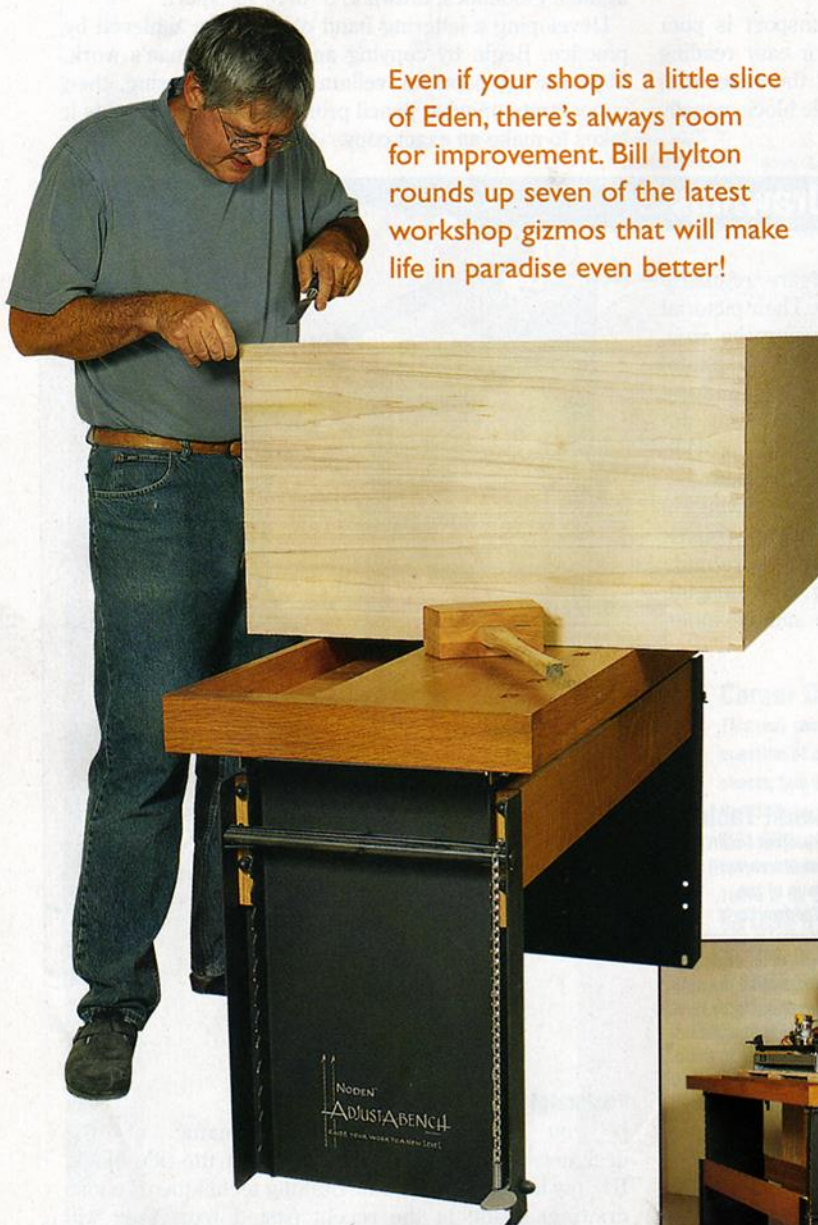


# 7 Top-shelf Shop Helpers

By Bill Hylton



Even if your shop is a little slice of Eden, there's always room for improvement. Bill Hylton rounds up seven of the latest workshop gizmos that will make life in paradise even better!

Nothing beats quality time in the shop. You know how it is. You are free from the workaday worries and turmoil, focused on working with your hands and your mind is clear. You're in the "zone." No motion wasted, no mental distractions.

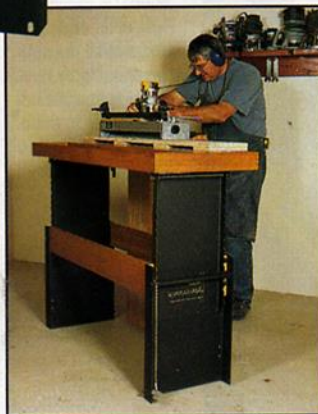
And then it happens: that flow gets interrupted by the need for a little help. Not really an extra pair of hands, but rather a little more help from your tools or your shop arrangement. Maybe it's a tool setup you can't get just right. Or clamps that won't cooperate.

Well, help is on the way. Here's an assortment of gadgets, gizmos and tools that will keep you in that happy woodworking zone.

## Noden Adjust-A-Bench

The workbench is a vital piece of shop equipment, but one bench may not serve every job equally well. If you've got a spacious shop, you might have room to build several benches of different heights — a low assembly bench, a mid-height workbench and a taller bench for certain power tool operations. But most of us don't have the shop space for multiple benches.

Here's a novel idea: How about a sturdy bench with adjustable height? The Noden Adjust-A-Bench ([adjustabench.com](http://adjustabench.com); 609-882-3300) is just



In the basic configuration of the Adjust-A-Bench, you can adjust from roughly 28" to 45" high, allowing its use as an assembly table, hand-tool workbench and power tool bench.

[www.woodworkersjournal.com](http://www.woodworkersjournal.com)

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that. Its core is an adjustable height leg assembly invented by furniture-maker Geof Noden.

Each leg assembly consists of two nesting trays with a ratchet-lock mechanism. The inner tray slides vertically through 12 stops, adding 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " to the bench's height. Adjustability notwithstanding, the steel legs are strong enough to endure all the pounding and other abuse your woodworking delivers.

To raise the benchtop, you simply lift it. A latch in the ratchet prevents the bench from dropping. To lower the benchtop, you step on a foot pedal and lift slightly. The pedal disengages the latch and allows the benchtop to be lowered. (If you step on the pedal inadvertently, the benchtop won't drop.) Adjust the bench one end at a time or, if you have a helper, both ends simultaneously. Set it level or at an angle.

The baseline Adjust-A-Bench package (\$430 plus shipping) is a pair of the leg assemblies. To turn them into a working bench, you supply a pair of wooden rails, four long 3/8" threaded rods and a benchtop.

You determine how long and wide your bench will be. You can make your own top or buy one. Equip it with a vise or two. Perhaps, as I did, you'll mount your existing benchtop on the Noden leg assemblies.

Complete bench kits (\$800 to \$920 plus shipping) are also available. They include leg assemblies, rails and rods and a 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ "-thick solid maple benchtop in various dimensions. Optional

accessories include caster sets, vises and a storage cabinet.

I recommend adding casters. Making the bench mobile enhances its usefulness in any shop. You can roll it behind the table saw or band saw or beside the drill press to serve as an infeed or outfeed table.

Of all my prime shop helpers, the Adjust-A-Bench is tops. I can scoot it around the shop, raising and lowering it to whatever height the job requires. It's more versatile than any conventional bench I've used.

#### Oneida's Dust Deputy

Shop vacuums are essential tools in most shops, not only for general cleanup but also as small-scale dust collectors with tools like sanders and routers.

But there are two big drawbacks here. One is that the filter cakes up quickly when you are vacuuming fine dust. You lose suction long before the vacuum's canister is full. The other is emptying and cleaning the vacuum ... it's a chore.



Oneida's Dust Deputy is a cyclone powered by a shop vacuum. The cyclone separates the dust and dirt, which drop into the Oneida dust drum, while the air exhausts through the vac and its filter back into the shop.

Enter the Dust Deputy (\$199) from Oneida Air Systems ([oneida-air.com](http://oneida-air.com); 800-732-4065). It's a mini-cyclone powered by a shop vacuum. The deluxe package includes the 12"-tall welded-seam steel cyclone and a 10-gallon steel dust drum with lid and clamp. You provide the necessary two hoses: one is the shop vacuum's hose, of course, and you can buy the second hose from Oneida.

Plug the hose from the shop vac into the top of the cyclone. Attach the other hose to the intake side of the cyclone and to the tool in use.

Vacuum your benchtop, your drill press, the nooks and crannies under your band saw or even the floor. Attach the hose to your portable belt sander or router. Everything surges

*Today's Shop continues on page 66 ...*

