

Double-Duty

This homemade box catches dust and provides power **BY ANDREW YOUNG**

Carpentry is a dusty business. To make matters worse, many projects are done in occupied homes. So whether we carpenters set up in a client's garage or on the front porch, or we create a "clean room" somewhere in the house, we have to be as conscientious and proactive as possible when it comes to dust.

There's no question that capturing dust at the source safeguards the health of the workers, allows tools to run more efficiently, reduces cleanup time at the end of a job, and impresses the client. But switching a vacuum hose from one tool to another is about as efficient a solution as having just one extension cord for six separate tools. That constant need both to power our tools and to control the dust they create inspired this homemade vac box.

A combination of a cyclonic dust separator and electrical receptacles housed in a plywood box, this device has become the central hub

for my company's on-site workspace. We don't waste time switching out power cords or vacuum hoses each time we want to use a different machine, and the cyclone separates most of the dust and debris before it reaches the vacuum, which extends the life of vacuum bags and filters and ensures that we never lose suction. And because finish carpentry demands a fine point for accurate marking, we've added what has turned out to be a crew favorite: a built-in electric pencil sharpener.

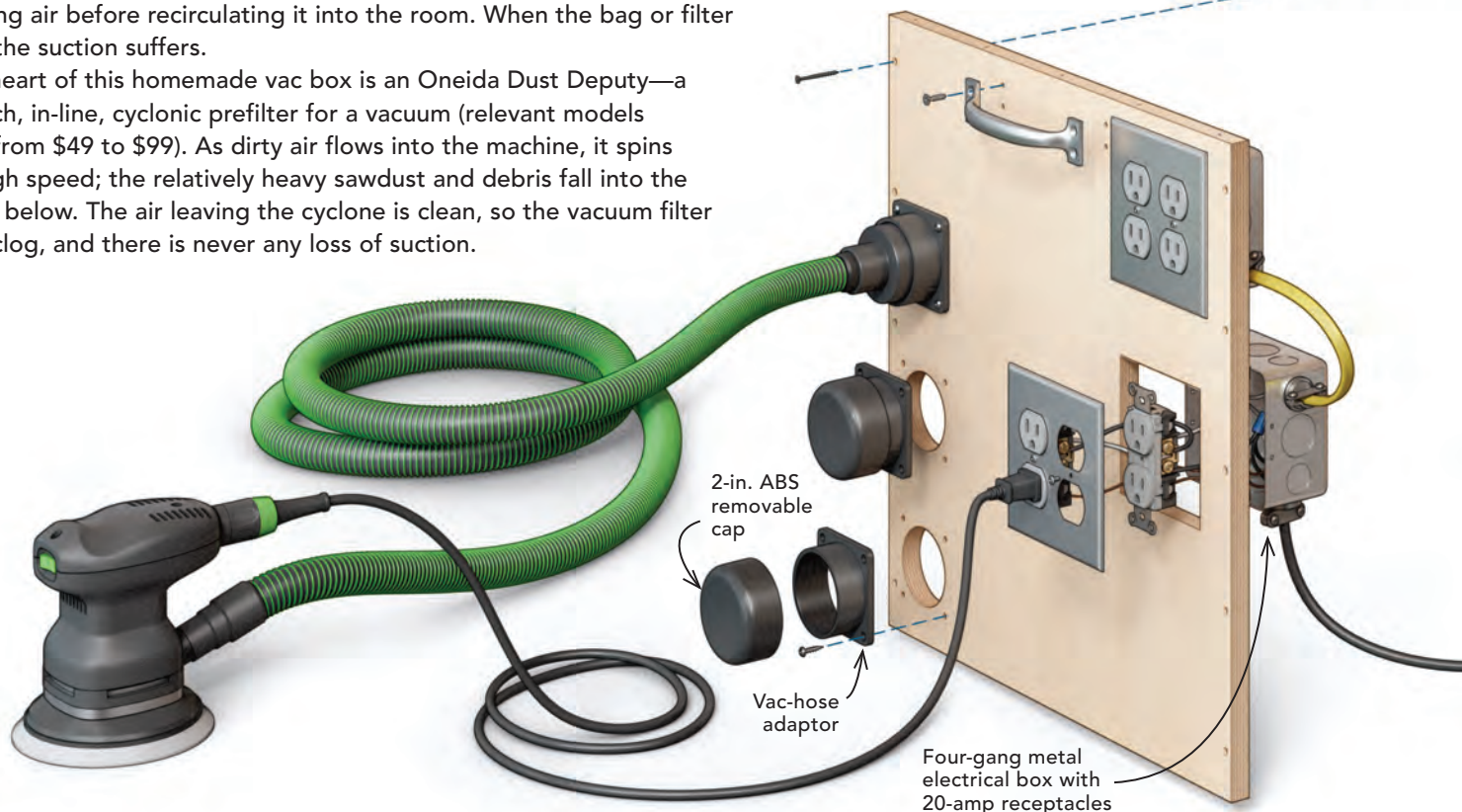
When connected to a powerful tool-actuated dust collector (we like the Festool CT 26), we now have constant power, automatic dust collection, and sharp pencils. What more could a carpenter want?

Andrew Young is co-owner of Young & Son Woodworks in Portland, Ore. Photo by the author.

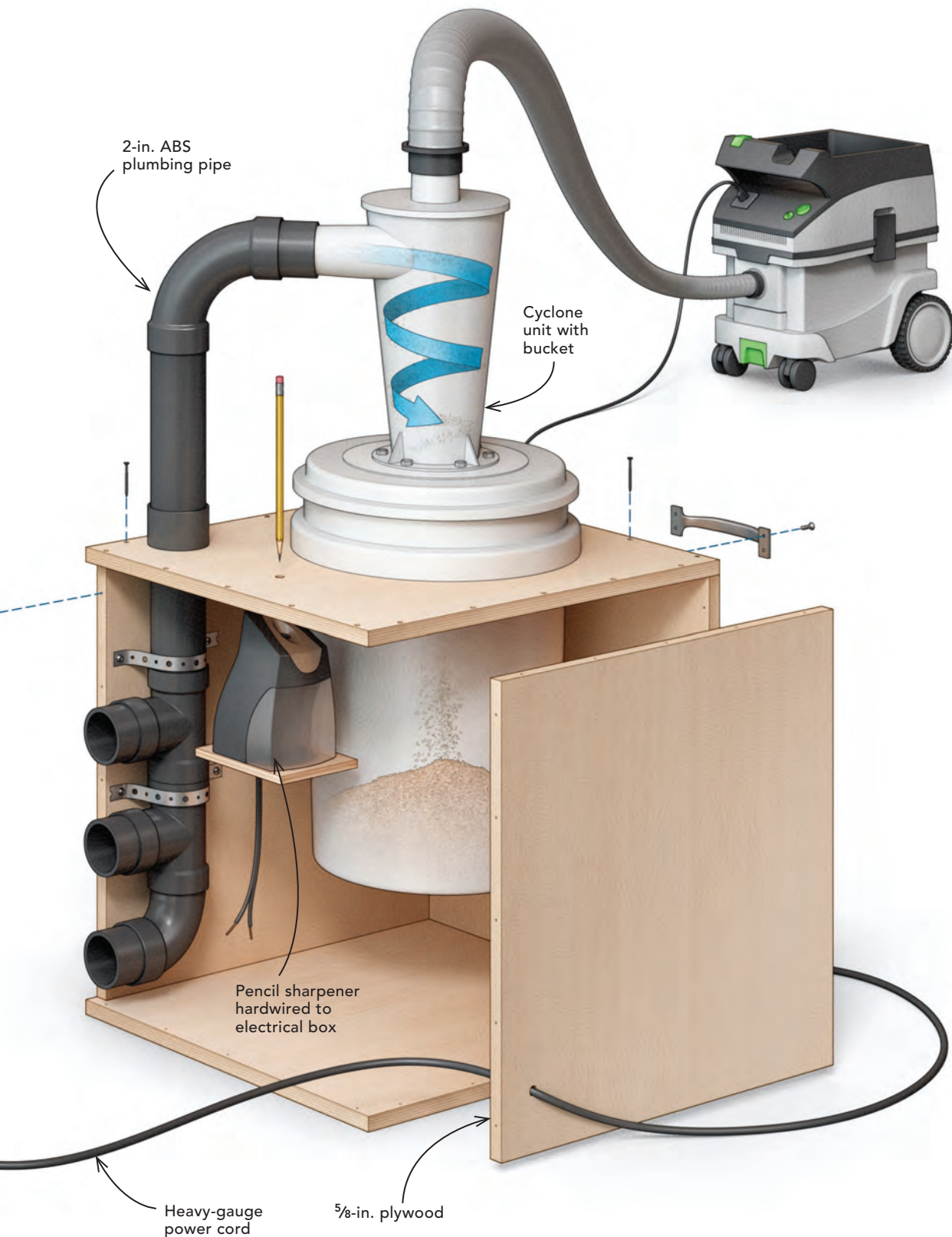
LOW-TECH, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DUST SEPARATOR

Standard wet/dry vacuums rely on a cartridge filter and/or bag to clean the incoming air before recirculating it into the room. When the bag or filter clogs, the suction suffers.

The heart of this homemade vac box is an Oneida Dust Deputy—a low-tech, in-line, cyclonic prefilter for a vacuum (relevant models range from \$49 to \$99). As dirty air flows into the machine, it spins at a high speed; the relatively heavy sawdust and debris fall into the bucket below. The air leaving the cyclone is clean, so the vacuum filter won't clog, and there is never any loss of suction.



Dust Collector



Built from about half a sheet of plywood and some plumbing and electrical parts, this dust collector is light enough to be portable but heavy enough to keep the cyclone unit upright. When plugged into a tool-triggered vac, the box's onboard electrical outlets provide on-demand, centralized power for multiple job-site tools, which can be fed into the multiport vac inlets. When not in use, the cyclone fits neatly into a truck or van. The pipe arm can be removed and stored inside the unit along with the vac hose.

