

Backfill

Workbench Wonderland

For some of us, vintage tools are impossible to resist. The mere sight of them incites an overwhelming compulsion to buy, regardless of need.

Skip Brack, proprietor of the Jonesport Wood Co., understands. His three stores — Hulls Cove Tool Barn, Captain Tinkham's Emporium, and Liberty Tool Co., all in Maine — contain a vast selection of antique tools. A walk along their aisles invites massive sensory overload: Shelves creak beneath the weight of every kind of old woodworking and machining device imaginable. Musty-smelling drawers overflow with ancient drill bits, saw blades, and files, weathered by time and use. Cracked mason jars brim with rusty fasteners.

From planes to saw blades, if it's vintage and cool, Brack probably has at least 100 on hand.

His route into the vintage-tool business was circuitous. Back in the '70s, he launched a driftwood salvage and sculpture shop that also carried a few old tools. Fairly quickly, he says, he realized that "the driftwood sculptures didn't sell, but the tools sure did." Once he began expanding his stock of antique tools, business picked up considerably — so much so he had to move to a larger building (the Liberty site, shown here). Eventually he expanded to the other two locations; today the three stores carry a total of 200,000 tools. — *Reid Shalvoy*

