

BY JON VARA

1. Bolt holes in recycled bleacher boards are carefully filled with matching plugs.

2. The prepared stock is then run through a surface planer.

3. The resulting clear, fine-grained material is ideal for cabinet work, high-end interior trim, or flooring.



Indoor Old Growth

The best flooring and millwork have always been made from straight-grained old-growth lumber. But now that the big trees are gone, millwork shops need to take their old growth where they find it.

Mark Anderson, the proprietor of Trevett Millworks, in Greenwich, N.Y., finds his in old gymnasium seating. When an area gym is slated for renovation—which often involves tearing out half-century-old wooden bleachers and replacing them with modern self-retracting plastic seating—Anderson will send an eight- or a 10-man crew to the site to salvage the lumber and haul away the steel for scrap.

Bleacher boards, he reports, range from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick and are up to $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide and as much as 22 feet in length. The majority are sawn from

clear yellow pine or Douglas fir. On rare occasions, striped mahogany seating from the 1920s or 1930s will turn up.

Whatever the species, Anderson says, it's wonderful stuff to work with. Because bleacher seats are fastened with easily removed carriage bolts, they're less likely to contain machinery-damaging nails or screws than recycled beams or timbers.

On the other hand, the crew spends a lot of time scraping off generations-old accumulations of chewing gum. "It's amazing," says Anderson. "There's so much of it you'd think they encourage chewing gum in school."

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Photos: Carl Anderson