

## Japanese handsaws win favor

Whether you're a fine-furniture builder, a house carpenter or an active do-it-yourselfer, the handsaw is an essential tool. Although the portable power saw is the choice for many cutting jobs, handsaws are far from becoming obsolete. In fact, there has been a renewed interest recently in handsaws partly due to the advent of the Japanese tools.

While after the screwdriver, the handsaw may be the second most misused tool, each of the many types evolved over centuries to handle a specific cutting task. Familiar Western saws have recently been joined in this country by equally ancient designs from Japan. These are getting rapid acceptance among wood craftspeople for fine work and even for fast cutting.

Choosing a handsaw, as with any tool, depends on the particular job at hand. When the correct handsaw is used prop-

erly, it's an effective, accurate cutting tool. You can tell its purpose by looking at the teeth. Generally, the fewer the teeth, or points, per inch, the rougher the cut in the softer material. A greater number of teeth per inch (tpi) will produce a smoother cut in harder workpieces.

Nearly all saws have teeth that are set, or bent, alternately to the left and to the right of the blade. This enhances the cutting action and, more importantly, forms a kerf, or cut, slightly wider than the blade's thickness

to prevent binding. A taper-ground blade also prevents binding and helps to ensure smooth sawing. Taper grinding, a feature found on almost all quality saws, produces a blade that is thinner at the top edge than at the toothed edge. It's also thinner at the blade's toe, or tip, than at the handle. A taper-ground blade requires less set on the teeth so it cuts a narrower kerf which requires less effort to make the cut and wastes less material.

The major difference between Japanese handsaws and

Western handsaws is that the Japanese handsaws cut on the pull stroke. Most Western saws cut on the push stroke. The distinct advantage of the Japanese saws is that since they are pulled through the wood, the blades can be virtually paper-thin, a big help when cutting precise, intricate joints. Western saw blades are made of heavy-gauge steel to keep them from buckling when the saw is pushed. Learning to use Japanese saws requires no special skills — only a little patience and practice.

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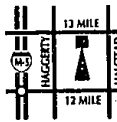
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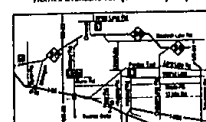
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