

## Sharpening a Handsaw

First of all let me establish something. I don't consider myself a saw sharpener but I do sharpen my own hand saws and have gotten quality results. A word of caution, I have noticed that there seems to be a direct correlation between the saw teeth getting smaller and my own birthdays. If anyone else has noticed this strange occurrence, please do let me know. I hope this is of some help to those of you who wish to sharpen your own saws.

Terry Landry

Here are the tools you will need.

- 2 files: a 6"- 8" mill bastard and a 7" triangular extra slim taper
- Jointer attachment. This could be just a block of wood attached to the file
- Saw set. I was lucky enough to find an old Stanley #42 still in the box w/ instructions
- Saw vise. I made my own, but you find them at flea markets, etc.
- 3 homemade guide blocks. Helpful but certainly not needed



### Joint the teeth

You must make certain that all teeth are of the same height before you can set them and this is done by jointing. How much jointing needs to be done is dependent on the condition of the saw. Using light pressure, joint from the handle end moving toward the front end. This cuts the taller teeth down to the same height as the shorter teeth (see next photo). Should some teeth remain untouched, you can make another pass from the opposite direction. Once jointed, some teeth will have to be reshaped so that the little flat on the teeth tips are all the same size. This is done by very lightly filing the back of those teeth. If, in the process of jointing, you form a bit of a crown in the saw's cutting edge don't bother. This will give the teeth a "progressive cut". Some saws used to be formed that way with a about 1/8 inch crown from heel to toe.



### Set the Teeth

This is done using a saw set. You should adjust the saw set to one of the teeth closest to the handle (those teeth have been less abused over time). Start with a few teeth near the handle to assure you've got the proper set. Watch the anvil of the saw set. Ideally you should bend only one-third to one-half of the tooth and it should be bent out only about half the thickness of the saw. The next photo shows this being done in the vise but you may find this easier done while holding the saw in your lap. Do the first side from handle to toe and then the other side from toe to handle.



## File the Teeth Sharp

The next photo shows two little guide blocks being used. They simply assist me in holding the file at the proper angles in relation to the saw and tooth. With or without these little blocks this is still a “by eye” operation. Again, start from the handle and work towards the toe using very light pressure working on the teeth pointing away from you. File on the back of each tooth. File down so that you remove only about half of the jointed flat on each tooth tip. Flip the saw end for end in the vise and now do the same working from toe to handle. Once done, repeat the process this time filing down to a point making certain that all the jointed flats are brought down to even points. You should do at least two filings on each side to help in keeping all teeth to the same size. Trying to sharpen the teeth in the first pass could shorten some of the teeth. Note! My drawing for the rip saw shows the file on the leading edge of the tooth, it should be on the back edge. Enjoy and good luck!

