Scrapers for Cane

FOR YEARS I HAD BEEN PROMISING myself that I would build a bamboo rod. But the task of gathering the necessary tools and materials seemed insurmountable and I reluctantly let my dream die. Later, my interest was reawakened by various magazine articles geared to the home rod builder. These articles had foreseen my problems and led me to many sources of the tools and material I needed. But one problem remained. Try as I might I could not find a satisfactory scraper with which to achieve the final and very exacting tapers for the cane sections. None of the tools and techniques I had read about worked for me.

Then, in a small Denver industrial supply house, I found the tool that I was sure must exist. It is a three-cornered, bluntly tapered, hollow-ground, hard-steel machinist's scraper. It has provided me with the means to work to the extremely close tolerances required in the final tapering of the bamboo sections.

The tool should be held with the wooden handle in the palm of your hand

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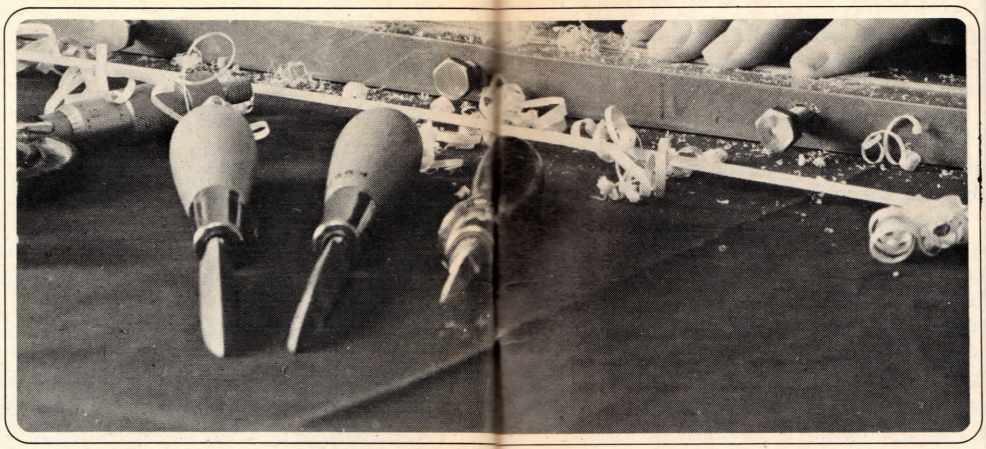

Different scrapers described by the author. Photo by the author.

and with your index finger on top of the blade to provide the proper amount of pressure. Place the blade at a slight angle to the rod section and cant it slightly off vertical. I have found two basic strokes to be useful.

The first stroke is a rapid back and forth motion used to remove material rapidly. Be very careful when using this stroke. There is a tendency to cut into the bamboo fibers on the return stroke which creates a small depression. Unless extreme care is used this depression will rapidly enlarge and become deeper, ruining the section. Should a depression appear, a quick pass or two with a sanding block loaded with 320-grit Durite No-Fil sandpaper will correct the uneven spot without taking off too much material.

The second stroke is a slow one that should be made with moderate pressure in one direction only. It is used to remove the final thousandth of an inch or so from the section. Shavings of .001-inch or less can be made with this scraper. I have found that the scraper works best when

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the sections are carefully prepared. A very light sanding with No-Fil sandpaper before you begin scraping will make the job much easier.

Since the blade is made of carbide steel it keeps its edge for a long time. An occasional pass with a fine file will dress the edge if it becomes dull.

The scrapers are not easy to find. Few hardware stores carry them, although dealers listed under "machine tools" in the yellow pages of your telephone directory often do. The scrapers I have been using are manufactured by the Simonds Company and by Nicholson Files; they are also available from other manufacturers of machine tools. The best size and kind to get is a straight 3/8-inch blade like the tool with the black handle in the illustration. These are very hard to find and you will more commonly find 1/2-inch scrapers with the curved tip like those with the light handles. These tools are called by different names: machinist's scraper, bearing scraper or deburring tool. You might have to describe it to the clerk. The cost varies from about $3.50 to $10.00 for a single tool, and up to about $20.00 for sets. The scrapers illustrated all cost in the $3.50 range and have been most satisfactory. RALPH MOON