

tools & materials

■ HAND TOOLS

Veritas unveils customizable bench planes



Front knob available in three different shapes.



Two tote designs available in three sizes each.

THERE ARE FIVE BENCH PLANES in the new line of customizable bench planes from Veritas, and over the past few months I've been using three of them (No. 4½ smoother, No. 5 jack, and No. 7 jointer) daily in my shop. They perform extremely well.

With these planes, you can choose from among three knob options and six for the tote (two designs in three sizes each). Also, in addition to three standard frog angles, you can have a frog made at any angle between 40° and 65°.

Because the frogs are affordable (\$55

to \$65) and easy to switch out, you could equip a single body with different frogs to dial it in for the work at hand: Use a standard angle (45°) for most work. Add a low-angle frog (40°) to smooth softwoods and trim end grain. Switch to a high angle (50°) for figured woods.

But these planes are much more than tricked-out versions of a traditional design. Some great innovations make them easier to use, too. Gone are the days of moving the frog to adjust the mouth for finer and rougher shavings. Instead, the planes have an adjustable mouth (similar to those found on block

Three standard frog angles (40°, 45°, and 55°). Custom angles between 40° and 65° (in ½° increments) available for an additional \$10.

planes), and the frog is stationary. This is a much quicker and easier way to dial in the mouth opening.

And the cap-iron screw has been replaced by a "blade carrier." The chipbreaker, which is secured to the blade carrier with an Allen-head screw, is taken off for sharpening. The blade carrier, secured to the blade with a second Allen-head screw, stays attached to the blade during sharpening. It acts as an indexing pin so that when you put the chipbreaker back on, its distance from the cutting edge is already set.

Out of the box, the planes needed very little work. After a few minutes honing on my finest polishing stone, I was planing beautiful, light shavings.

In nearly 30 years of woodworking, I've used some excellent planes, and these are some of the finest. They are now my go-to planes for everyday use.

—Chris Gochnour is a professional furniture maker in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Adjustable mouth. Changing from a narrow opening for light shavings to a wide one for heavy work is quick and simple because you don't have to move the frog, as you would on traditional bench planes.



Easy-to-set chipbreaker. The chipbreaker registers on a round "blade carrier" attached to the blade, so you can quickly reattach the chipbreaker after sharpening the blade.