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Garden Bench



In much the same way paths suggest that you wander, benches invite you to linger, to contemplate, to savor. For people who usually view their gardens from their knees or who mainly see them as works in progress, benches offer a different perspective, a change of view and attitude. Benches remind gardeners to relax and enjoy the beauty they are helping to create. In *The Principles of Gardening* Hugh Johnson says that garden benches should always look permanent; deliberately placed. One way to achieve that look is to start with a simple design such as this cedar bench. It has the sort of solid simplicity that suggests permanence. And the color of the cedar blends effortlessly into surrounding trees, flowers, and foliage, adding to the impression that the bench is and always will be an essential part of the garden.

Placing a bench deliberately is important, but not complicated. Walk around the

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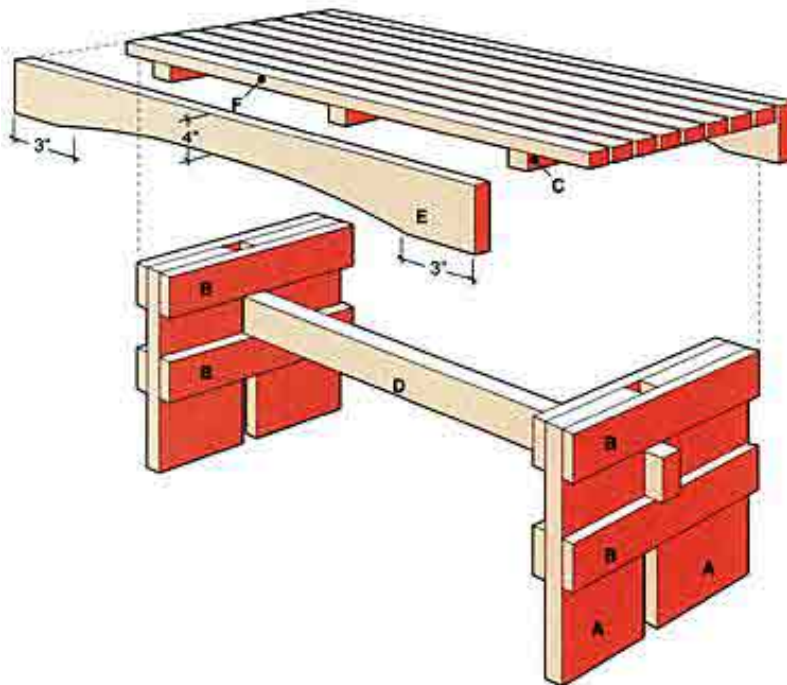
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garden and think about where you stop to rest, to enjoy a special view, or to appreciate pleasant fragrances. Take note of where visitors pause, and consider what draws them to those spots. A bench can provide a place for the eyes to rest, as well as the body. As you wander, imagine how you might use a bench to draw the eye down a path or into a quiet corner.

With its subtle design, this easy-to-build bench lends itself to being used in combination with other ornaments or furnishings. Flank the ends with cedar planter boxes or a copper trellis to create a lovely focal point at the edge of a bed or border.

Everything You Need:

Tools: 1 1/2" deck screws, Circular saw, Drill, Tape measure, Hammer, Long metal ruler, Jig saw, Finishing sander, 2 1/2" deck screws, wood glue, Casing nails (3), Wood sealer/stain, 1 x 4 x 12' cedar (1), 2 x 2 x 6' cedar (1), 2 x 2 x 10' cedar (4), 2 x 4 x 6' cedar (1), 2 x 6 x 10' cedar (1), 2 x 8 x 6' cedar (1).



CUTTING LIST

Key	Part	Dimension	Pcs	Material	Key	Part	Dimension	Pcs	Material
A	Leg half	1 1/2 x 7 1/4 x 14 1/2"	4	Cedar	D	Trestle	1 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 60"	1	Cedar
B	Cleat	3/4 x 3 1/2 x 16 "	8	Cedar	E	Apron	1 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 60"	2	Cedar
C	Brace	1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 16"	3	Cedar	F	Slat	1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 60"	8	Cedar



Step A: Begin the Leg Assemblies & Attach the Trestle

1. Cut the leg halves (A), cleats (B), and trestle (D) to length. Sandwich one leg half between two cleats so the cleats are flush with the top and the outside edge of the leg half. Then join the parts by driving four 1 1/2" deck screws through each cleat and into the leg half. Assemble two more cleats with a leg half in the same fashion.

2. Stand the two assemblies on their sides, with the open ends of the cleat pointing upward. Arrange the assemblies so they are roughly 4 ft. apart. Set the trestle onto the inner edges of the leg halves, pressed flush against the bottoms of the cleats.

Adjust the position of the assemblies so the trestle overhangs the leg half by 1 1/2" at each end. Fasten the trestle to each leg half with glue and 2 1/2" deck screws.

3. Attach another pair of cleats to each leg half directly below the first pair, positioned so each cleat is snug against the bottom of the



Step B: Complete the Leg Assemblies

Slide the other leg half between the cleats, keeping the top edge flush with the upper cleats. Join the leg halves with the cleats, using glue and 2 1/2" deck screws.

trestle.



Step C: Add the Braces

Cut the braces (C) to length. Fasten one brace to the inner top cleat on each leg assembly so the tops are flush.



Step D: Shape the Aprons

1. Cut the aprons (E) to length.

2. Lay out the arch onto one apron, starting 3" from each end. The peak of the arch, located over the midpoint of the apron, should be 1 1/2" up from the bottom edge.

3. Draw a smooth, even arch by driving one casing nail at the peak of the arch and one at each of the starting points. Slip a long metal ruler behind the nails at the starting points and in front of the nail at the peak to create a smooth arch. Then trace along the inside of

the ruler to mark a cutting line.

4. Cut along the line with a jig saw; then sand the cut smooth.

5. Trace the profile of the arch onto the other apron; make and sand the cut.



Step E: Add Slats to the Aprons

Cut the slats (F) to length. Attach a slat to the top, inside edge of each apron, using glue and deck screws.



Step F: Install the Aprons & Slats

1. Apply glue at each end, on the bottom sides, of the attached slats. Flip the leg and trestle assembly, and position it flush with the aprons so that it rests on the glue on the bottoms of the two slats. The aprons should extend 1 1/2" beyond the legs at each end of the bench. Drive 2 1/2" deck screws through the braces and into both slats.

2. Position the middle brace between aprons, centered end to end. Attach it to the two side slats with glue and deck screws.

3. Position the six remaining slats on the braces, using 1/2"-thick spacers to help you create equal gaps between them. Attach the slats with glue

and drive 2 1/2" deck screws up through the braces and into each slat.

4. Sand the slats smooth with progressively finer sandpaper. Wipe away the sanding residue with a rag dipped in mineral spirits. Let the bench dry. Apply a finish of your choice -- a clear wood sealer to protect the cedar without altering the color, or stain to provide deeper color for the cedar.

TIP: LEVELING LEGS

Sometimes our best efforts produce furniture that wobbles because it's not quite level. Here's a trick for leveling furniture:

Set a plastic wading pool on a flat plywood surface. Add shims under the plywood surface until the floor of the wading pool is exactly level.

Fill the pool with about 1/4" of water. Set the piece of furniture in the pool, and then remove it quickly. Mark the top of the waterline on each leg. Use these marks as cutting lines to trim the legs to exactly level.

TIP: COUNTERSINKING SCREWS

Take extra care to completely countersink screw heads whenever you are building furnishings that will be used as seating. When sinking galvanized deck screws, use a combination countersink/piloting bit that drills a 3/32"-dia. pilot hole.

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