAN GAFKJEN**

## BUCKET-LID CORD REEL

Make this handy cord reel using extra bucket lids from drywall mud pails or other 5-gallon buckets. Cut a 5-in. length of 4x4 and then cut a groove in the side just wide enough to fit your cord. Fasten the lids to the 4x4 with 1/4 x 2-in. lag screws. Make handles from an old 1-1/8-in.-diameter broom handle and drill a 1/2-in. hole through the centers. Fasten the crank to the lid with bolts, nuts and washers, and apply Loctite sealant to the end nut. Fasten the handle to the 4x4 through the lid with a 6-1/2-in. lag screw. Then just insert your cord and reel it in.

**DOUG KOENIG**



## PERFECTLY SQUARE, HANDS-FREE!

Holding parts square while clamping and fastening can be tricky. These plywood triangles make it easy. Using a miter saw or table saw, cut the triangles, taking care that your setup is perfectly square. Drill a hole at each corner, large enough for your clamp heads. Be sure to cut off the triangle's top corner, so it doesn't get glued to your workpiece.

**JOE SKIBA**



## A BETTER WAY TO CLEAN CAST IRON

Removing baked-on food from a cast iron pan is tricky. Soap can strip away the pan's "seasoning," so what do you do? Scrunch up a piece of tinfoil and run hot water over the pan, using the foil to scour away the stuck-on food.

**KIM ZHANG**



## SPRING-LOADED PLIERS

If you can't manipulate your pliers one-handed in tight quarters, here's what to do. Press the ends of a short length of vinyl tubing over the handles to hold them open. Squeeze to close. P.S. Take your pliers to the hardware store or home center to help you get tubing that's a perfect fit.

**SHELLY JACOBSEN**

## MOVABLE BIKE RACK

Tired of that bike hanging in your way? Build this movable bike rack from a 2x4 and a pair of bicycle hooks. Cut four 3-1/2-in. blocks, stack them in twos and screw them together. Now screw them on the end of a 4-ft. 2x4 and repeat the process on the other end.

Drill a hole in the middle of the stacked blocks and screw in the bicycle hooks. Lay the rack across your garage ceiling joists, and hang your bike from the hooks. When you need to get behind the bike, simply slide the entire rack out of the way.

**KITTY FAY**





## RENEW A KNIFE BLADE

Utility knife blades usually dull near the tip long before the rest of the blade loses its edge. To get more mileage out of a blade, put on a pair of safety glasses and snap off the tip with a pair of pliers. Presto! You've got a new sharp tip.

**CARL HINES**



Wire loom

## PROTECT SAW BLADES

Here's a quick way to protect the carbide teeth of your saw blades. Cut a length of split wire loom to length and wrap it around your blade.

**SAMUEL WARD**



## ENLARGE TINY PRINT

The print on some containers is so small that even someone with perfect vision would have trouble reading it. Instead of searching for a magnifying glass, grab your phone and take a photo of the text. Now, you can open the photo and zoom in to make the words legible.

**CESAR LOPEZ**



## A DAB MARKS THE TOP

Tired of guessing which side of a USB plug should face up when you're plugging it into the port? Put a dab of hot glue on the top face of the plug. Now you'll be able to tell the right direction without even looking.

**MARK DONLEY**

## NEVER FORGET THE COMBINATION

If you have trouble remembering your lock combination, try this: Pick a secret number and add it to each of the combination numbers. Mark the resulting higher numbers on the lock itself with a marker or rotary tool. When you need to open the lock, subtract your secret number from each number to determine the combination.

**RICK BRANDAU**



**Shhh...  
The secret  
number is 3**

**Lock  
combination**

$$\begin{array}{r} 15 \quad 36 \quad 25 \\ + 3 \quad + 3 \quad + 3 \\ \hline 18 \quad 39 \quad 28 \end{array}$$



## CUT A BOLT IN SECONDS

When you need to shorten a bolt, let your drill do the work. Put two nuts on the bolt and tighten them against each other. Then stick the bolt in a drill and hold a hacksaw against the spinning bolt. The nuts help to steady the saw blade and remove burrs when you take them off the bolt.

**LAWRENCE ORJADA**

## STEAM-CLEAN YOUR MICROWAVE

I've found that steam is the best way to clean my microwave. But I don't use just water. Here's my special mix: Combine 2 cups of water, 2 tablespoons of vinegar, and lemon rinds in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave the mixture on high for about five minutes, and then, with the door still closed, let it sit for three minutes more. Remove the bowl and wipe down the interior with a sponge.

**KARY MURPHY**





## WINE-BOTTLE WATERING

To keep a plant watered while you're away for a few days, rinse an empty wine bottle and fill it with water. Before you leave, water the plant as usual. Then push the upside-down bottle into the soil, holding your thumb over the bottle's opening until it's buried. The water slowly drains from the bottle as the soil dries.

**CORRINE BLANCHARD**



## JIFFY CHARCOAL STARTER

Run out of lighter fluid for your charcoal grill again? If you have a 2-lb. coffee can, you can make a reusable coal starter and skip the fluid altogether. Cut the bottom out first, and then pierce the sides with a can opener to make air vents.

Place the can in the barbecue and loosely crumple newspaper in the bottom one-third of the can. Fill the rest of the can with charcoal and light the newspaper through one of the vents. After the coals start to gray, lift the hot can off with tongs, leaving glowing coals behind.

**JOHN DEITHLOFF**



## EASY MULCH SPREADING

Mulching around flowers and bushes in tight quarters is easier if the mulch is in a small container. So I place buckets and pails in my wheelbarrow and fill them with mulch. It doesn't matter if the mulch misses the bucket and lands in the wheelbarrow. Once you've emptied the buckets, dump the contents of the wheelbarrow in an open area and spread it out.

**ERIC SWARTZ**



## DRAWER ORGANIZER

Keep measuring cups and spoons from cluttering up a drawer. Just attach a strip of wood to the drawer's side. Install washers behind the wood strip to create a gap for the handles to slide into.

**CHRIS GRIMAL**



## MAKE YOUR OWN LAZY SUSAN

I was shopping for a lazy Susan for my spices, but the ones I found were expensive and wouldn't fit in my cabinet anyway. I made my own with two matching pie tins and marbles. You just spread a single layer of marbles in the bottom tin and set the other tin on top. Spins just like the store-bought variety!

**CAROL SCHULTZ**



Silica gel crystals in a bag

## NO-SMELL GYM BAG

A gym bag can get stinky after a while, but here's an easy way to prevent that. Put silica gel cat litter in a small square of fabric and close it with a zip tie. The crystals absorb odor-creating moisture, keeping your bag fresh. Replace the crystals once a month or as needed.

**JOHN BURFEIND**





## PROTECTION FOR BIG BLADES

If you have wide chisels sliding around in your toolbox, here's a good way to protect their cutting edges (and your fingers). Cut a slot in a tennis ball using a utility knife. Stick your chisel in the slot and you'll have no more worries.

**NOEL HANSEN**



## HANDY CAMPING KIT

My family does a lot of camping, and I always had trouble rounding up all the little items we needed and keeping them organized. First aid supplies, bungee cords, clothesline, bug spray.... Then I loaded it all into a fishing tackle box, and now we're always ready to go.

**LYNN MAGERS**



## GET THE GUNK OFF DRILL BITS

The heat produced during drilling causes resin to build up on drill bits. Resin-coated bits cut poorly and heat up and get dull faster. To remove the resin, spray the bit with oven cleaner and let it soak for a couple minutes. Then scrub it with a toothbrush and rinse with water.

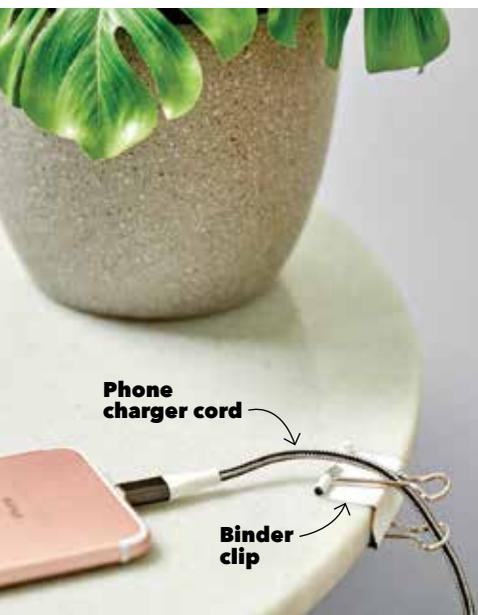
**VIRGIL PETERSEN**



## A STOP BLOCK FOR LONG CUTS

Setting up a stop to make repeat cuts is definitely a time-saver. Here's my solution for cuts that extend beyond my saw's fence. I attach a long 1x4 to my saw fence and use a stop block I made from a short piece of 1x4 and a 1/4-in. plywood lip. I just slide the stop block to where I need it and clamp it into place.

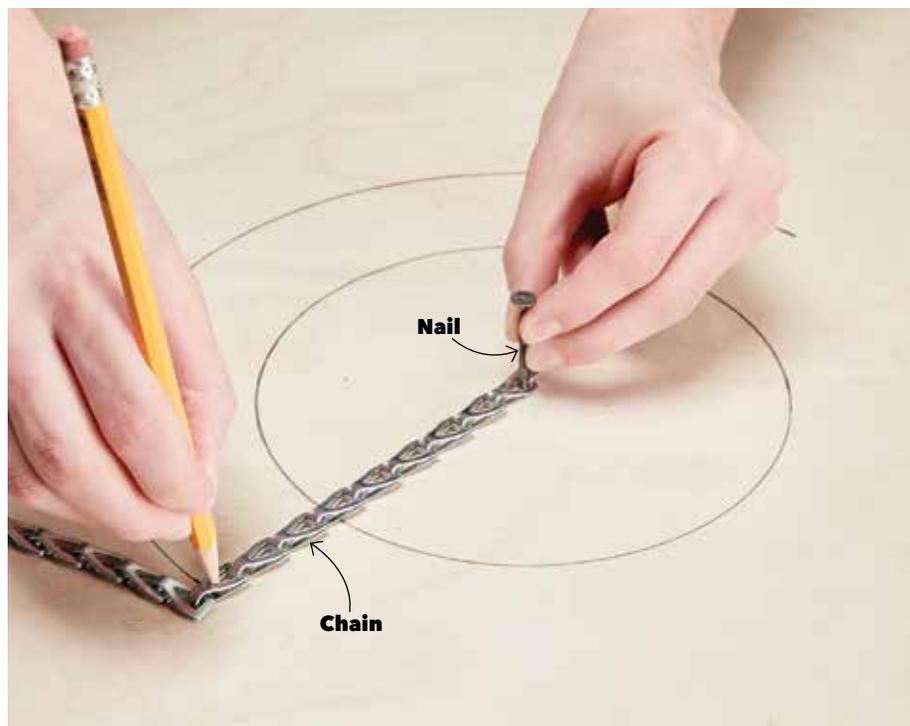
**TED KANON**



## CORD CONTROL

Here's an easy way to keep cords and cables from slipping off a desk. Clamp a binder clip onto the edge of your desk and run the cable through it. For cords with large ends, squeeze the clip's handles to remove them, slip in the cord and reinstall the handles.

**CARTER JANACEK**



## DRAW A CIRCLE WITH A CHAIN

To quickly draw a circle or mark a radius, put a nail through one end of a chain and into the workpiece and use the nail as a pivot point. Insert the point of a pencil into a chain link at the desired radius and draw the arc or circle while keeping the chain taut.

**MIKE MURPHY**



## WHAT'S IN THE GARDEN SPRAYER?

I use my garden sprayer for pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. I was never able to remember what I last had in it, so I picked up some key chain tags at the hardware store. I add the product info to the tags and clip the corresponding one to the sprayer. Problem solved! Our model isn't wearing protective gloves; be sure you do!

**CARROLL PETER**



## DEDICATED NAIL PULLER

Nippers are great for pulling brad nails, but the sharp edges often cut the nail as you try to pull it out. Dull a pair of nippers slightly with a metal file and mark it as your designated nail puller. Use a cheap pair; higher-quality nippers with hardened cutting edges may not file easily. Shoot a few nails into a test board to get it just right.

**DAN MASON**



## SIMPLE NOTE CLIP

Mousetraps make good note clips. I have one tacked on the wall over my workbench. I also fastened them near every stationary tool around my shop—they're effective and cheap!

**BRUCE SANDEEN**



## TOTE BAG STIFFENER

Reusable grocery bags are easier to load if you add a little more structure. Cut a piece of tempered hardboard or plywood to fit the bottom. You can also insert a cardboard box—or make one to fit your bag perfectly.

**ANNA JAKOWSKI**

## LOOSEN A STUCK LID

Stubborn lids are no match for duct tape. Just wrap a piece around the lid, leaving a tail for a handle. Be sure the duct tape is fastened only to the lid, not the jar. Hold the jar with one hand and pull the handle with the other. If the jar is full of liquid, do this in the sink to avoid a mess.

**MANNY NELSON**





Tension rod

## EXTRA SHOWER STORAGE

Need more space to hang storage bins in the shower? Next time you're at the home center, grab a shower curtain tension rod. Install it near the wall of your shower for 6 ft. of bin-hanging space!

IZZY OSMOND



Handsaw

Dowel

## MAKE YOUR OWN POCKET HOLE PLUGS

Instead of buying pocket hole plugs, use this jig to make as many as you need. Drill a pocket hole into a 2x4. Then insert a 3/8-in. dowel and slice it off flush with the face of the 2x4. After making the angled cut, push the dowel through, cut the end at 90 degrees and repeat.

JACK OWEN



600-grit sandpaper

Craft knife blade

## RENEW CRAFT KNIFE BLADES

Don't dispose of craft knife blades when they get dull. Instead, sharpen them. All it takes is a small piece of glass or a flat surface and a piece of 600-grit sandpaper. Carefully hone both beveled faces of the blade until it cuts like new.

KARI ALEXANDER