

# Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

**I'm thinking about getting a chain saw to use for cutting and prepping my wood. It will also let me buy in log form for better savings/selection. Suggestions on brand, size, and accessories?**

Having a chain saw does present a lot of opportunities to buy in log form, prep blanks for turning, and general harvesting of trees. Since you don't say you are experienced with a chain saw, my first suggestion prior to buying anything is to work with one of your more experienced friends to learn the "ropes". If you are somewhat experienced, forgive me and we'll use this opportunity to preach to the unexperienced. There are a lot of "ropes" to learn. First and foremost are the safety aspects. Until you've learned the safety aspects and are properly garbed with appropriate PPE, you should be an observer. After you've borrowed or purchased your own face shield/helmet/ear protection, gloves, etc., you can have your buddies give you a hands-on learning exercise. This taste will let you know what is involved with the different aspects of chain saw operations. With some saw time under your belt, you can more wisely decide if you really want your own saw, how big an engine, and bar for your planned work.

Lighter work of bobbing limbs and cutting smaller diameter wood requires a far different saw than heavier work on larger trees, logs, or blanks. I own three different chain saws that have different size and power capabilities. I list them for info only, not a brand recommendation since you'll see the names in the pictures anyway. While I am pleased with all, there are many other quality saw brands to choose from. I have a small Homelite that I have had for 35 or more years. Bought at a big box home store, it serves extremely well for anything around the yard that needs trimming or small prep for the lathe. For the larger work, I have a larger Stihl MS290 saw. Not very big but a far larger engine and bar than the other two saws. It is what goes in the truck when harvesting will be done, or the cuts needed exceed the capacity of the Homelite.

My indoor saw is a small Poulan electric. Easy to grab, plug in, and use anywhere indoors without exhaust fumes, gas fuel, or other issues with gas engine saws. Small and relatively light duty, I use it in the garage or basement shop needing only to clean up the mess that most saws spew all over. My suggestions in order. First, learn the saw basics and safe use including safety gear. Get some "saw time" with experienced friends to see how you mix fuel, start saws, operate them safely, cut properly, sharpen blades, and more. With that time under your belt, you can decide on a particular saw size that fits your needs as well as a potential brand. Quite possibly you'll have used one of your mates' machines and develop a liking for it. You certainly can buy used if that opportunity is available, but I am a fan of new with warranty type gear if funds allow. With little or no experience, buying used 2-cycle engine equipment might be beyond your assessment capabilities.

Accessories needed include 2-stroke oil, a special fuel container for properly mixed 2 stroke fuel, a file for blade touch up, usually a spare replacement blade, the wrenches for the saw, along with your PPE. You decide what you feel



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KURT HERTZOG



**1** My stable of chain saws. Since I don't tackle very large work, my Stihl is large and powerful enough for my needs. The others fill the smaller and quicker cutting or indoor cutting. **2** As important as the saw and your training is your PPE. Here's mine. Protective helmet (face and ears too), chaps, gloves, and extra PPE for the non-cutting helper if needed.

comfortable with, but I use a combination hard hat helmet with a wire mesh face mask and integral earmuffs. Along with my head, face, and ear protection, I have a pair of chain saw chaps and jacket, and cut resistant, vibration dampening gloves. It all stores nicely in a duffel bag next to the saw. Some advice wanted or not. Buy for value and not for price if you can swing it. The big box stores are unable to help you with any saw problems. Buying from a dealer who carries the more professional saw products, while pricier, will pay dividends when you have any issues. I have never been unhappy with my local Stihl dealer. That said, I have friends who run professional tree services that use other pro brands and are happy with them. The usable lifetime on my saws is far longer than on me so spending a few extra bucks was worthwhile. Take your time and spend your money to wisely get what fits your needs and has support.



**3** There are times when a dust mask is a wise idea. I keep some dust masks in my duffel bag for those occasions. Small, lightweight, and inexpensive protection when needed. **4** I always have room for extra PPE for those onlookers that are only in need of ear protection. Even far away to be safe from debris, is still close enough for too much noise.



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**I use an overhead dust filter and seem to be changing filters far too often. They are pricey. I'm not sure that I'm changing them at the right time. I do it when they look dirty. Any advice.**

I use a couple of overhead dust collectors in my main shop. They do a great job of cleaning up the dust floating around in the air. Remember, these provide help to keep the shop clean, not protect your lungs very much. You are correct about the filter elements being pricey. I can't speak to your size and brand of filter, but I'll share how I do it. To tell when the filters need attention, I check the actual airflow. A trick I learned many years ago was to tie some strings to the exhaust screen. When the strings blow out horizontal, the airflow through the filter system is very good. As they tend to droop from horizontal, your airflow is somewhat restricted. When the exhaust airflow strings dangle down too far, it's time to change the filters. I do two things with my filters. My outer filter gets a vacuuming from my floor based, multi-horse dust collector. I can clean out the filter in a flash with the vacuum hose and press it back into service. This will work a few times before it needs to be replaced. The inner filter gets trashed and replaced each time

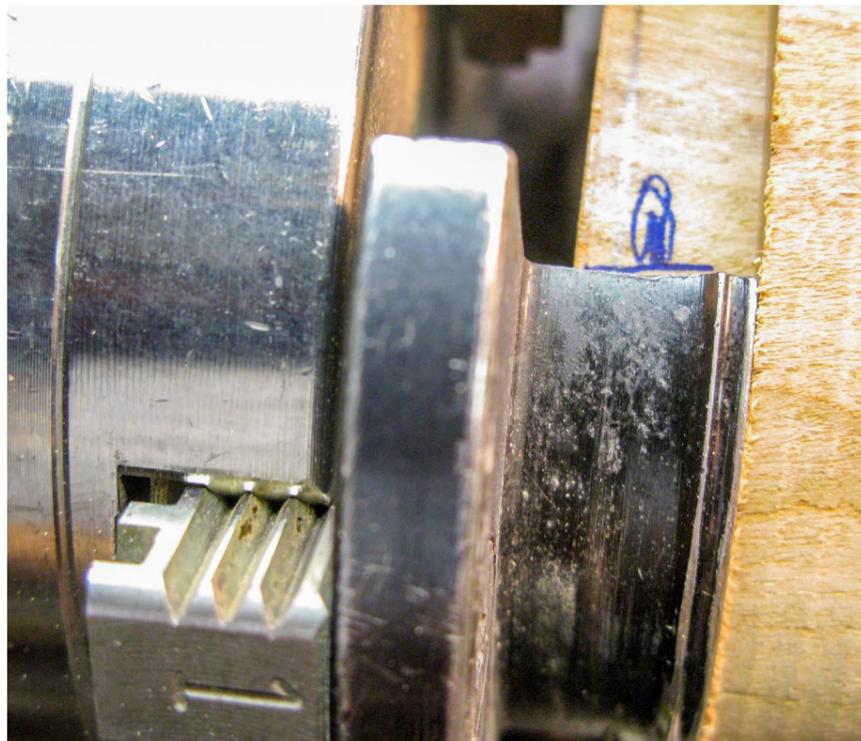


**5** While not flowing at the highest flow rate, there is still some life in the filters. When it drops a bit more, it is time to vacuum the front filter (or replace) and replace the inner filter.

because I haven't found an effective way to clean it. By vacuuming the outer filter and using a new inner filter, I don't get to "brand new" air flow but close. With two new filters, I'm back in business to the max. To help control price, I buy my filters in quantity for that price break. You may or may not need to buy in bulk, but I find that they don't go bad, they never get less expensive, and they are on hand when you need them. Notice that I marked the filter codes and dimensions on the back plate of the filter unit. No confusion and easy to read when you need to reorder. The dimensions are there just in case you need to order something other than the indicated filter part number.

**Currently, I only one chuck. At times I need to remove a turning to mount something else. Later, I have difficulties getting the original remounted and running true. Any help?**

Over the years I've accumulated enough chucks that I don't often run into problem this anymore. When I do, I use the following method. As my standard method of workflow, once I bottom the turned shoulder of my work on the lips of the jaws and secure the work, I mark my number 1 jaw on the work. I mark every turning once mounted whether I intend to remove it or not. Just a standard workflow for me. It really doesn't matter what jaw number you use. I picked #1 but you can pick anything as long as you always use the same number jaw. When the work is removed, you'll have the jaw marks on the wood from all the jaws. To remount accurately as possible, I orient the work to the proper jaw position, snug the chuck up while feeling the jaws seat in the indents put in the wood from the original clamping. It is amazing the feel you'll get when reseating your work this way. Snug everything up and check for runout. Sometimes a bit of truing is needed to be cut. Of course, a slight whack on the turning in the correct place to true up any minor runout works too. If you would like to bone up on workholding ideas and tricks, you can find my 13-part series on workholding in WT issues 238 to 250.



**6** Always marking my number 1 jaw is well worth it should I need to dismount that work. Feel alone will help you guide the turning back into the original impressions.

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