

Pleasant Hill Firewood Box

A classic Shaker design with enough curves to make it interesting.

The buildings at the Shaker Village in Pleasant Hill, Ky., are filled with handy firewood boxes. After a few visits to the colony, I concluded that this example is the best one.

Tucked into a room in the Centre Family Dwelling, this firewood box represents what I like about the Western Shaker furniture styles. This box has a few graceful and unexpected curves, yet it still looks decidedly Shaker.

Building this box is simple. With the exception of the curves on the sides, all the cuts are straight. With the exception of the hinged lid, all the joinery on the box is glue and nails.

The biggest construction challenge is gluing up narrower boards into the panels that make up the box's sides, front and bottom. I glued these up using pocket screws as clamps, a technique we detailed in the November 2007 issue (#165) of the magazine.

However, because this project is painted, there's an easier solution at the home center. In the lumber section of the store you'll likely find wide laminated pine panels that are pieced together at a factory from narrow strips. If you purchase this material, you won't have to glue up any panels and can go right to cutting.

The other option is to buy No. 2 common 1 x 12s. I bought five 8'-long 1 x 12s so I could cut around knots. I also bought a small piece of 1/4"-thick Masonite. Why? Read on.

Make a Template

When you're working out a complex design or need to make multiple and identical parts, a full-size template is handy.

With this project, a full-size template helps you get the curves just right and helps you fit the pieces to the hinged kindling box. Plus, if you ever need to make more of these boxes, the template will give you a good head start.

Use the illustration to draw your template on the Masonite using a ruler and a compass.



Repurposed. While originally designed to be used to hold firewood and kindling, this Shaker piece[®] also can be pressed into service as a recycling bin.

All the curves are a 7" radius, so the layout work is easy. Cut the template to shape using a jigsaw and sand the edges until the template looks good and has smooth edges. If you want to adjust the design, here's your chance to alter it and see how it looks. Glue up all the panels you need and get ready to cut the sides.

Construction

Trace the template's shape on your side pieces and cut them with your jigsaw. Clamp the two sides together and shape the curves with a rasp and sandpaper so the two are identical. Using the side pieces as a guide, determine the actual width of the box's bottom, the width of the

bottom of the kindling box and the width of the front of the kindling box. Cut these three pieces to finished size. Glue and nail them between the sides.

Now work on the front of the box. Cut this panel as close to size as possible – I like to leave it a hair long. Glue and nail the front to the carcass. Trim any overhang with your block plane or #100-grit sandpaper.

Now repeat the same process with the back pieces. I used three horizontal boards for the back. Two of the boards were 1 x 12s. The third one was ripped to fit just right. If you like, you can plane a small chamfer on the back boards' long edges as a decorative detail. This adds a shadow line where the backboards meet one another.

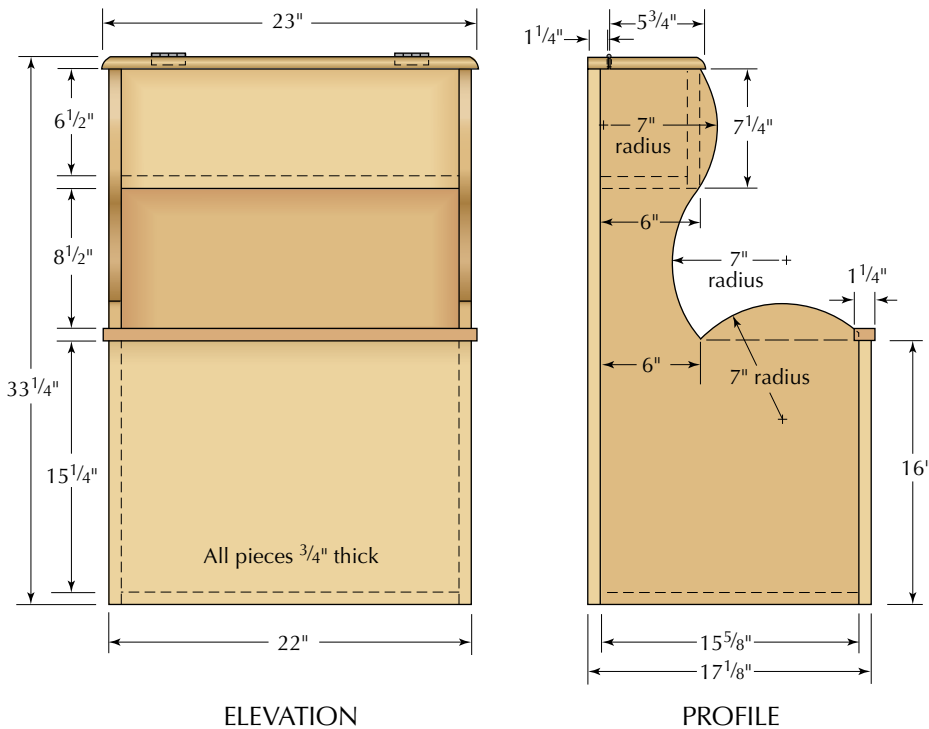
Crosscut the hinge rail and lid at the same time so they are the same length. Your miter saw is an excellent tool for this sort of operation. Screw your hinges to both the hinge rail and the lid. Then glue and nail the hinge rail to the carcass.

The last bit of construction is the box's front edge. I took the difficult route to fit this piece in place. I notched out the underside of the workpiece with a handsaw and chisel so the notches nest neatly over the curve on the sides. You can fit the piece any way your skills or tools allow.

Disassemble the lid and hinges and sand the project up to #150-grit. Break all the sharp edges of the piece by hand with a piece of old sandpaper. The finish is simply three coats

of semi-gloss paint. As shown, this piece is a little more barn red than the original. But it is still a red that is consistent with the original Shaker paint recipes. You should, of course, finish yours to suit your decor. **PW**

Chris is the editor of this magazine and the author of the book "Workbenches: From Design & Theory to Construction & Use" (Popular Woodworking Books). You can contact him at 513-531-2690 x1407 or chris.schwarz@fwpubs.com.



Watch those curves. A full-size template helps in many ways. It allows you to refine the design details, determine the finished sizes of key components and to lay out your cuts.

Firewood Box

NO.	ITEM	DIMENSIONS (INCHES)			MATERIAL	COMMENTS
		T	W	L		
□ 2	Sides	3/4	15 ⁵ / ₈	32 ¹ / ₂	Pine	
□ 1	Front	3/4	16	22	Pine	
□	Back	3/4	32 ¹ / ₂	22	Pine	Three boards
□ 1	Bottom	3/4	15 ⁵ / ₈	20 ¹ / ₂	Pine	
□ 1	Kindling box bottom	3/4	5 ¹ / ₄	20 ¹ / ₂	Pine	
□ 1	Kindling box front	3/4	7 ¹ / ₄	20 ¹ / ₂	Pine	
□ 1	Kindling box lid	3/4	5 ³ / ₄	23	Pine	
□ 1	Hinge rail	3/4	1 ¹ / ₄	23	Pine	
□ 1	Front edge	3/4	1 ¹ / ₄	22 ¹ / ₂	Pine	Notched around sides

About This Column

Our "I Can Do That" column features projects that can be completed by any woodworker with a modest (but decent) kit of tools in less than two days of shop time, and using raw materials that are available at any home center. We offer a free online manual in PDF format that explains all the tools and shows you how to perform the basic operations in a step-by-step format. You'll learn to rip with a jigsaw, crosscut with a miter saw and drill



straight with the help of our manual.

Visit ICanDoThatExtras.com to download the free manual.