Darnell Hagen's
Three Beech Handplanes

# Local Woods for Krenov Styled Handplanes?

## Q&A: Best Local Woods for Krenov-Styled Handplanes

**From *Sharp & to the Point; A Shameless Shill for Hock Tools*, #3/2017**

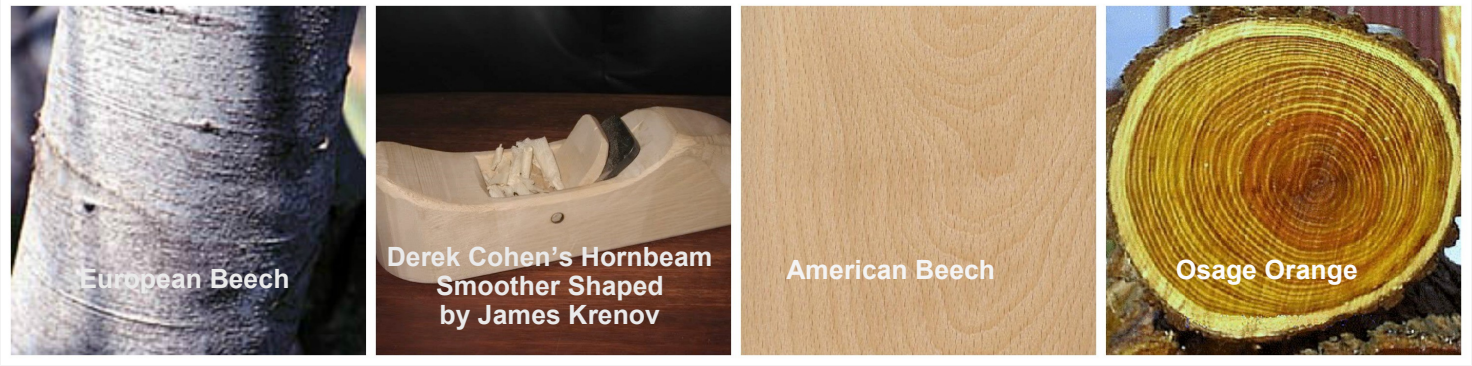
***At Sharp & to The Point we toggle our Q&A Issues between Ron Hock, who answers metal related questions, and Isaac Fisher, who answers woodworker related questions.***

***You may know Isaac from his helpful video about shaping planes to fit your hands, the article on how to use a scratch stock, the article on building a scraper plane, and other projects. Isaac comes from an architecture background and makes his living as woodworker and cabinetmaker. He either helps Ron design or fully designs tools for Hock Tools, builds all of our kits, and is otherwise a total maven when it comes to working wood.***

This question from Oregon woodworker Kiko Denzer is definitely in Isaac Fisher territory:

***Q:*** *If you had to make a plane from wood you could find in your own neighborhood, what would you use? (A "100 mile plane," if you will...). We have some (non-native) beech trees up here in OR -- or maybe our own Oregon White Oak?*

**A:** Glad to hear you're exploring the local options. Beech is the classic plane-making wood used in Europe, and if you have some growing nearby it should work for you too. A lot of the white oak and live oak species growing in Oregon would also be good choices, but some would be better than others. Pacific yew would make an outstanding plane if you happened to come across a small plank in an old barn, but please don't cut down a yew tree, as they are severely threatened. Osage orange is another excellent selection




that grows in most areas of the country, including yours.

Here's a list of what I would look for in a piece of wood for a plane:

The first thing to look for is a **heavy wood with even density across winter and summer growth**. (If you scrub the wood with a stiff wire brush, it should wear evenly rather than eroding


***A few good choices are checked. Chart Adapted from Wikipedia.***

into a ripple pattern that accentuates the grain). Heavy, dense woods provide momentum to the plane as it cuts, and makes it

much easier to use. The smaller the plane, the more this applies. Related to density, but not quite the same thing, is hardness. **Harder woods wear better than soft ones.**

**Isaac Fisher's Own self-made Krenov-Style Handplanes made of Swiss pear, kwila, goncalo alves, and ipe. Isaac cautions that Maple is only one of these that is commonly available, although goncalo alves *is* out there if you persist. No plane here is less than 10 years old. Most are at least 15.**

The next thing to look at is the **size of the pores**. Large pores on the sole of the plane scoop up dust and minerals from the surface being worked. Friction and pressure eventually turn the dust into little hard corns, and just as you take the final pass on your perfectly surfaced board - a giant scratch appears across the surface, caused by one of those corns stuck to the bottom of your plane. The smaller the pores, the less likely this problem will be.

Naturally **oily woods** also help to prevent corns from building up, and reduce the amount of effort needed to use the plane, too. Most of our domestic woods are not oily, but a light coat of wax on the bottom of your plane now and then works almost as well.

Finally, there's **stability**. Stability is nice, but unless you're building a large jointer plane you shouldn't get too hung up on it. No matter which wood you choose, you'll still have to flatten the plane from time to time. Just take the normal precautions that you would take for most other woodworking projects where excessive

movement would be a problem. Use **straight-grained heartwood** pieces. Don't use wood cut from branches. Avoid knots, the pith of the tree, and other defects that might indicate stress in the wood. Above all, make sure the wood has been **properly and completely dried**. If you follow these guidelines, almost any wood should be stable enough to make a good plane.

Good Luck!
Isaac Fisher

**Derek Cohen from Perth, Australia, used a local hardwood, Australian She-Wood, to make this Krenov Styled Smoothing Plane. Derek's blog, intehwoodshop.com talks about how he built this plane.**

**Mitch Roberson's article in the woodworking section of the *online* crafter's blog *Craftsy* includes a *how-to* build this smoother made of relatively easy-to-obtain hard maple. The Internet is filled with woodworker blogs addressing the build of a Krenov style handplane!**

**Remember... If you're ready to make your own plane but are uncertain about the exact dimensions and angles, our full-scale plans will help you succeed. Hock Tools offers seven different plans to help you make your own wooden plane. These are classic "Krenovian" designs with pivoting cross-pin and separate sole plate.**

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