



PIC 1. Sycamore is a natural antibacterial and doesn't taint food, so is ideal for food preparation



PIC 2. Jack planing to flatten the board

The joys of *furniture making*

In the first of a brand-new series, **Peter Sefton** and his Long Course students embark on a 35-week woodworking journey – and what better way to start out than by learning the basics

How appropriate that I begin my regular writing for *GW* with a new intake of students on my Long Course at the Furniture School. I have eight students who have just joined us for their 35-week woodworking journey; some of them have experience and some are completely new to furniture making, going through the workshops to become highly skilled designer-makers in their own right.

Making a breadboard

The students have started straight on the workbench with us concentrating on hand tools while fine-tuning their hand-eye coordination. Their first few tasks are well on the way and with tool selection, tool care and sharpening accomplished, it's time for hand-cut joints and planing skills.

The first project introducing them to design is a breadboard; simple in form but full of techniques to be explored. The students have measured up a wane-edged board of sycamore and selected a suitable piece to hand saw out. Drawing and colour-washing a perspective sketch is the starting point to work from, before the hand planing starts in earnest.

Tools for the job

The plane in their toolboxes is a 5½ jack plane; great for this size of work – large

enough to flatten the board but small enough to smooth. The only way to really learn how to plane and clean a board up is to get those muscles to work, in a controlled and measured way.

Getting the board clean of those saw mill marks, flat and without twist, takes more than sheer hard work; this now calls for sharp tools, measuring and testing techniques while learning how to read the grain and work with the timber. Once the face side has been produced, it's over to either planing the face edge square and true, or getting the board down to thickness.

Some students opted for a natural-edge after removing the bark, others wanted a much more formal rectangular board, while the rest wanted a sculpted edge with natural flowing lines or incorporated finger grips. The one common theme learned by all was that a few hours using the hand plane and various other tools is a great introduction to the joys of furniture making. **GW**



PIC 3. Checking flatness with a Veritas straightedge



PIC 4. After initial planing the boards are cramped to keep them flat



PIC 6. Spokeshaving out carving gouge marks



PIC 7. Final sanding to remove any plane or finger marks



PIC 5. Initial marking out for a carved handgrip



PIC 8. A great hand carved detail accentuates the annual rings