

# Editor's Choice



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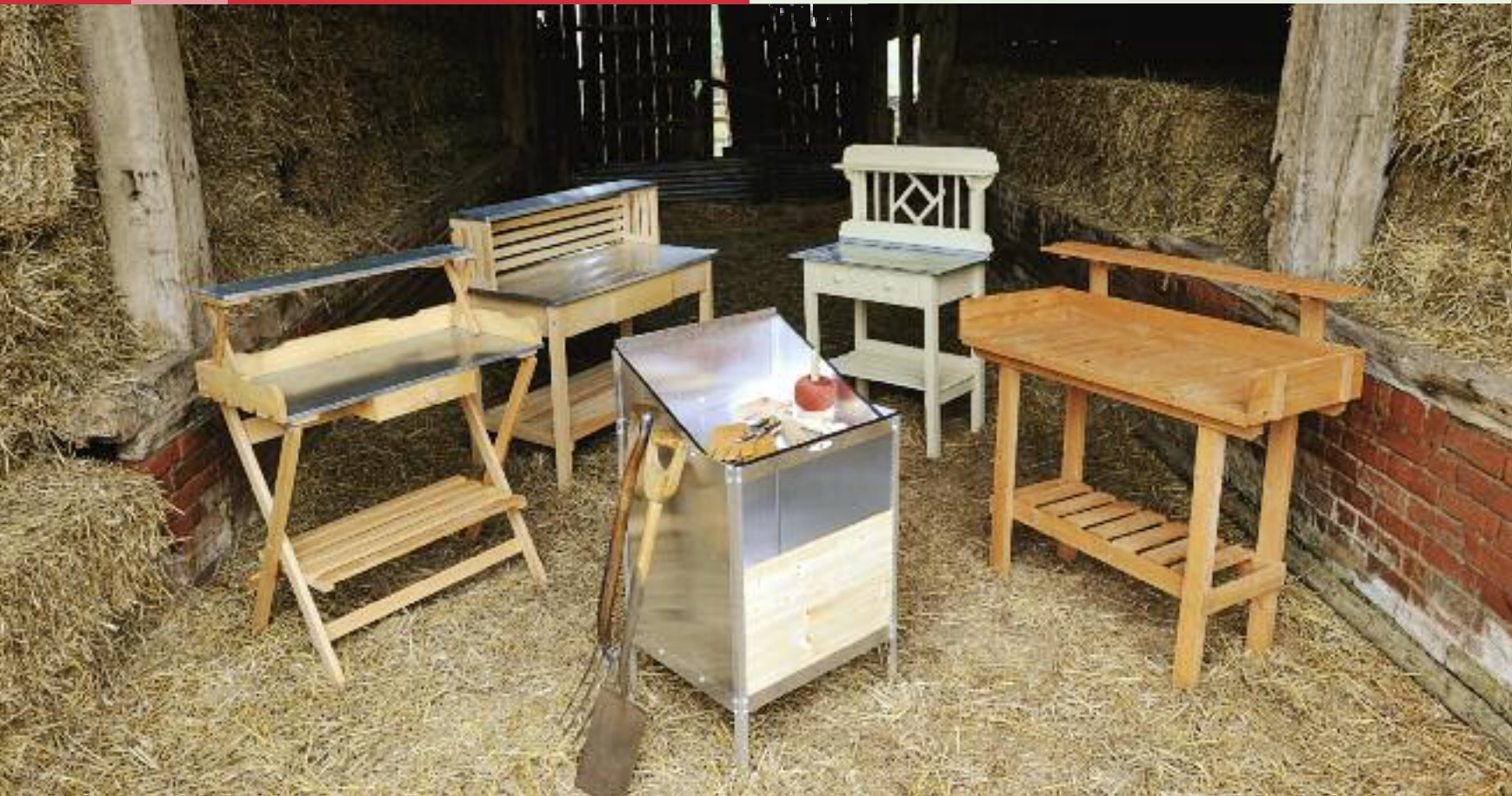


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*On wet days it's a treat to have an undercover area and a potting bench at which to base yourself*



**1** I'm the last person to sing the praises of folding anything - many times I've had a trapped finger in a deckchair, so the Folding Potting Bench was met with caution. However, this bench is genius and my **EDITOR'S CHOICE**. Made of beech timber that is FSC certified, it ticks all my boxes - drawer, shelf and compost backstop. The worktop is covered with an easy-clean galvanised sheet and the whole bench folds flat. It's perfect for a small work area and can easily be moved to work in the garden, and the price is very reasonable - it even got my uncle's seal of approval. Height to worktop 90.5cm, width 95cm, depth 48cm. Priced at £149.95 (£19.99 postage).

**2** The Traditional Potting Bench wins the race for looks, hands down. Beautifully made of solid beech, it will last the test of time. It's heavy and comes with a galvanised work surface. Measures

120cm in length, worktop of 90cm high and width 60cm. Sadly it lacks the essential back plate to prevent compost falling off. It's still tempting though. Comes as a flat pack but straightforward to build. You'll be proud to show off this item. Priced at £325 (£5.95 postage).

**3** If you pot up in the conservatory, the Garden Work Bench would be at home in the best of rooms. A very attractive piece of furniture, made from softwood that is FSC certified. Comes in many different colours and repaint packs are available. All finishes are water-based acrylics that are non toxic. Height 141cm, width 88cm, and depth 42cm. Although it comes with a zinc-covered work surface, I think this bench is more suitable for the hobby gardener than professional use. Some self assembly required. Priced at £279 (postage usually £35, but free this month to *The English Garden* readers!).

**4** The design of the Potting Bench With Shelf is perfect. It has the back plate, top shelf and a handy bottom shelf. It's made of FSC timber but is fairly rough in finish - but for the price it's great value and the more rustic style will be preferred by many gardeners. Unlike all the others, it lacks a metal top, so it would be tricky to dry the surface. Height 119cm, and the bench is 117x57cm. Some self assembly is required. A sensible price at £59.99 (£5.99 delivery).

**5** The Aluminium Potting Bench from Two Wests & Elliott is a neat option, ideal for a small greenhouse. Although basic in design it was comfy to use. Out of all the benches it was the best for working with compost. It measures 61cm wide with a height of 92cm. It is quite fiddly to put together on arrival. Price £59.95 (delivery charge from £4.99).

## Which potting bench will make the perfect workmate?

**I**t rained like it hadn't rained for weeks when I set to work on testing my selection of potting benches. As the rain thundered down on the polytunnel and shed, I thanked my lucky stars that mowers or secateurs weren't the order of the day. The weather was a reminder of what a treat it is to have an undercover area to potter in wet weather, and a bench at which to base yourself. I've always fancied spending many a pleasant hour potting up and taking cuttings at a sturdy bench - it's that classic, romantic image we all have of our hobby. Truth be told, I've never owned a purpose-built one - most gardeners I meet have fashioned their own out of old kitchen

units. The reason for this is that many purpose-built versions are too small or too low, and in some cases quite costly. My very practical uncle, who spends hours at his bench, pointed out that it's better to have one that's too high, as standing on concrete for hours while potting up is never good for you. He was all for working from a wooden platform. Another vital ingredient for him is that a bucket of compost can be tipped onto the tabletop and be kept neatly brushed up against the corner. Gaps for compost to fall over the back of the bench are a nuisance. I for one don't enjoy lifting heavy benches to rescue valuable compost. I favour having a drawer for labels, string and note pad, and a shelf is

sensible. A mug of coffee will always attract compost, and a radio will last far longer if kept away from soil and water.

As I'm not running a nursery and simply want to potter at the weekends, I fancy the idea of owning a purpose-made bench. I know it sounds very shallow, but having a good-looking bench in the greenhouse means quite a bit to me - I'd like people to be a little envious of my purchase. So, I'm after good looks, practical design and durability - should be no problem, right?

*With thanks to Stockton Bury Gardens, Hereford. [www.stocktonbury.co.uk](http://www.stocktonbury.co.uk) All props available from Capability in Cheltenham, tel: +44 (0)1242 262999.*



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### STOCKISTS

- **Folding Potting Bench** Available from Heritage Garden Traders. Tel: + 44 (0)1989 720178. [www.heritagegardentraders.co.uk](http://www.heritagegardentraders.co.uk)
- **Traditional Potting Bench** From Burford Online. Tel: +44 (0)1993 823117. [www.burford.co.uk](http://www.burford.co.uk) (Also available from Capability in Cheltenham, tel: +44 (0)1242 262999 - no mail order.)
- **Garden Work Bench** From Lanes Garden Shop. Tel: +44 (0)1460 57703. [www.gardenshopsomerset.co.uk](http://www.gardenshopsomerset.co.uk)
- **Potting Bench with Shelf** Available from Crocus. Tel: 0844 5572233. [www.crocus.co.uk](http://www.crocus.co.uk)
- **Aluminium Potting Bench** from Two Wests & Elliott. Tel: +44 (0)1246 451077. [www.twowests.co.uk](http://www.twowests.co.uk)

*Please note that most of the benches require some self assembly.*