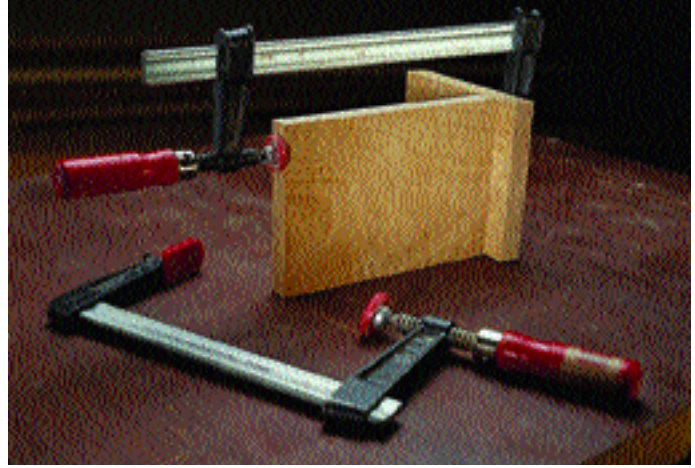


Unsung Hero

While these “tools” are within arm’s reach of almost every woodworker, we don’t often talk about the value of stout bar clamps.



Photos by Al Parrish

We’ve had Bessey Trademen bar clamps hanging on the ends of our benches for more than eight years. We don’t think about them much because they’re always handy and always do exactly what we ask.

These aren’t the least expensive bar clamps out there, but you get what you pay for in this category (and many others).

Tradesmen medium-duty clamps come in two throat depths, (2½" and 4") and are built around galvanized profiled rails (either ⅝" x 1" or ¼" x 1" rails, depending on throat depth). The rails themselves are serrated on either side. The serrations lock into the cast-iron arms in a cam-style grip. These clamps give a strong, solid hold without slippage. You might think that these serrations biting into the cast iron would wear the clamp, but they still hold as well as day one.

Large wood handles and oversized threads on the screws make it fast and easy to tight-

en and release the clamps. The large jaw faces are protected by non-marring plastic caps that stay on when necessary and snap on and off easily as required. Amazingly we haven’t lost more than a couple of pads in eight years.

We prefer the extra reach offered by the 4" throats, but there’s a place for the 2½" clamps as well. Overall, these clamps apply more than enough pressure (up to 600 or 880 pounds of pressure, again depending on the throat depth) for any woodworking task. There’s never a concern of the bars flexing during a glue-up and they’re virtually maintenance-free.

You can save a few bucks and buy a similar bar clamp; but honestly, we’ve found these Bessey clamps to be worth every penny. Stout and reliable, you might not think about them often, but when you need a clamp, they’re always ready. **PW**

— David Thiel, senior editor

SPECIFICATIONS

Bessey Trademen Bar Clamps

Street price: 2½" x 12", \$12
4" x 12", \$21

Nice features: Strong, no-slip design. Reliable and easy to care for.

Recommended modifications: Round handles can slip in your grip. A faceted handle would offer more grip strength.

For more information: Contact American Clamping at 585-344-1160 or jamesmorton.com

ABOUT OUR ENDURANCE TESTS

Every tool featured in this column has survived at least two years of heavy use in our shop here at *Popular Woodworking*.