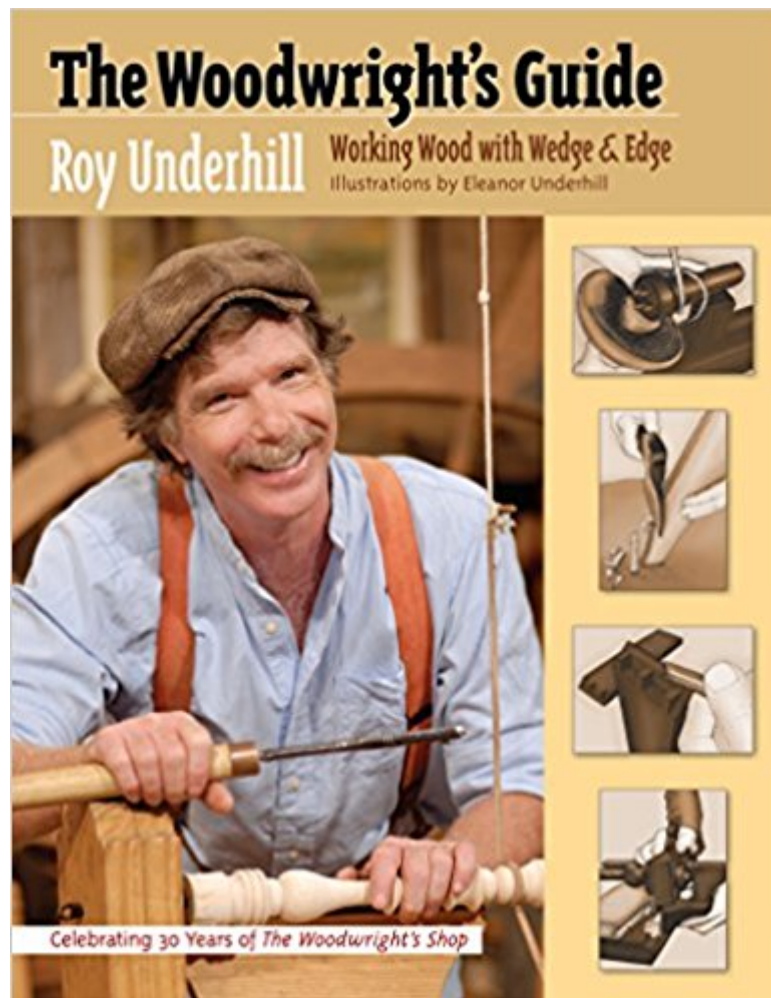




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# The Woodwright's Guide: Working Wood With Wedge And Edge



## Synopsis

For thirty years, Roy Underhill's PBS program, *The Woodwright's Shop*, has brought classic hand-tool craftsmanship to viewers across America. Now, in his seventh book, Roy shows how to engage the mysteries of the splitting wedge and the cutting edge to shape wood from forest to furniture. Beginning with the standing tree, each chapter of *The Woodwright's Guide* explores one of nine trades of woodcraft: faller, countryman and cleaver, hewer, log-builder, sawyer, carpenter, joiner, turner, and cabinetmaker. Each trade brings new tools and techniques; each trade uses a different character of material; but all are united by the grain in the wood and the enduring mastery of muscle and steel. Hundreds of detailed drawings by Eleanor Underhill (Roy's daughter) illustrate the hand tools and processes for shaping and joining wood. A special concluding section contains detailed plans for making your own foot-powered lathes, workbenches, shaving horses, and taps and dies for wooden screws. *The Woodwright's Guide* is informed by a lifetime of experience and study. A former master craftsman at Colonial Williamsburg, Roy has inspired millions to "just say no to power tools" through his continuing work as a historian, craftsman, activist, and teacher. In *The Woodwright's Guide*, he takes readers on a personal journey through a legacy of off-the-grid, self-reliant craftsmanship. It's a toolbox filled with insight and technique as well as wisdom and confidence for the artisan in all of us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Woodwright's Guide" captures the true glory and mystery of the material that built this country, from the first swing of the axe to the final shaving of a smoothing plane. Roy Underhill's impressive

technical knowledge, respect for traditional methods, and amusing storytelling make this his finest effort to date. I devoured every word and enjoyed it immensely." -- Christopher Schwarz, editor of "Popular Woodworking" and "Woodworking Magazine""I own all of Underhill's books. . . . So it is no small thing when I say that Underhill's new book (his first in 12 years) is his best. . . . Unlike his previous books . . . "The Woodwright's Guide" is focused entirely on technique. . . . Underhill's other great strength is his ability to explain extremely complex ideas in a way that makes it feel like you've suddenly achieved Buddhist enlightenment." --Christopher Schwarz, "Woodworking Magazine" Weblog

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Roy Underhill has that rare gift of imparting complex technique in a straight-forward manner so that beginners are able to grasp what the master understands clearly. This book endeavors to bring the understanding of connection of systems so that any one task is a part of a large knowledge base which can be accessed via our national history. Learning why we do things and how we can continue the solid technique that has been laid out for us to follow gives notion to the pride of leaving this world with something worth keeping. Roy Underhill is helping us to preserve not only our national identity but also our human ingenuity as the skills learned from the "Woodwrights Guide..." remains over time to teach new students the value of self sufficiency.

From what I understand, this book is almost a compilation of some of Roy Underhill's other works. This is my first of his books so I cannot be offended if some of the info is rehash. I've slowly come to like, but not love, Roy's show the Woodwright's Shop, so I thought that I would give the book a try.Woodworking with "wedge and edge." I suppose every woodworker realizes that when dealing

with wood you are either cutting it's fibres or splitting them. I did, but the book actually brought that line of thinking/idea into true clarity to me for the first time. This really did change the way I saw, use a chisel, and even use power tools, so at that the book helped a great deal. Much of the book centers of the process of creating furniture from tree to finished product. It is less of a how-to book and uses a bit of storytelling to get the knowledge across, which worked for me though some may not enjoy it as much. Towards the end of the book there are plans for a workbench and a lathe that I thought could have been more clearly presented. The workbench in particular interested me, I just didn't care for the plans. Overall I liked the book though I'm not overly sure if I would purchase another book by Roy Underhill. Other reviewers on and other sites have stated that this book is quite similar to prior books of his. As I said, I thought it was enjoyable and I learned from it, but I wouldn't pay for it twice.

I have several of Roy's other Woodwright's Guide books. This one is mostly a repeat of what's in those. If you don't have the others, then you will enjoy this one. If you do have the others, you will still enjoy this one, because that's how he writes, but you won't learn as much.

This, the sixth in Underhill's Woodwright series, is more tool and process oriented than the others. I really like this one for its practical teachings. I do have an axe to grind, however. The Product Description above says "A special concluding section contains detailed plans for making your own foot-powered lathes, ...." Aah, I thought, I'll finally get plans for building that treadle lathe Underhill has been teasing me with for five books. If you, like me, think "detailed plans" will give you true shop drawings, lists of materials, and instructions that, if you follow them will give you a working lathe at the end; then you, like me, will be very disappointed. He does give you more than in the past, but be prepared for much head scratching and trial and error. If I do go ahead and try to build one, I'm going to make sure I have at least three of everything on hand. Over all, this is perhaps his best book yet. I just don't understand why he's so stingy with his plans.

My husband likes it, he Loves this guy!

The book is driven by a very simple thesis: there are two ways to cut wood, with an edge and with a wedge, and every possible woodworking operation uses one or both methods. Beginning with the tree in the forest, the book moves through the tasks of the feller, the sawyer, the timber framer, the joiner, the turner, and the cabinet maker. At each step, the workmanship becomes more precise and

refined, though not necessarily more skillful or complicated. It helps that the author has direct experience in all these areas, so he speaks from the point of view of the craftsman as well as the historian. As some of the previous reviewers point out, this book does repeat a lot of information that is scattered throughout Underhill's earlier books. For those who have read and digested his previous books, there won't be a lot of new information or techniques here, although there is some. But the advantage to Underhill's approach in this book is that he takes more time to explain techniques in detail than he has in the earlier, project-focused books. Want to know how to make a lapped dovetail joint in a timber frame with just a saw and axe? A hidden dovetail in a miter joint? Or a rule joint for a drop-leaf table? This book gives you the details, complete with line drawings that show important steps. I should emphasize, though, that these are not the step-by-baby-step instructions of conventional woodworking literature. Underhill is content to explain the crucial principles, guide you around common pitfalls, and let you work out some of the details on your own. But that has always been his ethos, and anyone already familiar with Underhill, either through his TV show or his books, will know already. Implicitly, the book shows that once you master the basic principles of a process, you become free to improvise at any number of levels. Readers of Underhill's previous books will no doubt recognize a lot of the drawings, many of which are rendered from photos that appeared in the older books. I happen to like the drawings better, since they tend to be clearer and less visually cluttered. Plus, there are a lot more images than in previous books, so the book is on the whole much better illustrated than previous works. The layout is very effective, with the images confined to the wide margins and the text in a single column. If you happen to be in the habit of annotating your books, the layout offers ample opportunity. An added bonus is a short essay, "The Great Wheel," which originally appeared in *Woodworking Magazine*. The book's appendices have some otherwise hard-to-find information on making taps and dies for wooden screws, as well as spring-pole and treadle lathes. (There is also an appendix on making two traditional workbenches, which are helpful if not revolutionary.) The lathe "plans" are minimal; Underhill sets up the crucial details and lets you figure out the rest yourself. Many woodworkers are uncomfortable with this approach, but I think that any experienced woodworker should be able to build either lathe successfully without further directions. Underhill's spirit in this book is very consistent with his earlier work--he combines historical research, traditional techniques, and American-style improvisation to inspire the woodworker to discover woodcraft afresh.

Roy Underhill is a great teacher

My husband loves this gift!

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