

Create your own Beading Tool

A thoroughly enjoyable project with a successful outcome that enhances your work

Many hobbyist woodworkers turn out furniture with great joints and finish. All too few seem to take the extra time to decorate their furniture, the way the fine cabinet makers of the past would do. I think this could be because its perceived to be too difficult, tricky or time consuming, in a world of instant gratification. It maybe also be because they don't have the necessary tool on hand.

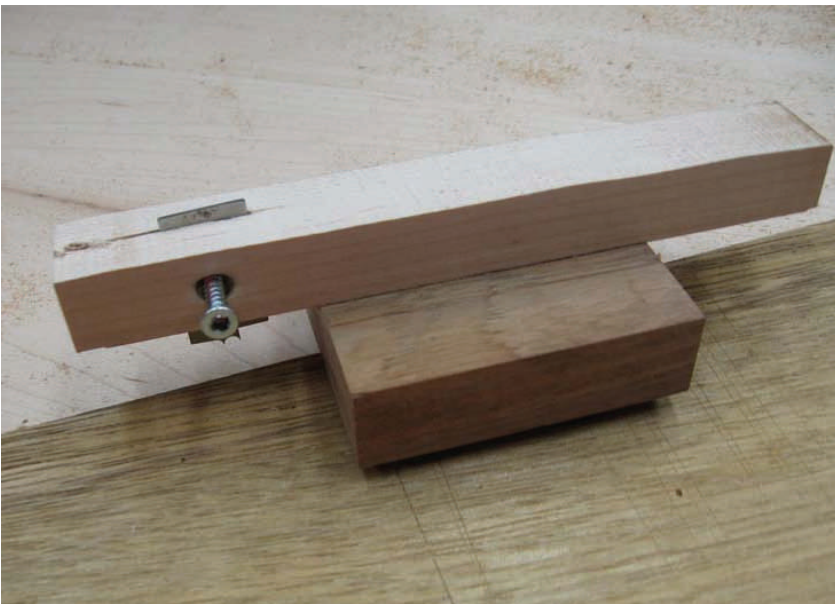
Inspired to explore my creativity by many woodworkers ,that make their own tools, I have come to thoroughly enjoy the process of hand tool making. If its possible and makes sense to me I would rather do that than buy one. I don't do this to save a buck, (that's an added bonus) I do it for the enjoyment after all that's what a hobby is supposed to be about.

Nothing beats woodworking with "home made" or "hand made tools" to me.

I therefore decided to try out, adding a little decorative bead to the sides of a small vanity table, I am in the process of building, for the young daughter of a really good friend of mine. It's a birthday present.

What follows is the journey I took to make this tool. Maybe you too can make one and derive the tremendous pleasure I got from scratching with my own beading tool or scratch stock as its also called.

The journey started and was made possible because [Lee Valley sells beading tool blades](#) separately. You can pick them up in sets of 3 for \$9 CDN. Of course you can also just use a piece of old reciprocating saw blade or any other steel for that matter ground to suit your profile . I choose to buy a set instead.



Being an impatient fellow when it comes to woodworking. Caused by the excitement and desire to see the end product. It therefore follows that I am no different when making a tool.

In my haste and excitement to experience the feel for this new process of cut of maple, was grabbed, a slot cut in its end using the band saw, a screw was used to secure the scratch blade once it was pushed into the slot. This served to clamp the blade down and hold it in position.

An improvised fence was made by screwing a block of wood to the maple handle in order to keep the scratch blade parallel to the edge you want a bead on. The prototype worked fine. Control difficult and the blade not adjustable. Its also hard on the hands. It proves however you don't need a fancy tool to do this.

W

ith the initial excitement out the way, having experienced the chore of trying to hold this prototype a more permanent version was contemplated that could be added to my existing set of Neanderthal woodworking tools for future use.

Considering future uses, gave rise to the issue of blade changed, preferably without any tools also blade positioning to be able to set the blade in any location on a board.

The concept of scratching a bead resembles the two pins of a mortise gauge initially. It led me the path of a handle and fence similar to a mortise gauge. Of course the piece of maple railing I had made, lying around the shop facilitated it.

Cutting the railing down the middle resulted in a piece of wood with a flat on one side and round over edge on the other. MK 2 started out with a piece of this wood.

Using a gripper to steady it, the wood was split in two on the table saw. Then a strip was routed off each side in the middle area to accommodate the blade and allow the blade to slide the full range of the tool handle, freely.



On the left you see the split ex railing pieces. The bottom is flat and the top round making for the perfect profile for a good rolling action while scratching.

Not a great picture however, you can see the narrow blade slit in the picture to the right.



The enjoyment and pleasure of making your own tools comes in part from making use of material you have on hand in the shop, after all you get to make the rules since its your design.

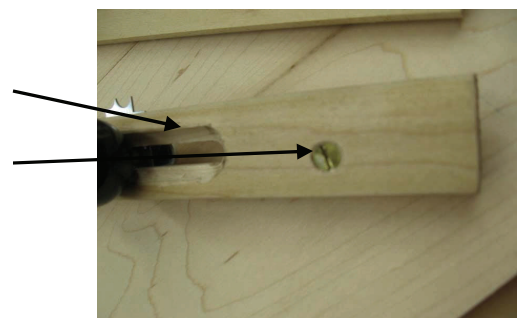
When adjusting the blade it needs to be held steady and move the length of the handle, a shouldered slot was routed through the two sections. Each piece machined separately so as to retain control on the router table.

Wooden hand tools need a little "bling" too add to the looks, and a brass screw was used to hold the blade clamped in position with the aid of a round threaded knob. It was discovered that the sides on a brass screw are too low and the shoulder of the screw too narrow, to allow the blade to slide, therefore a new plan was devised.

Using a threaded [T slot nut](#) as a stabilizer, worked well, to keep the screw 90 degrees to the handle while providing for the necessary blade adjustment by hand. Securing the two sides of the handle together is achieved using two brass screws at each end, keeping it all in place. The blades as it happens allow a 1/4 -20 screw thread to wiggle through.



Here you can see the rounded over slot on the knob side as well as the small brass screw to hold the two halves of the handle together.



The making of Mk 2 Beading tool continued.

For the fence a piece of 3/4 red oak, lying around, was used. Only reason being it was about the right size to cut two fences from. The fence design was cut out on the band saw and edges cleaned up on the drill mounted drum sander.

The fence too needed some "bling" and an adjustment knob to secure it in place, the idea of making a brass knob from a ferrule and brass screw came to mind. By turning a piece of mahogany round (left over from the workbench build) on the lathe to a press fit into a [small brass ferrule](#) you have a brass knob. To make it a threaded knob a hole was drilled and brass screw "super glued" in place. "Voila" you have a brass threaded custom knob.

The fence needed something to hold the screw in place. A brass insert was considered, to secure it, however it's needed on the inside of the handle hole to hold the threaded knob captive and the space is too small to insert it.



Instead used a [T nut with the spurs cut off](#).

Cut the spurs off and ground it round using the bench grinder. This reduced its size and visibility. Used its long tapered collar to secure it in a 1/4 inch hole, it will hold in place, at least long enough for the handle to be fitted.



Naturally, the obligatory tests were performed on scrap stock, before testing on my project.

The great results can be seen in the adjacent picture .

While testing, Mk 2 was found to be short. If the need to scratch a bead on a wide board, should arise, the handle would need to be longer. Refinements were therefore in order giving rise to Mk 3.

Finally..... Mk 3



Searching through the [LV catalog](#) I came across this [brass knurled screw](#) so while at LV decided to give it a try. Worked perfectly for Mk 3. Looks more shall we say professional, tongue in cheek of course.



Beading Tool Mk3

The broad, wide fences chosen work well at keeping the blade in a pre determined position, and cater well for most board thicknesses likely to be used in this application. These might be cumbersome for small peaces of trim, but that will give rise to Mk4.

The handle provides for multiple blades to be mounted simultaneously, this however, has not been tested, yet!

To ensure tracking on wide boards the double fence works really well.

Regardless of fences care still needs to be taken when scratching its easy to get knocked out of the "railway lines" when scratching so good hand control, as is the case with most hand tool operations, is important.

It's my hope, that you have enjoyed sharing this journey with me, as much as I have enjoyed the process of making of this tool.

Perhaps, you are just a little inspired, to try it for yourself and "dolly up" your furniture a little more in future. After all what have you got to loose, its only wood.

Thank you for following along.
Rob

