

low-angle **Pocket Planes**

They may be small, but these planes have what it takes to get the job done.



The more time I spend in the shop, the more I find myself reaching for my block plane. It's a great tool for removing machining marks, adding chamfers, and tweaking a workpiece for a perfect fit.

The problem was that my old block plane often seemed too big and bulky. So I started to look for something that was a little easier to handle and I could keep handy in my shop apron. I found two small block planes that fit the bill for a little less than \$80 each.

POCKET PLANE. *Veritas* and *Lie-Nielsen* manufacture small block planes that are a delight to use. They're what I call "pocket" planes. As a matter of fact, you can even buy a leather pouch for them, like you see in the photo above. It lets you wear your block plane on your belt to keep it within reach in the shop.

Since they're small enough to keep in my apron pocket, I'm not always looking around the shop for them. But their small size doesn't mean they're wimpy. Their solid castings and thicker blades have the heft to do the job.

But these planes have more going for them than just their size. Let's take a look "under the hood" to see what I mean.

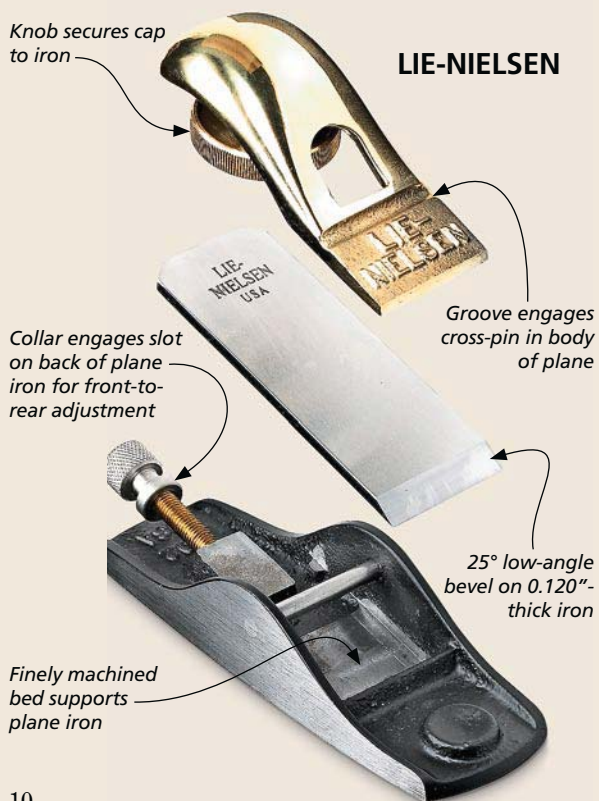
LOW ANGLE. Both of these are "low-angle" planes. This means that the

plane iron, or blade, is mounted at a 12° angle instead of a more conventional 20° angle.

Now all this geometry really means is that these planes do a great job of slicing through end grain. But I've found that they do a fine job at most of the other tasks you'd ask of a block plane.

Since these planes are low-angle, I learned a trick that makes them even more useful around the shop. I bought an extra iron and ground the bevel at a steeper 35° angle. This converts the plane into a standard-angle plane for those times when I need to plane figured grain. The steeper cutting angle helps avoid chipping and tearout.

BEVEL UP. As you can see in the photos on these two pages, the irons are positioned "bevel up" — a characteristic of block planes. This has two benefits. First, placing the iron bevel up means that the cutting edge is fully supported by the bed of the plane at the mouth. That means there's less tendency for the plane to "chatter" or skip across the workpiece.



Second, the combination of a thick iron and placing the bevel up means there's no need for a chip-breaker or cap iron. These are used in conventional bench planes to help "stiffen" the blade.

And speaking of the irons, they're 25-50% thicker than the one on my old block plane. This stoutness helps make a better cut with less effort. And with just a light honing of the iron, these planes are ready to use right out of the box.



▲ Sole Difference. The sides of the Veritas plane (right) are machined square to the sole.

Either one of these planes is a great addition to your shop, but there are some differences.

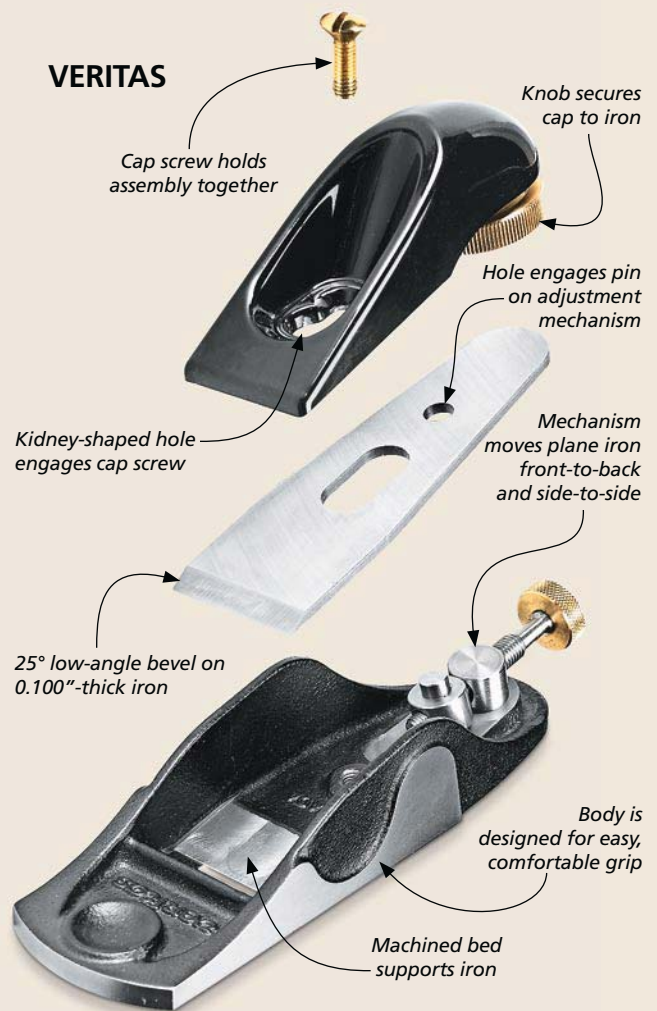
LIE-NIELSEN. The *Lie-Nielsen* models 102 and 102I planes are based on the old *Stanley* 102 model, long out of production. It's available with a bronze or iron body. See lower photo on the opposite page.

Lie-Nielsen's plane is simple to set up since there are only three components. The advancement mechanism works smoothly, and the rounded cap and body just feel great in the hand. When the iron is advanced for cutting, the mouth is nice and tight for reduced tearout.

VERITAS. If you look at the photo on the right, you can see that *Veritas* broke tradition with hand plane design. The *Veritas Apron Planes* (models 05P27.01 and 05P27.02) look more like a hot rod than a conventional plane (photo right). But I like the way they're engineered.

The first thing I noticed about the *Veritas* plane was the shape of the body. You can see in the photo on the left that the sides are parallel and machined square to the sole. This lets me use the plane with a shooting board (see box below).

What I really like about this plane is its adjustment mechanism. It has a lateral adjustment that the *Lie-Nielsen* plane lacks. This makes it easy to keep the cutting edge



parallel to the mouth for even cuts. I can tell a lot of thought went into the design of this plane.

For all-around shop use, a "pocket" plane is always by my side. See Sources on page 49 to find out where you can get one. **W**

How-To: Using a Shooting Board

Using a hand plane on a shooting board is a quick way to fine-tune a workpiece for a perfect fit.

A shooting board guides the plane for straight cuts. It can be nothing more than a scrap piece of plywood with a wide rabbet cut on one edge (see photo). The plane rests on its side with the sole against the shoulder of the rabbet. A piece of hardwood acts as a fence and supports the workpiece.

To use the shooting board, place your workpiece firmly against the fence and make light cuts.

