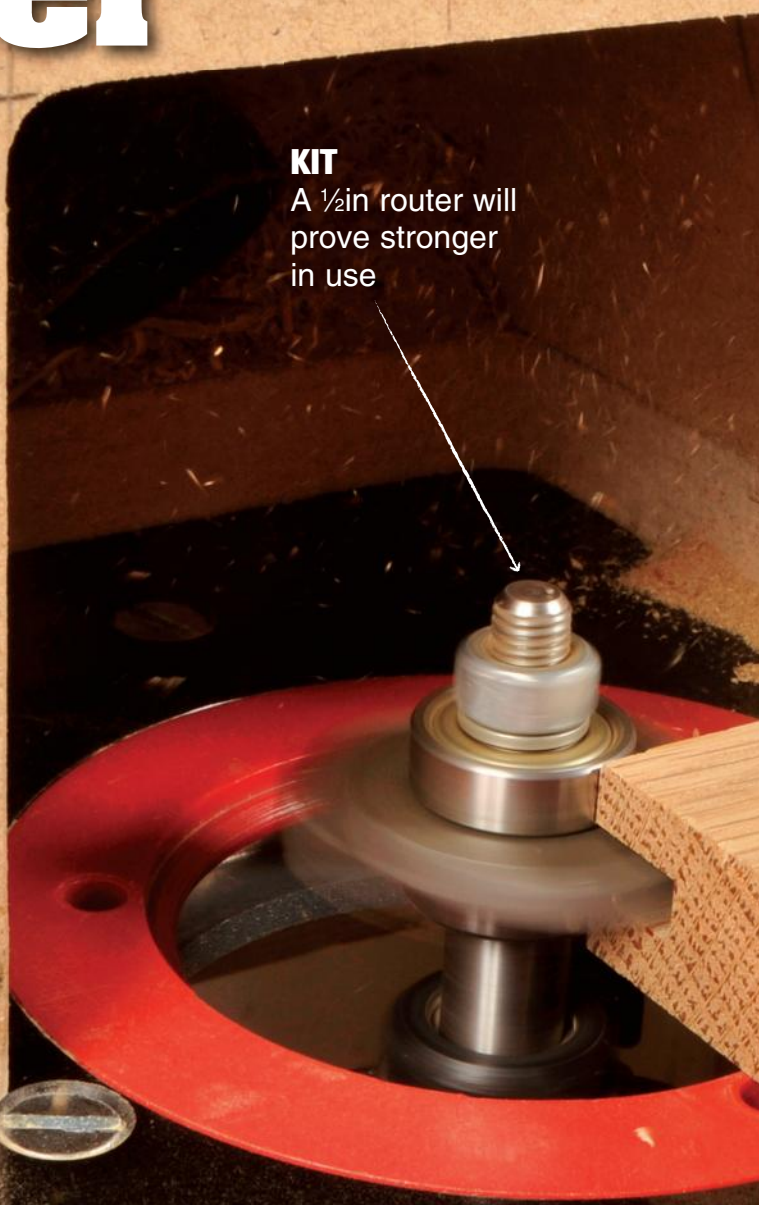
Slotting on the router

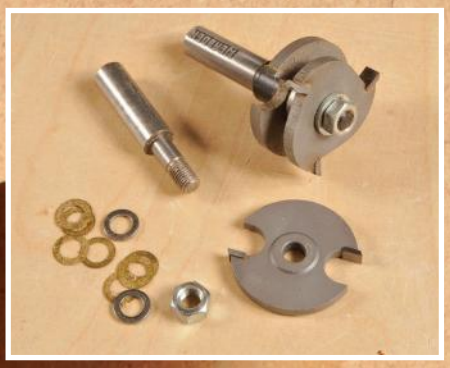
Anthony Bailey provides an alternative to spindle moulding with a simple router application that takes little more than care and kit!

Most of us don't possess a spindle moulder although they are incredibly useful and safe if used correctly. The lower cost option is a router table and slotting cutters. You ideally need a large ½in router because the arbor (shaft) is stronger and you can mount larger cutters. However there are a few slotting cutters on ¼in shank which may not be wide enough to slot to the correct width in one pass. In this case, simply adjust the height in the table to make the second pass, making a test cut to check position and width. Although it is possible to use a straight cutter, the strain on a narrow one is enough to break it if you make the cut to depth in one pass, the groove will pack with chippings, and it may try and wander slightly.

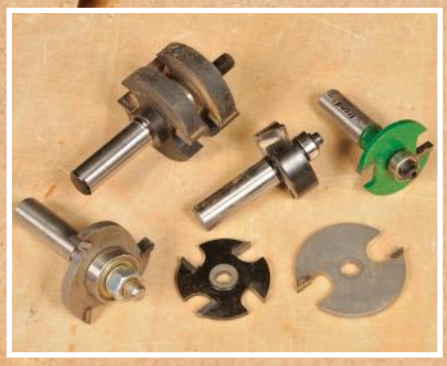
A long arbor can accommodate more than one groover or slotter, thus allowing machining of tongues to fit in the grooves. You can also fit a bearing so you don't need to rely on the fence to get consistent slot depth. It also makes curved work with a template possible too. If you have a biscuit slotting cutter, this can also be used for making grooves.



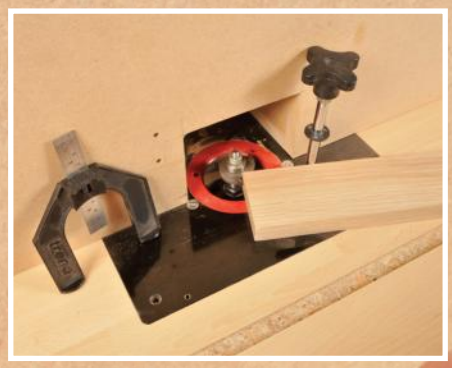
KIT
A ½in router will prove stronger in use



1 A two-part groover set for creating tongues and grooves in different widths. Showing the arbor, interchangeable groover adjustment shims, washers, and nut to hold everything in place safely



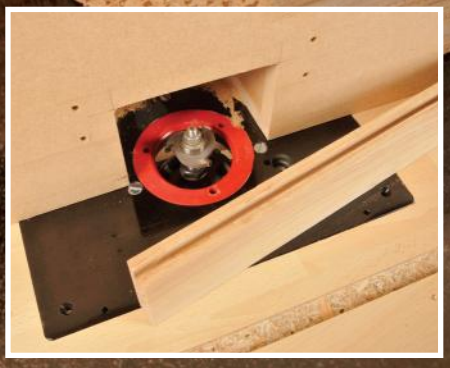
2 There are different size and types of groovers available, including the rebate cutter (centre) and the biscuit slotter (top right)



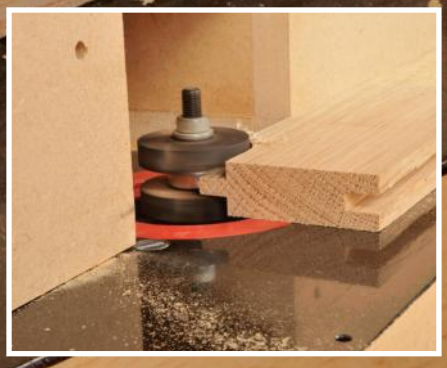
3 Accurate setting-up is required, especially if you want the groove exactly centred – a fine adjuster and a height setting gauge are needed

PREPARATION
A scoring cut will help to prevent breakout

ACCURACY
Use a marking gauge to get dead centre



4 Slotting on the router table is easy, however, to avoid breakout as seen here, do a very shallow scoring pass first



5 Machining a matching tongue profile – do test cuts to ensure a perfect alignment

Now build Mike Jordan's kennel ...

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