

Best New Tools

The tool-buying guide you're holding contains a wide variety of real-world tests and reviews, conducted by experts in the field who took groups of tools and put them through their paces in workshops and on job sites.

There were tools, however, that made their debuts so recently that we were unable to include them in the head-to-head reviews. Nevertheless, because some of these tools caught our collective

eye, we managed to give them a test run before we went to press to include them in this year's guide. Some clear winners emerged. Although you won't find these tools elsewhere in the guide, you should consider them when you're reading reviews of products in their categories.

For all of the tools listed in this publication, names of manufacturers and sources of supply are listed in a single index on p. 122.

An improved cabinet scraper

The cabinet scraper stands out when it comes to smoothing tricky grain because it's less likely than a handplane to tear out wood fibers. The latest cabinet scraper from Veritas is touted as an improvement over traditional versions, so we were keen to give it a good workout.

Right out of the box, the scraper needed no tune-up other than burnishing a cutting hook on the edge of the blade. The Veritas is heavier than other cabinet scrapers, and this gives it a well-built feel. We used the scraper on three figured hardwoods: white oak, mahogany and cherry. And for each wood, we produced a blemish-free surface and a heap of fine shavings. At \$34, this tool deserves a place in any hand-tool cabinet. It's distributed by Lee Valley Tools.



Infrared paint stripper makes job easier

Whether you scrape, sand or strip, paint removal is labor intensive. A new and easier method, called the Silent Paint Remover, uses infrared heat to soften the mass of paint right down to the wood's surface. The unit consists of two elements that heat a 12-in. by 5-in. area. Once moisture escapes from the wood, the paint is soft enough to scrape. Best of all, the Silent Paint Remover's heat will loosen lead-based paint without releasing harmful lead vapors, making it one of the safest techniques for lead abatement. As a bonus, the Silent Paint Remover softens old, hard window glazing, too. The unit is available from IMG Inc. for \$395.



A better tool organizer

Organization never comes easily, and when you're spending time looking for the right tool, you're not getting the job done. Designed by a carpenter with 25 years of experience, the Vetopropac is one of the best tool organizers that we've seen. Its features include a comfortable PVC grip, a body made of heavy golf-bag material with thick polypropylene bottom, pockets, pouches and zippered compartments of varying sizes. But will it hold all your stuff and let you find the right widget quickly without the bag tipping over? The answer is yes. What the Vetopropac won't do is put the stuff in the bag for you; you'll have to do that yourself. The price is \$120.

