



Bill Bélanger chose locally sawn pine for his flooring and knotty cedar for three of the interior walls. "I laid the flooring diagonally," Bill says, "because I wanted something different from everything being square in the shop."

woody retreat

In just three years, this woodworking newbie moved from a toolbox to a complete shop. Today, he enjoys an ideal retreat that includes basement storage and a second-story lumber loft. And the main floor? As comfortable as any of us could imagine.

Bill Bélanger was so put off by a contractor's estimate for a custom bathroom mirror frame that he declared to himself, "I don't want to spend that kind of money." But he reasoned that he could build his own workbench—much smarter than building the frame on the floor on his hands and knees—and then build the mirror frame himself.

The frame and workbench became Bill's gateway drugs for a new pastime and a new workshop. In three short years, he has journeyed from a few tools in a two-car garage to a well-equipped 1,200-square-foot backyard retreat that would be the envy of most. Sure, the shop is palatial, but to Bill, it's been a

perfect investment: "It's a hobby! It doesn't have to make sense."

Today, he's totally immersed in woodworking, from building birdhouses with grandkids to spreading the gospel of European-made sliding tablesaws. "I didn't know I could have so much fun," Bill declares.

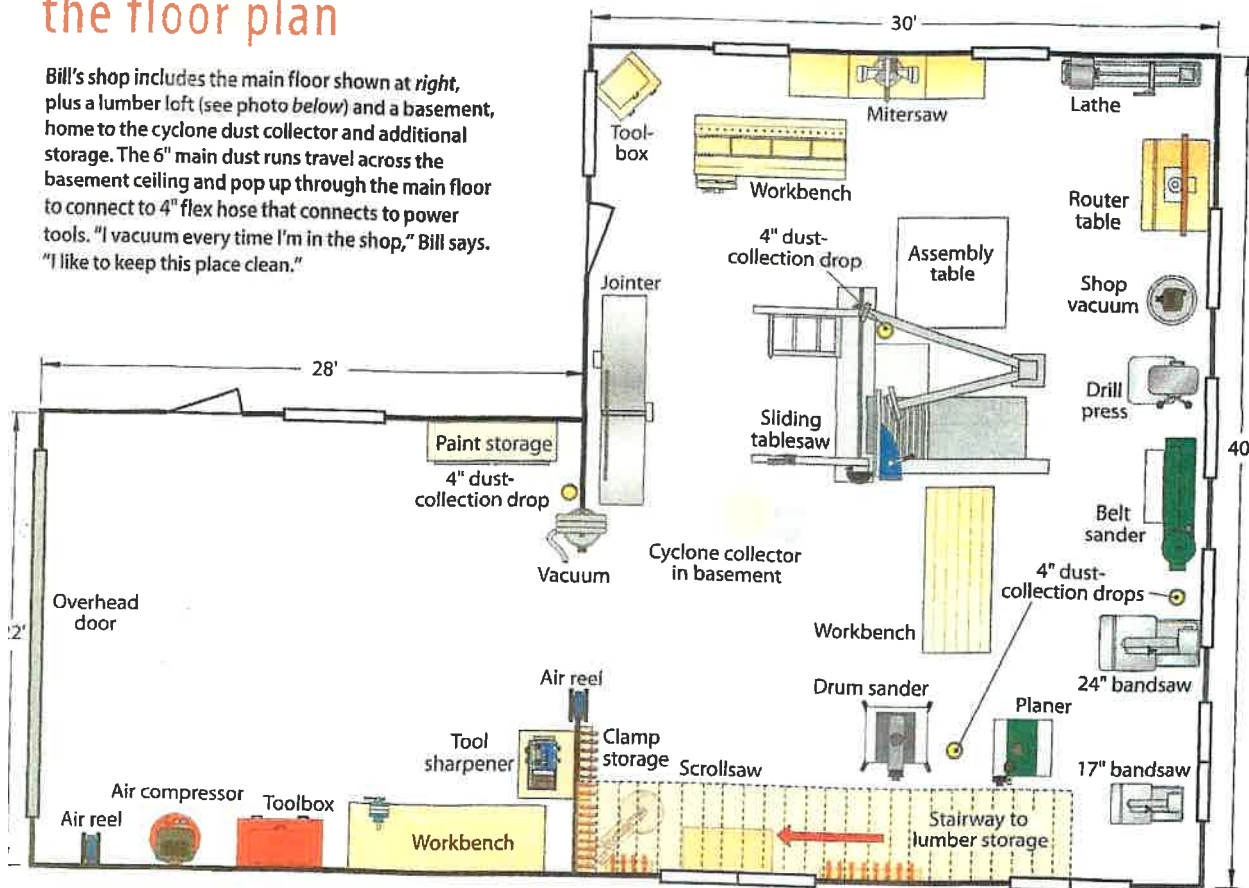
Bill's slipper shop

For a couple of years while starting out, Bill stood at his workbench on the unforgiving concrete garage floor. That experience convinced him that his new shop would have a wood floor. "This is so much more comfortable," Bill says. "Most days I wear slippers in my shop."

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the floor plan

Bill's shop includes the main floor shown at right, plus a lumber loft (see photo below) and a basement, home to the cyclone dust collector and additional storage. The 6" main dust runs travel across the basement ceiling and pop up through the main floor to connect to 4" flex hose that connects to power tools. "I vacuum every time I'm in the shop," Bill says. "I like to keep this place clean."



Upstairs, Bill stores lumber on two 30'-long racks (softwoods on the right; hardwoods on the left). He does some finishing at the bench near the window.



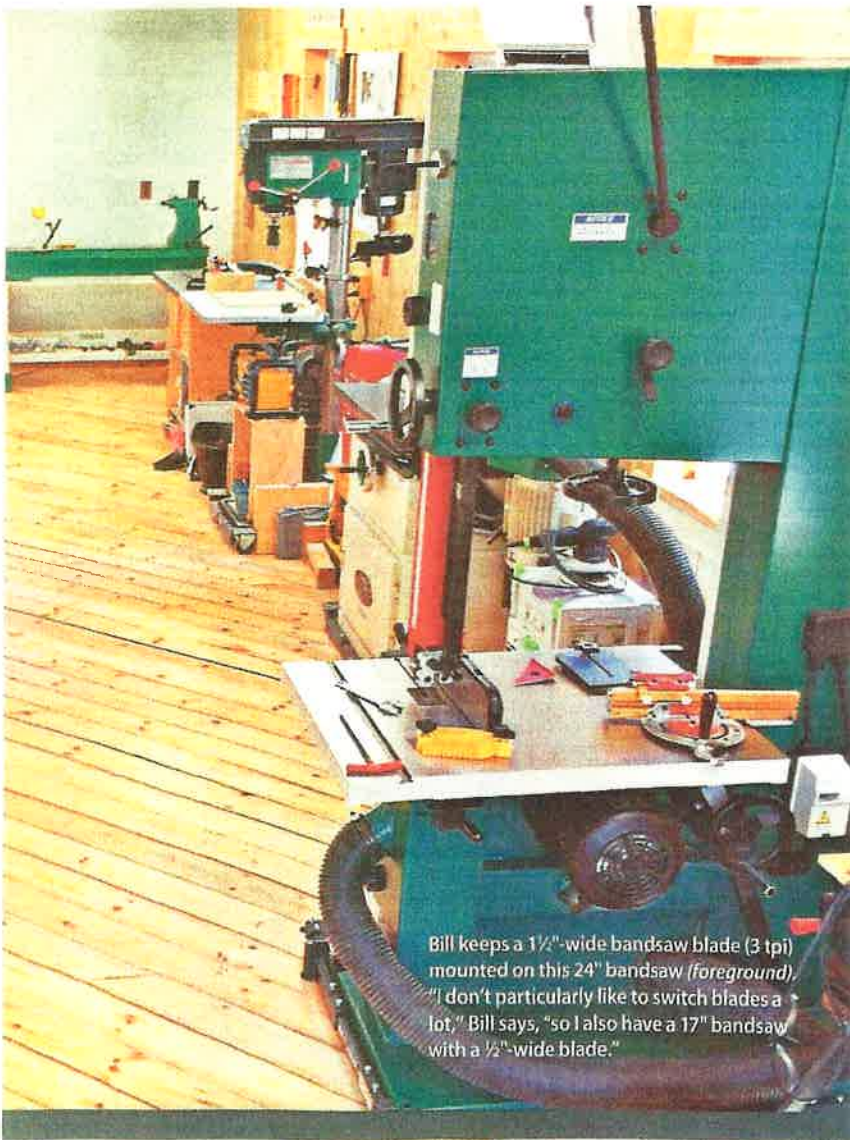
To lift 4x8' sheet goods onto the saw table, Bill loads the material on the side of this mobile bench, raises the hinged side, and then slides the sheet across the bench and onto the saw.

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With a supply of Maine white pine at hand, Bill glued each 5½"-wide plank to the joists with Liquid Nails, then drove home nails. "I'm glad we used panel adhesive," Bill says, "because there was some moisture still in the lumber. The leftover stock twisted and cupped wildly. I got lucky by taking the extra step to secure the pine. Otherwise, I would have had a mess."

Better than spiral ductwork

Bill's old garage shop included 4" spiral ductwork. When he built this shop, he stepped up to 6" lines from Nordfab Quick-Fit (ductingsystems.com). "It was fast to install," Bill says. "All the fittings are laser welded and have rubber gaskets. I just pushed the pieces together, flipped a clamp, and it was solid. It was easier to cut, too." 🌲



"Except for a few tools I keep in a garage toolbox, this is my go-to cabinet for hand tools," Bill says. He found the 10-drawer oak chest and 26"-wide 9-drawer oak cabinet at grizzly.com.



SHOP SPECS

TYPE: Dedicated 2½-story building with 2-car garage

SIZE: 1,200 sq. ft. with 8' walls on main floor. Lower level, 1,200 sq. ft. for storage and dust collector; upper level, 800 sq. ft. for lumber and finishing.

CONSTRUCTION: 2x6 frame construction on 24" centers. Exterior walls are sheathed with ½" OSB and covered with 2" foam panels and cedar siding.

HEATING AND COOLING: Main floor: 21.5 SEER heat pump; 18k Btu heating/14.5k cooling ductless heat pump with one head. Lower level: 21.5 SEER heat pump; 12k Btu heating/9k cooling ductless heat pump with one head. Radiant heat warms the basement floor that was insulated with 2"-thick foam panels.

ELECTRICAL: 100-amp service with ten 220-volt outlets and 15 110-volt outlets. Phase Perfect three-phase converter supplies power to the tablesaw.

LIGHTING: 11 4-bulb T5 fluorescent lights

DUST COLLECTION: 5-hp Oneida cyclone connected to 6" ductwork under the shop floor. Four 4" drops located throughout the shop. Ceiling-mounted Jet air cleaner.

AIR COMPRESSOR: Craftsman 3½-hp 60-gallon tank in adjoining garage; three 50' reels

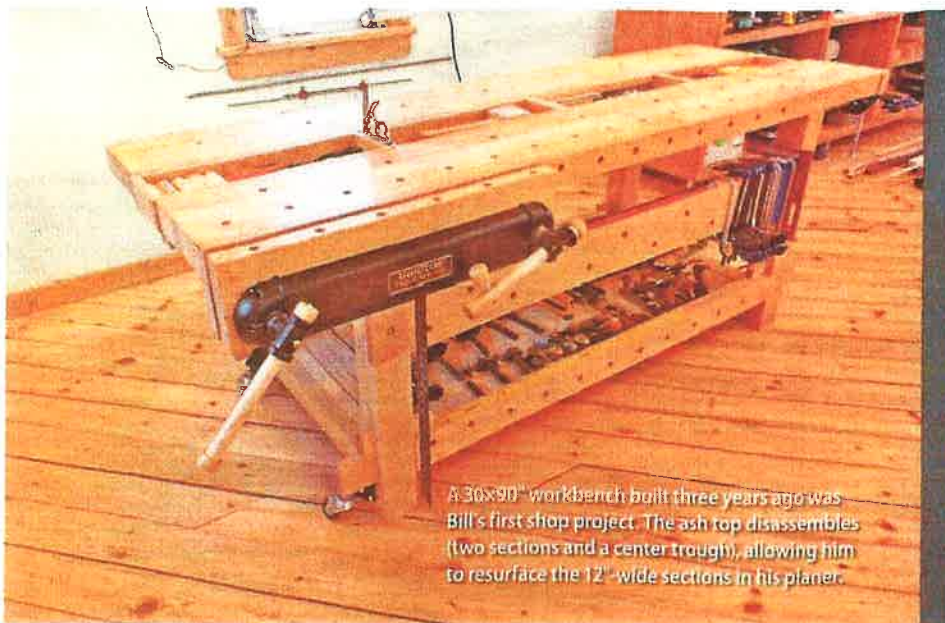
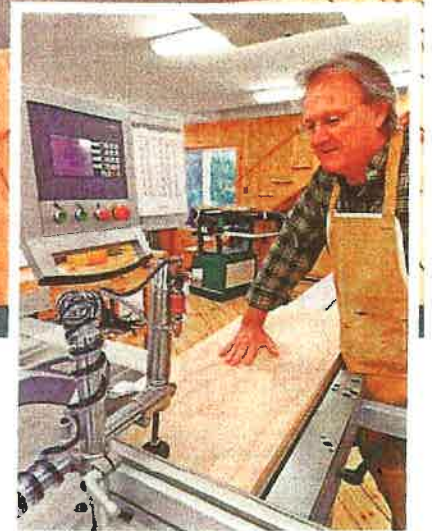
FLOORING AND WALLS: Floor is 5½" tongue-and-groove pine on the main floor and lumber loft. Fiberglass batts provide R38 (ceiling) and R19 (wall) insulation values. Three interior walls lined with tongue-and-groove knotty cedar; ⅝" drywall on fourth wall and ceiling.



woods retreat

Outrigger for sliding table

A Felder sliding table saw (sometimes called a panel saw) is the heartbeat of Bill's shop. The sliding table moves 10'6" on the infeed and outfeed sides of the table. As shown at right, Bill programs the height and tilt of the blade plus the width of the cut from a computer screen. A small blade ahead of the main blades scores the bottom of the panel, eliminating tear-out. For more details about the saw, see woodmagazine.com/felder/slider.



A 30x90" workbench built three years ago was Bill's first shop project. The ash top disassembles (two sections and a center trough), allowing him to resurface the 12" wide sections in his planer.

Bill organizes most of his clamps on inexpensive hangers (about \$4 each) purchased at Lowe's. Each hanger holds three parallel-jaw clamps.

