

The Home HANDYMAN

September/October 2020 • Vol 30 No 09



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MAGAZINE



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The Home HANDYMAN



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FROM THE WORKBENCH

Lockdown problems...

A few issues ago, a reader submitted a Bright Idea to *The Home Handyman* regarding a solution for a dog which was jumping over their wall. While working on that issue I was thankful that our dogs didn't have a propensity for escaping. Then Lockdown Level 4 happened...



After close on two months of deserted streets, when everyone (and their dog) in our neighbourhood left the house to enjoy three hours of freedom, our dogs went crazy, barking constantly. And then it happened, the first escape. After half an hour of running around the streets chasing a dog who didn't want to be caught, I realised the reader's frustration. The next day it happened again. Our dog had tasted freedom, and apparently it tasted really good!

I had a look back at the Bright Idea and followed the suggested instructions of installing electrical conduit between the walls as sort of 'rolling fence', and it worked for a while until our dog found another escape route by jumping 'into' a hedge, climbing up onto the wall, walking along the neighbours wall and then jumping into the street. What followed was rushed attempts to block off any escape routes with whatever we had at hand, including plastic bins, bicycles and old doors.

Whenever we thought we had prevented her from getting out, she found another way and we heard her unmistakable bark echoing from down the street. Cue pandemonium as we got treats, her favourite toy or anything else we could get our hands on to try and lure her back inside. Eventually we found a solution which, so far, has worked (touch wood). Shelving brackets and electric fencing wire. It's not the prettiest, but it certainly beats the look of wooden pallets strewn along the walls.

Ultimately, it was quite a costly exercise, yet probably not as costly as a trip to the vet if she was hit by a car or got into a fight with another dog. It also taught us a valuable DIY lesson; do not let go of the wire... in a split second a nicely rolled coil of electric fencing wire can become a tangled mess if not held correctly. We cursed the dog who we had to spend so much money on to keep in our boundaries while trying to unravel a hundred metres of tangled wire, but that night, once everything was up and she came and lay her head on my lap, I was glad that she was safely inside with us. Long may it last!

Gregg

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OFF THE SHELF

Your guide to the latest products in the world of DIY

Outdoor power blower

The Makita cordless range offers users low noise, zero emissions and ease of use

The Makita have added a the new DUB184Z 18V cordless blower to its range of Outdoor Power Equipment. Now is the perfect time to acquire a blower to keep the leaves in check and sort out the dust that seems to collect on the driveway, paths and patio. The DUB184Z is powerful as well as being lightweight.

This model has a brushless motor providing a power output of 18 000 rpm and a maximum air volume of 13.0m³/min. It has a cruise control and variable switch and will produce a maximum velocity of 52m/s. The batteries and charger are sold separately. You can expect to get a continuous run time of approximately 12 minutes on a single 6.0Ah battery charge when operating with the maximum air setting.

For more information, call 011-878-2600 or visit www.makita.co.za or www.facebook.com/MakitaPowerToolsSA



For all your cutting needs

A great new selection of hand saws from Tork Craft

"We are excited about the new selection of Tork Craft hand saws that are now available to customers. This new range forms part of our Tork Craft hand tool launch," says Dale Englebrecht, Director at Vermont Sales. "We also have the new bonus units in a bubble pack and very handy nylon carry bag. Both sets incorporate a large hand saw, a back saw plus the job saw, and also available is the back-saw and mitre box set."

The Tork Craft favourite is the new handy job saw with a comfortable ABS handle and durable, heat treated, 150mm cutting blade. It is the perfect tool if you are working with wood and need to cut something that will save you hauling out your power saw. It is also suited for the service industry – the electrician, plumber and maintenance workers – as well as for gardeners, painters, roofers, electric fencing operators, irrigation installers and garden maintenance teams as there are always vines, creepers and branches that need to be cut away and trimmed back.

Completing the saw range are four new large hand saws from 300mm to the 550mm.

For more information, call 011-314-7711 or visit www.vermontsales.co.za



Playful globes. Sophisticated light

A contemporary interpretation of the classic ball luminaire

Draft, by Serien Lighting and available through Eurolux, turns the archetypal spherical luminaire into an object that boasts an unpretentious contemporary look and perfectly balanced light. The transparent, mouth-blown glass ball and the matte, conic internal reflector make for a striking contrast. Set deep in the internal reflector, the LED illuminant delivers softly diffused all-round and downward directional light. A diffuser plate ensures particularly soft light and evenly illuminated spaces. Draft is absolutely glare-free, comes with two different light colours and the Dim2warm function, which upon dimming imitates the warmer colour gradient of a traditional light bulb.



Fresh sinkspiration from Franke

Italtile extends the Franke range in South Africa with a new range of quality sinks

Italtile is excited to introduce freshly unpacked new sinks from Italian 'sinkmasters' Franke, world leaders in kitchen innovation. These exciting new models add further variety and diversity to its already extensive range of Franke sinks and prep bowls.

The gourmet's choice, to complement the designer kitchen, the Kubus 2 KNG110-52 Super Metallic Sterling Silver sink was developed and created in the Franke Group's new, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. The Kubus Super Metallic Sterling Silver sink is the latest offering from Franke; a dazzling innovation that offers a never-before-seen sheen, and extends the existing Kubus range of Stainless Steel, Onyx Black and Polar White.

The Grace AMX621 is a seamless double sink with soft and sleek modern styling that features slim edging with a Swiss-designed deep, inset lip (to minimise splashing and spills), as well as deeper-than-usual bowls (340mm in length, 400mm wide, 200mm deep). The generously proportioned integrated waste is offset toward the centre of the bowl, and a neat overflow is positioned toward the rear.

Basis BFG621 is a wonderfully elegant sink manufactured from Franke's signature Fraganite material, designed to make a natural statement in the kitchen. Fraganite has a subtle sheen, and gives a finely textured, but not porous, feel, and was developed to offer high levels of hygiene, thanks to the trademarked Sanitized® feature. Both modern and practical, the sleek Basis model is easy to clean and is available in a range of on-trend colourways: Onyx, Polar White and Stone Grey. Also supplied is a 90mm basket strainer waste fitting and 90mm basket strainer waste fitting with overflow kit. Basis models carry a 5-year warranty on manufacturing defects.

Italtile has been in partnership with Franke for many years, with a shared passion for beautiful living and sustainable design and manufacture.

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Draft Suspension is available in two sizes, three colours (clear, transparent blue, and transparent brown), with tube or tool-free adjustable rope suspension. Draft Suspension Tube with its classic ball luminaire tube suspension, compliments the architecture more strongly, whereas with its wire rope suspension, Draft Suspension Rope can be hung deep in a space, as low as over a coffee table. A staggered group of Draft Suspension luminaires becomes an eye-catching arrangement in lounges, above tables or on stairs and in foyers.

For more information, visit www.eurolux.co.za

VOICE YOUR VIEWS

Do you have any thoughts or comments on DIY issues?



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opinion

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Please include your name,
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number (office hours)



**Bob
Gillies**

wins a 115mm Makita MT
M9507B Angle Grinder
courtesy of Makita

Prizes are not exchangeable

Your reappearance

WINNER

I was surprised the other day to see a *The Home Handyman* issue in my local Spar after it had been discontinued a few years ago. I wrote a number of articles from June 1998 until June 2016 when Cobus Erasmus and Gareth Greathead were editors respectively.

I started my power tool career at 18 years old with a newly opened Diesel-Electric in Kitwe, Zambia in April 1968. The Diesel-Electric had the Bosch Power Tool franchise there and in Zimbabwe and South Africa. I imported the tools and spares direct from the factories in Switzerland and Germany and learnt to repair and service them. I left in 1977 to join another new Diesel-Electric in Springs, where I immediately set up a workshop and was appointed a Bosch Authorised Power Tool Service Centre until I retired in March 2019, so I completed an unbroken 51 years of selling and repairing Bosch power tools, including all the prominent non-

Bosch tools such as Metabo, Makita, Hitachi, Ryobi and many others that came into the South African market.

I own probably 70+ Bosch power tools and other equipment like radial arm saws, bandsaws, chop saws, planer thicknesser, etc., and now retired I am able to pursue my hobby of woodworking that includes model making of wagons and carts. There is a lot to know as the owner of a power tool but sadly this is often lacking, resulting in accidents, poor results and unnecessary breakdown of a tool due to lack of maintenance and service.

Bob Gillies, Springs

Ed replies: Wonderful to hear from you Bob, and we will definitely be in touch regarding getting you back on board as a contributor. There cannot be many people in this country – and abroad – with your knowledge of power tools.

Cabinet making courses

I'm a reader of *The Handyman* magazine. Do you perhaps know of any part-time cabinet making courses available in Gauteng? Thanks in advance.

Lister Kom, by email

Ed replies: Thanks for the email – I would suggest contacting Paul Roberts who heads the Cabinet Makers Group at the Woodworking Association of Pretoria. His email address is paul.roberts@ptawoodworkers.com



A great adhesive find

Hello *The Home Handyman* and fellow readers. I am so excited! I found an amazing adhesive product that you need to tell your readers, about.

Previously I had cut my security gate to make an entrance for my dogs, yet now that I am moving, I had to fix it. First, I used some leftover steel putty (which didn't work then either) to stick it together. It lasted until the painters somehow bumped my gate and it was off again.

So, I contacted the adhesive company I believe in, GlueDevil. They suggested I try ScrewIt. So, I went to buy a tube and I stuck the piece of square tubing back and 24 hours later... it sticks, it is strong. My dogs were surprised that their entrance is closed and tried to squeeze through – they really pushed their whole body against the tubing and it didn't move.

It does not look good though, and because I had already packed my rotary grinder away, I didn't get to clean the

other stuff off as you will notice on the photos.

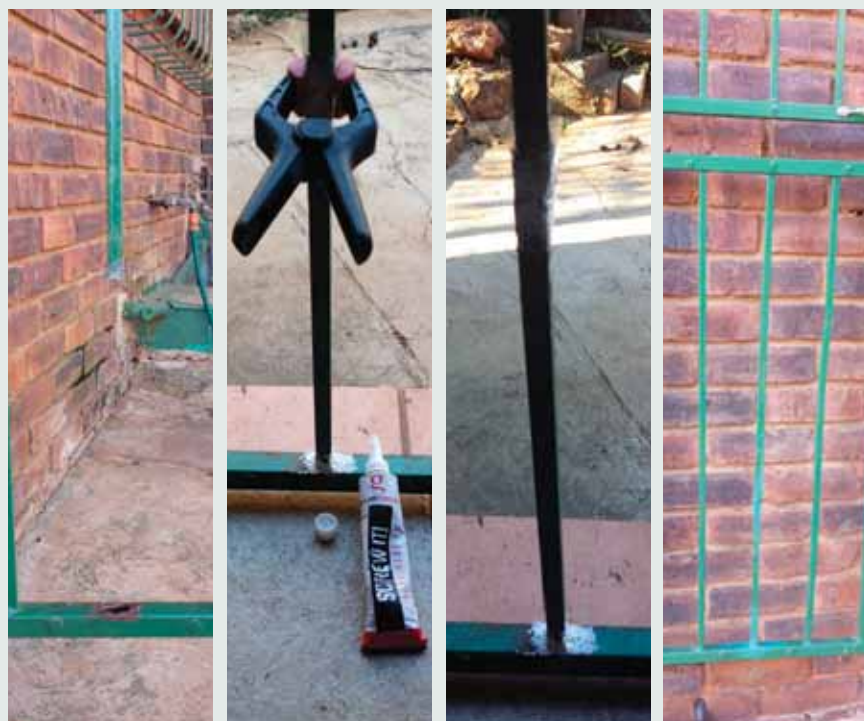
Please you have to give GlueDevil ScrewIt a big shout out from me. Not only did they make my life easier, they also saved me R450 from a quote to weld it together. You will not find any other adhesive product in my house but GlueDevil. And the GlueDevil clear, contact and spraypaint is the best.

The only issue I did have is that my paint didn't want to stick to the ScrewIt so I made a paste out of the paint and it has covered the white – it is still wet in the photograph.

PS. The guys at the hardware store laughed at me when I told them I was going to use ScrewIt to fix my gate. I can't wait to go show them the photos.

Ivanca Pazzi, by email

Ed replies: Great to hear that you found a solution to your problem Ivanca – from the photographs, it looks like you made a solid choice!



Reader's projects



The Home HANDYMAN

www.homehandyman.co.za

Willing to share your latest project with our readers? Send a step-by-step write up of how to make the project, along with step-by-step photographs (at least 300kb) and a picture of the finished product.

Email projects and photographs to:

editorial@homehandyman.co.za



Our competitions – the fine print

Prizes may not be exchanged for cash. The closing date is stipulated by the competition box. If not stipulated, it closes on the last day of the issue. For example: Jan/Feb edition. All competitions close on the last day of February. To enter simply e-mail your answer to: editorial@homehandyman.co.za and include your name, surname, address and a day time contact telephone number with your entry. Unless otherwise stipulated, competitions are lucky draws and the correct entry drawn on the closing date will be the winner. The prize may differ from the picture shown. By entering this competition you agree to all rules and accept that the decision of the publisher is final and that no correspondence thereto will be entertained. This competition is open to all readers of *The Home Handyman* except employees of THH, BB Print and employees who work for the company that sponsors the prizes and their immediate families. Prizes not claimed within 60 days will be forfeited.

A soothing spring colour palette is just what we need, says the Plascon Colour Advice team

In this time of social, informational, and emotional overload, the world sees a rise in the search for wellness and other self-preservation tactics. We are burnt out from the pressure, fear, anxiety and constant sense of uncertainty. People yearn for community, connection and peace. Colour has the ability to fulfil some of these longings.

Spring is approaching and Plascon guides you in the search for renewal and solace. The Plascon Colour Advice team's newest palette, Gentle Serenity, is a modern and fresh interpretation of chalky pastels with gender-neutral appeal. Gentle Serenity showcases moods and moments which embrace imperfection in order to generate happiness, wellness and contentment.

The cooler tones in the Gentle Serenity palette bring peace and the tranquillity of an oasis to your space. "We have selected fresher tones of blues and greens to modernise the pastel palette concept. Ask a child and they will tell you: 'Yellow is the colour of sunshine'. We believe the soft yellows and neutrals we have selected epitomise warmth, happiness and joy. Pinks and lavenders are no longer 'girly' colours and these warm hues bring healing, comfort and security," says Nozipho Kunene, who leads Plascon's Colour Advice team.

Tint the Gentle Serenity colour palette in the new and improved Plascon Double Velvet Pure premium paint – a first of its kind – which drastically improves indoor air quality. Plascon Double Velvet Pure contains formaldehyde abatement technology that neutralises harmful formaldehyde particles emitted from fabrics, engineered woods, building materials and furniture. Formaldehyde reacts with specific compounds present in the paint, which irreversibly converts the formaldehyde into harmless water vapour that is safe for breathing. Plascon Double Velvet Pure, when tinted in the Gentle Serenity palette, is the obvious choice for anyone who wants to put wellness first whilst experiencing warmth, comfort and security.



*For more information, email
ColourAdvice@kansaiplascon.co.za*

The benefits of LED floodlights



Floodlights have become a common feature around homes and commercial spaces. These broad-beamed high-intensity lights are fairly inexpensive, easy to install and come with a variety of benefits. They serve as a security measure by ensuring the exterior of your home or business is well-lit, leaving no dark spots for intruders to hide in. They also offer the simple functionality of providing you with enough illumination to find your keys

and make your way up to your front door without stumbling in the dark. These are just some of the reasons you may want to invest in one:

They have an impressive lifespan: LED floodlights last almost 10 times longer than incandescent lighting and are known for their longevity. They also give you fair warning that they're reaching the end of their lifespan by dimming gradually as opposed to abruptly dying.

Western Cape non-profit skills development course receives large power tools donation

In the conclusion to what started as a call for South Africans to donate their unused and unwanted power tools to a worthy cause, Brights Hardware, in partnership with Ryobi Tools, has donated R190 000 worth of brand new power tools to a non-profit skills development and job creation organisation called Learn to Earn.

"There's no denying that power tools are expensive and yet necessary for numerous artisanal trades," says Nita Luis, founder of family owned Brights Hardware. "Talented artisans abound in South Africa, but challenging economic times can make these items unaffordable. It is for this reason that we decided to launch the Tools Donation campaign in a bid to help. Ryobi Tools then came on board and agreed to sponsor an exceptionally generous amount of new power tools which were delivered to Learn to Earn at the end of June."

David Nichol of Ryobi explains that they were approached by Orlando Luis, CEO of Brights to get involved in the Tools Donation campaign. "Brights is one of our largest customers in the Western Cape and we have a wonderful relationship with the company. When Orlando asked for our support, we were only too happy to get involved in such a worthy cause."

The selection of tools donated by Ryobi included mitre saws, planers, table saws, wood lathes, cordless impact drills, sanders, laminate trimmers, grinders, routers, paint sprayers, and drill presses.

Learn to Earn – a charity organisation that aims to develop unemployed and disadvantaged people – has skills development and training centres based in Khayelitsha and Hermanus, and since 1989 has trained 14166 unemployed people with market-related skills, equipping students to become employees or self-employed entrepreneurs. Learn to Earn offer a woodworking training course in Khayelitsha as well as a handyman skills course in Hermanus.

According to Learn to Earn, the purpose of their Basic Handyman Skills course is to equip course graduates with the entry level knowledge and skills required in order to find employment as assistants in any of the following trades: electrical, plumbing, painting or general handyman. It is a 17-week full time course conducted in Hermanus. The Woodworking course is a 19-week long full-time course that takes place in Khayelitsha that prepares students to either go on a learnership, or to be skilled enough to seek entry level employment in the woodwork and cabinetry industry.

"This initiative by Bright's Hardware will go a long way in equipping and facilitating job creation for previously unemployed people, who complete the Woodwork or Basic Handy skills course at Learn to Earn," says Barbara Lipp, Communications Manager at Learn To Earn. "One of the keys to doing a quality job is having the right tools and now our graduates will have the appropriate starter pack of tools when launching their businesses. The Ryobi tools are great quality and durable, which will stand a craftsman in good stead as they look to build their business. "On behalf of our students at Learn to Earn we wish to thank Bright's Hardware and Ryobi for their generosity and driving this campaign."

For more information, visit www.brights.co.za and www.learntoearn.org.za



They're energy-efficient: LED floodlights will save you money in the long run because they use less electricity. This ultimately leads to a lower electricity bill and also plays a part in reducing your carbon footprint.

They don't emanate heat: In comparison to standard bulbs, LEDs don't waste heat which allows them to conserve a large amount of electricity. This also means they do not contribute to a rise in temperatures where they are placed, making them ideal for cold storage facilities. The absence of heat

makes them a safe option because the risk of an electrical fire is reduced.

They're durable: LED floodlights are made of tough materials and can withstand exposure to the elements and drastic changes in temperature.

They're environmentally friendly: No mercury or lead is used in the production of LED floodlights and they do not give out carbon emissions which are harmful to both the environment and your health.

They're available with a motion sensor: Some LED floodlights come

equipped with a motion sensor which can detect movement from up to 10m away. Motion sensor floodlights are a convenient option for those wanting the benefits of a floodlight but only when movement is detected. A floodlight that automatically switches on and then off again cuts down on electricity consumption. It's also great for security as the sudden flood of light will startle any criminals attempting to enter your property.

For more information, visit www.radiant.co.za

Even seasoned DIY'ers gulp and take a deep breath when considering tackling a bathroom remodelling job. Other than perhaps a kitchen, no project is more involved in terms of the systems and skills involved.

Bathroom remodelling: DIY or pay?

Bathroom remodelling is all about plumbing, electrical, and tile work – all highly skilled trades. It's dense, tight work, too, where every square foot counts. And then there are the frequent surprises, such as when you find a leaky shower or cast iron

plumbing stacks that have rusted to the point of crumbling. And finally, there is the time pressure. A bathroom is an essential space, and a DIY'er is under great pressure to get the room remodelled and back into service as quickly as possible.

The obvious solution is to call in the professionals; the pros will do the job well and almost certainly faster than you can. But there's one real (and very important) reason why you wouldn't hire professionals to handle your bathroom remodelling job: money.

COSTS

DIY'ers often like to talk about the personal satisfaction that goes with doing the work themselves, but the reality is that saving money is the single biggest reason why people tackle home improvements themselves. Even a small bathroom can easily cost you tens of thousands of rand if it is completely overhauled by a general contractor. The bottom line is that a DIY bathroom remodel will generally cost less than half of having a professional do the work. Essentially, you will retain all the materials cost but save the labour costs. That savings will buy a lot of shampoo.

Of course, convenience is its own luxury and one that might be worth paying for. In this case, luxury doesn't mean a spa-like bathroom with Tuscan tile, but the luxury of having someone else do the heavy lifting while you keep your hands clean. There is certainly value to having skilled pros do the work faster, and perhaps better, than you can do it yourself.

Bottom line: The truth is that most DIY'ers with a moderate amount of experience can do at least the surface remodelling of a bathroom, especially if they use the same contractor-grade materials that pros depend on. But should you do it yourself? That's a different question, and arriving at an answer involves looking at the individual considerations in a major bathroom remodelling project.

TIME

Balanced against the cost savings of doing the work yourself is the brutal reality that DIY'ers usually take a lot longer to do the work. You can save an incredible amount of time – weeks or months even – by hiring professionals. A busy homeowner squeezing remodelling work into a hectic schedule might take six months to painstakingly remodel a spare bathroom, while the same bathroom can be whipped into shape in a couple of weeks by a contractor and his team.

Bottom line: If you have only one bathroom, you must hire pros. If you have a second bathroom and can afford to have one out of commission for a while, then the DIY option is more realistic.

PLUMBING AND ELECTRICAL

The mechanical systems in a bathroom are subject to all kinds of rules and regulations, and professional plumbers, electricians, and HVAC contractors deal with these issues every day and will know the particulars of local code requirements. Unless you are an experienced home plumber and electrician, it is a good idea to leave the plumbing and electrical work to professionals.

Bottom line: Even experienced DIY'ers often leaving major wiring and plumbing work to the pros. Tackle this only if you are suitable qualified.

Summary

Unless your bathroom is unusually large, you can DIY most of the smaller tasks within this overall project. For core-level bath remodels, many DIYers still hire out electricians and plumbers but do the rest of the work themselves. For surface-level remodels that require no major wiring and plumbing changes, the entire project is within the reach of a DIYer.

But do remember that professional contractors may do the job better and faster than you can. Weigh cost savings against these advantages when making your decision.



Tiling can be done by DIY'ers to save money



Lots of plumbing work? Rather leave it to the professionals



Installing shower heads and taps can either be done by you, or by the pros

FLOORING	Ceramic and porcelain tile is very often left to professionals, but considering the limited floor space in a bathroom, there is no reason why you can't do this yourself, too. It does not take long to learn the basics of tile installation, and you can easily lay a moderate-sized bathroom floor in a weekend.
Bottom line: Most DIY'ers will find it easy and satisfying to install their flooring.	
WALL SURFACES	If they're worth their weight, professional tilers will nearly always produce flawless bathroom walls. Even the best homeowner ends up with anomalies that must be conveniently ignored or covered up. Yet again, this is something the experienced DIY'er could tackle themselves.
Bottom line: DIY'ers can do this work, too, saving money.	
CABINETS AND COUNTERTOPS	The main advantage of having professionals install cabinets and countertops is the simple convenience. A professional crew of two or three workers can navigate the cabinets into place and mount them quicker and easier than you can do it. But bathrooms don't have a lot of cabinetry, and the countertops are typically short. For the smaller spaces of bathrooms, you'll most likely be buying a bathroom vanity unit in a prescribed width that you can easily handle by yourself. Many come paired with vanity unit tops, making countertop installation a snap.
Bottom line: Homeowners can DIY this. Except for large bathrooms, homeowners will gain little by having professionals install cabinets and counters.	
SHOWER/BATH INSTALLATION	Installing a shower is tough when you're building up your shower pan and covering walls with tile. While you <i>can</i> do this, most people will want to hire pros for this stage. However, installing a pre-fabricated shower stall may be practical for DIY'ers. Refinishing your bath/shower yourself can produce acceptable results. Hiring a company will give you a better finish, mainly because the companies do better prep work.
Bottom line: This is often difficult work that is best hired out to pros. DIY'ers will need patience and plenty of help if they attempt it.	
SINK AND TAP INSTALLATION	As long as supply pipes already run to your sink location and a drain pipe runs out, bathroom sink installation is easy. There is no need to have a plumber install your sink. However, if the installation requires moving plumbing lines, then bring in a plumber.
Bottom line: DIY this if you already have the plumbing lines; hire it out otherwise.	
TOILET INSTALLATION	Toilets are clumsy and heavy, but they are not hard to install. Unless you are already having a plumber install the other taps and fixtures, there's no reason you can't install the toilet yourself.
Bottom line: A DIY task, unless a plumber is already making other hookups.	
PAINTING AND TRIM	Even homeowners hesitant to do-it-themselves for most other remodelling tasks can tackle the painting and trim installation. Hiring painting contractors makes sense for large spaces but not for the tiny wall spaces of bathrooms. Hardware, mirrors, and other trim pieces are also fairly easy to install yourself.
Bottom line: You gain little by hiring a painting company to paint your bathroom or someone to hang mirrors and install towel bars. Do it yourself.	



How to revive your shower grout in 9 steps

If you have noticed cracks in the grout in your shower, or if it's looking a little grubby and no amount of scrubbing helps, it may be time to replace the grout. With a little time, effort and this step-by-step guide, replacing the grout is an excellent way to revive your bathroom. It is, however, a project better suited to an experienced DIY'er.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Select the grout colour

Depending on the age of your bathroom, and its' tiling, you are unlikely to find an exact colour match to your existing grout. Rather choose a new grout colour and really give the room a facelift. You can either match the grout to the tile for a seamless look, or contrast with a lighter or darker colour to create a feature.

Step 2: Gather your tools

A grout rake is essential for scraping out the existing grout, a makeshift tool runs the risk of damaging the tiles. You will also need a grout squeegee, a grout sponge and ideally an adhesive mixing paddle that attaches to your drill for easy mixing of the grout. A small chisel and hammer may also come in handy.

Step 3: Remove existing grout

Rub the toothed blade of the grout rake back and forth, along the tile joint, until it has worn away the existing grout all the way to the wall/ floor beneath the tiles. Take care not to damage the tiles as you work, particularly the corners of the tiles and the T-joints.

Step 4: Clean up the edges

If there are small sections of grout still on the tiles that the grout rake can't budge, gently chip out the remaining grout from around the tile with a small chisel and hammer. When carrying out this step, take care not to damage/chip the adjacent tiles. Thoroughly wipe, sweep or vacuum any dirt and dust from the cleaned joints.

Step 5: Mix the grout

Follow the instructions on the grout bag and as you are grouting a wet area, replace the water in the grout mix with TAL Bond - a modified latex-based additive that enhances the bond strength, flexibility and water resistance of the grout.

Step 6: Apply grout

For this step, make use of a grout squeegee for easy application of the grout and be sure to fill the tile joints completely, leaving no air pockets.

Step 7: Clean off excess grout

Wait for 2-6 hours, then use a damp, not wet, grout sponge with rounded corners to clean off the excess grout. The

rounded corners prevent the grout from being removed from the tile joint while you clean. Rinse the sponge frequently. Remember to clean your tools before the grout hardens, particularly when you've added TAL Bond to the mix.

Step 8: Finishing it off

Let the grout dry fully for 24 hours before cleaning or exposing the new grout to water. Polish the tiles with a clean cloth to remove the grout haze and to restore their shine.

Step 9: Perimeter joints

Seal the perimeter joints of the shower with a silicon sealer.

There is no reason to live with cracked or stained grout. With this guide you can safely remedy the problem and rejuvenate your bathroom very cost-effectively. For additional information, you can view a step-by-step video on this project by TAL, on their YouTube channel [youtube.com/TALSouthAfrica](https://www.youtube.com/TALSouthAfrica)

For more information, call the TAL Technical Advisory Service on 0860 000 (TAL) 825 for further details or visit www.tal.co.za

1



Select the grout colour

2



A grout rake is essential for scraping out the existing grout

3



Remove existing grout

4



Clean up the edges

5



Mix the grout

6



Apply the grout

7



Clean off any excess

8



Polish the tiles with a clean cloth

9



Seal the perimeter joints of the shower with a silicon sealer



The fully renovated bathroom

Step-by-step bathroom renovation in pictures

Scope of work for this bathroom remodel included:

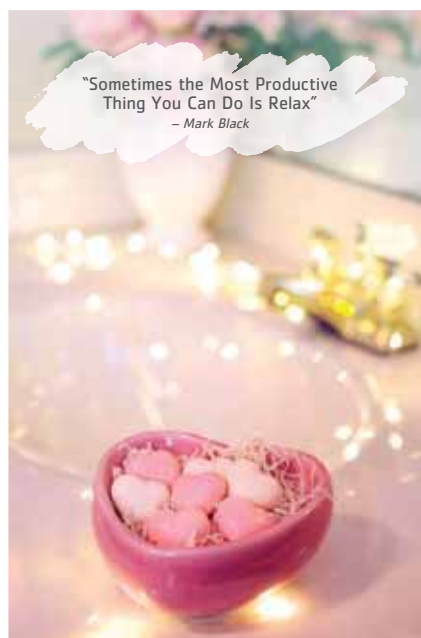
- Demolitions of existing bathroom
- Levelling to walls for tiling
- Plastering walls for tiling and decorating
- Repairs and plastering to ceiling
- Self levelling renovation screed to floor
- Waterproofing to floor
- New bathroom suite installation: toilet, heated towel rail, free standing bath, bath taps and new shower, shower screen, basin and taps
- Tiling to walls and floor with tiles



This is how this bathroom looked like partly demolished. There was a lot of existing pipework running above the floor that needed to be altered. Walls and floor were out of line and level and not suitable for good quality finish. Existing floorboards were also not suitable for tiling.



1. The walls were levelled with a tile adhesive or mortar. 2. Tiling was started by installing horizontal guides for the second row of walls tiles. To set levels, a self-levelling laser level was used and metal channels fixed horizontally to the walls. Metal channels are normally used for suspended ceilings as they are cheap, light and rigid, but also work perfectly for this application. 3. The walls fully tiled and floor primed prior to application of self-levelling screed. 4. Self levelling screed applied to the floor. Although self-levelling screed is safe to walk on after just few hours it is best to allow 24 hours before other work is done to the floor. 5. Once the screed was dry, rubber matt was placed before installing wood effect tiles. 6. The last tiles to get installed were the bottom row of wall tiles once the floor tiles were down. Grouting then follows. 7. With tiles installed, sealed and grouted (crackled glazed tiles were used for the walls and those require special sealant prior to grouting) it was time to decorate walls and install sanitaryware. 8. The last steps of the bathroom installation: silicone seals around new toilet, bath edges, basin and in all internal tiling corners followed by fixture installation: mirror, shelves, etc



ASK FOR IT BY NAME

Den Braven Silicone Sanitary is a quality multi fungal resistant sealant

Silicone Sanitary is ideal for use in bathrooms, showers and kitchens. It has perfect adhesion to glass, ceramic and enamelled surfaces.

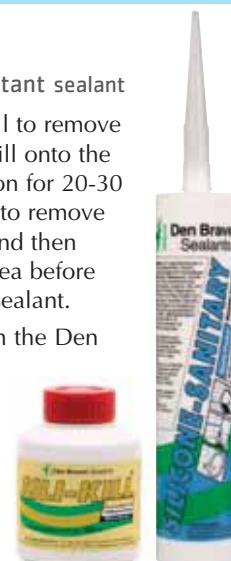
Den Braven offers Sanitary Silicone in both a low odour neutral grade (Den Braven NO Silicone), as well as an acetoxycy grade (Den Braven Sanitary Silicone), providing application and usage versatility to many industries.

Use Den Braven Sili-Kill to remove old sealant. Paint Sili-Kill onto the old silicone and leave on for 20-30 minutes. Use a scraper to remove the dissolved sealant, and then thoroughly clean the area before applying new silicone sealant.

Watch the "How to" on the Den Braven Sealants South Africa website www.denbraven.co.za or FaceBook page.

Available from hardware stores or call

Johannesburg: 011-792-3830, Cape Town: 021-552-9674 or Durban: 031-579-2375



Exterior wood protection and maintenance from the experts.



>> Frikkie Greeff from Woodoc

Tools

- Bucket
- Paint roller
- Paint scraper
- Paint tray
- Paintbrush
- Pump sprayer
- Roller sleeve
- Safety glasses
- Stiff-bristle brushes

Materials

- Deck finish
- Deck stripper
- Painter's tape
- Plastic sheeting

There is no doubt that the South African climate is extremely harsh on exterior wood. The South African consumer/homeowner/prospective homeowner is also extremely

particular about the appearance of their exterior wood, be it windows, doors, garage doors or decks. While the European or American homeowner may accept blackened or 'silvered' wood, South Africans prefer that their exterior wood should look like new.

The combination of a harsh environment and finicky consumers make for some interesting conundrums for both manufacturers of wood protection products and for retailers. We must make

sure that we supply products that are of the highest quality, easy to apply and at reasonable cost. In our opinion, the best South African wood sealers/varnishes perform considerably better in South African conditions than their European or American counterparts, simply because our products are developed and tested in South Africa, for South African conditions.

One can be sure that nothing will last for ever on exterior wood, as weathering will unavoidably take its toll. Unfortunately, some manufacturers make unrealistic claims about the longevity of their products on exterior wood. The inevitable failure of their systems and the resultant disappointment of their customers have given wood somewhat of a bad name as exterior finishing material, but this need not be the case.

As long as manufacturers are honest and realistic in their claims and consumers are realistic in their expectations, nothing will add more appeal to a home than quality- and well-cared-for wood finishes. That is why top-quality exterior wood sealers are formulated to bio-degrade and 'disappear' off the wood in the process of weathering, making maintenance and re-coating easy.

Current trends

South Africa is experiencing a strong trend towards wooden windows, -garage doors, -gates and -patio furniture and away from the iron-, steel- and plastic varieties. With this trend comes an ever increasing need to protect, enhance and maintain exterior wood exposed to the elements, but without the limitations imposed by conventional varnishes that can be inefficient and difficult to maintain and refurbish. The main requirements of modern lifestyles require exterior wood treatments which offer effective protection, maintenance and refurbishing.

Protection: Protection of wood is of prime importance in the harsh South African climate. Woodoc Sealers contain excellent UV-absorbers to combat the effects of the South African sun.



Before you start a deck refresh, do your planning and gather all your supplies

Woodoc Sealers are based on the best and most modern technology. Our Water-Borne range represents a quantum leap in water-borne technology, easily surpassing any water-based sealers or varnishes. The products are all

available in either pre-tinted or clear finishes and can be easily tinted with the addition of Woodoc Colours. Apart from the obvious advantages of increased versatility, tinting improves the already high UV-absorption factor. Water- and

In order to ensure that users are happy, the following hints and tips are provided:

- 1 We recommend that a tinted rather than a clear product should be used in exterior conditions. Good-quality transparent iron-oxide based tints assist the built-in UV-absorbers in the sealer to protect wood against the harsh African sun. Tinted sealers also help to even out the appearance of exterior wood and to make old damage less conspicuous.
- 2 It is further recommended that penetrating sealers rather than pure surface coatings should be applied. Quality exterior sealers all penetrate wood aggressively and then build up on the surface, enabling them to bind with the wood rather than merely clinging to the surface. This is important, as pure surface coatings may delaminate off the wood surface, leading to peeling and this can only be rectified by removing the entire old surface coating and starting afresh. Woodoc Sealers become part of the wood – i.e. application of Woodoc Sealers create a sealed layer of wood leading to a surface coating – and are therefore able to effectively 'live' and move with the wood. Consequently, they will not peel and flake.
- 3 Many consumers express the desire to 'oil' their exterior wood. As a primary protective application to exterior wood, oil is not a durable option. The reason for that is that merely oiling wood will not create any worthwhile surface build-up or coating on the wood. In order to protect exterior wood one must have a surface coating, as it is what is on the surface that protects wood in exterior conditions. Quality sealers combine the best qualities of oil – the ability to penetrate wood and become part of the wood – and a pure surface coating or varnish – the ability to protect the surface of the wood by forming a hard coating.

moisture repellence is achieved through Woodoc Sealers' deep penetration of the wood, followed by the build-up of a tough, protective and water-repellent surface coating. In this way, Woodoc Sealers' deep penetrating properties form a protective coating that is part of the wood. This sealed 'layer of wood' moves in harmony with the natural expansion and contraction of the wood. Being part of the wood, Woodoc Exterior Sealers therefore won't peel and flake, but will merely bio-degrade and "disappear" off the wood at the end of their life cycles.

Maintenance: Maintaining the wood to extend the life of the coating, is unique to Woodoc. Woodoc Deep Penetrating Weatherproof Wax wipes on easily over a sealed wooden surface and not only cleans the surface, but also penetrates it to re-nourish the wood below. The UV-absorbers in Woodoc Deep Penetrating Weatherproof Wax also help to revitalise the surface coating and extend the length of its lifespan.

Refurbishing: Any transparent coating, even with maintenance, has a limited life span. Woodoc Sealers are therefore designed to dry hard and protect beautifully, but never to become brittle with resulting peeling and flaking. At the end of a Woodoc Exterior Sealer's life cycle it starts to biodegrade and "disappears" from the wood, making for easy refurbishing. Once you notice bio-degradation taking place, all that is needed is a light rub-down with fine sandpaper, followed by a wipe with mineral turpentine to prepare the surface if a solvent-based sealer was used. Do not wipe with mineral turpentine when refurbishing a water-borne sealer. Sand lightly with fine sandpaper and remove dust. The tedium and expense of deep sanding the wood to re-establish a firm base, is avoided. All that is then needed is a re-application of the Woodoc Sealer originally used.

For more information, contact the toll-free helpline: 0800-411-200, email: information@woodoc.com or visit www.woodoc.help or send a WhatsApp: 066-302-4702



The best South African wood sealers/varnishes perform considerably better in South African conditions than their European or American counterparts

4 ways to refresh you deck for the summer

How to clean decking

To maintain your deck's vibrancy all year around, it is imperative to know how to regularly clean decking, as giving your deck frequent attention can avoid a larger work load down the track. Firstly, remove leaves, dirt and other debris with a decent outdoor broom purchased from any hardware store. Doing so will prevent unwanted particles building up and damaging your deck. To finish, use a high-pressure cleaner, to wash away any excess grime. Ensure, you follow instructions on how to safely use your pressure washer to clean decking. If you don't have a pressure washer, a hose and some extra elbow grease will work too. For best results, we recommend using a specialised wood and composite cleaner. This simple two step job requires little effort for a large reward. It doesn't take long and will give your deck a new lease on life, whilst promoting its lifespan.

General repairs

Whilst outdoor living is desirable in South Africa, your deck may endure some of the consequences of a variety of weather types. Therefore, it is vital for your safety to regularly inspect your deck for necessary maintenance and repairs. Rusted or loose screws, rotted timber and bug infestations are just a few problems you may encounter. If you suspect any of these issues, it

is well worth taking the necessary measures to restore your deck to its full potential.

Adding plants

Plants can make any old space come alive and restore your love for your deck. A cost-effective game changer, you won't believe the fresh vibes these natural beauties will bring. Depending on your ideas of the style you wish to create on your deck, the climate in which you reside and the position of your deck, a variety of plant ideas await you. If your deck is bathed in sunlight and you live in a sub-tropical climate, try potting a frangipani cutting to create an island vibe.

Adding feature lights

To give your restored timber deck that added shine at your next party, make the most of a new lighting scenario to create your desired atmosphere. If you are in need of a central feature, get creative with a standout light shade, or for a more temporary effect, a workable string of fairy lights always delivers ambiance. Still feeling that lingering winter chill? Keeping in the theme of light, you may also consider a timber-friendly brazier or fire bowl option to provide warmth and ambiance for your evening guests. Ensure you place the fire bowl on a non-combustible surface such as some brick pavers or stone tiles.

Modern Decking

The Woodoc Way

Creating an outdoor environment that complements your personal style has never been easier than with Woodoc Water-Borne DECK and Woodoc Colours.

Woodoc Water-Borne DECK - the modern sealer for outdoor decking and exterior woodwork is high in UV-absorbers and weather-resistant, providing an extremely attractive finish. Quick drying, it is easy to apply and easy to maintain.

Mixed with Woodoc Colours - your décor possibilities are endless with our range of fashion shades and natural wood shades.

Use Woodoc Water-Borne Plus-Life PRIMER as primer to significantly extend the life of the surface finish.



Clifton Grey was used to colour this deck.



Woodoc®
FOOD FOR WOOD™

Our website has full details and “How-to-do” -advice.

Use our new **Woodoc Wizard** to help find your perfect sealer. www.woodoc.help



Woodoc Customer Care: For friendly, personal assistance and advice, phone Toll-Free 0800 411 200, during office hours. Visit www.woodoc.com Woodoc WhatsApp +27 66 302 4702

Running out of cupboard space?
Fear not as
Kreg show you
how to make a
freestanding closet.

MAKE A FREESTANDING CLOSET

Closets are kind of like potato chips. No matter how many you have, it would always be great to have just one more. Of course, finding space for another closet is challenging, if not impossible. That is why this freestanding closet is great. It provides an extra closet anywhere you need one.

Tools

- Miter saw
- Tape measure
- Combination square
- Circular saw
- Drill
- Pocket-hole Jig
- Brad nailer
- Sander and sanding block

Hardware & supplies

- 149 x Kreg 32mm coarse-thread pocket-hole screws
- 4 x 130mm (or equiv.) locking casters
- 1 x Closet rod bracket set
- 1 x Hanging mirror
- 50 x 25mm Brad nails (for edging)

Wood products

- 2 x 19 x 1220 x 2440mm sanded pine plywood
- 5 x 19 x 140 x 2100mm pine boards
- 1 x 32 x 900mm poplar dowel
- 1 x 6 x 32 x 2400 pine lath
- 6 x 6 x 19 x 2400mm pine screen molding

PARTS LIST

QTY	NAME	MATERIAL
(1)	Lower outside filler	19mm ply x 248 x 483mm
(1)	Upper outside filler	19mm ply x 248 x 140mm
(2)	Outside frame	19 x 140 x 1830mm pine
(1)	Corner frame	19 x 140 x 1830mm pine
(1)	Back panel	19mm ply x 483 x 1830mm
(1)	Front panel	19mm ply x 362 x 1830mm
(1)	Top panel	19mm ply x 508 x 1187mm
(1)	Bottom panel	19mm ply x 508 x 1187mm
(1)	Lower inside filler	19mm ply x 229 x 464mm
(1)	Upper inside filler	19mm ply x 229 x 140mm
(2)	Inside frame	19 x 140 x 1792mm pine
(4)	Shelf	19mm ply x 343 x 508mm
(1)	Middle shelf	19mm ply x 508 x 826mm
(1)	Shoe shelf	19mm ply x 356 x 826mm
(1)	Shoe stop	6 x 32 x 826mm pine lath
(1)	Closet rod	32mm dowel, cut to fit
Plywood edging		6 x 19mm screen molding, cut to fit



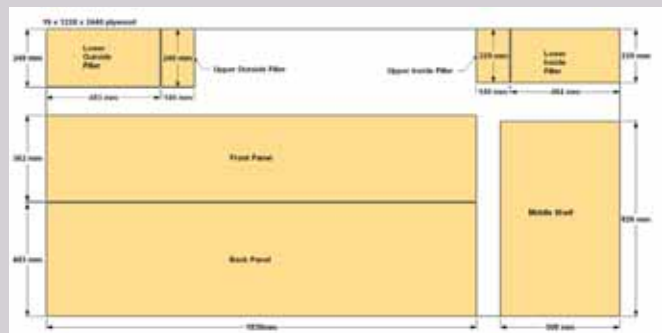
Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Cut one Lower Outside Filler and one Upper Outside Filler to size from 19mm plywood, as shown in the cutting diagram. Set your Kreg Pocket-Hole Jig for 19mm-thick material, and then drill pocket holes in the Fillers. The exact location of these pocket holes isn't critical, just space them approximately as shown.

Step 2: Next, cut two Outside Frames to length from 19 x 140mm boards. Double check the length of the boards. Then join the Outside Frames to the Upper Outside Filler and the Lower Outside filler using 32mm coarse-thread Kreg Pocket-Hole Screws to create an outside assembly. Sand the assembly smooth, as needed, using 120-grit sandpaper.

Step 3: Cut one Corner Frame to length, a 19x140mm board. Then drill pocket holes in the Corner Frame, as shown. Sand this piece as needed.

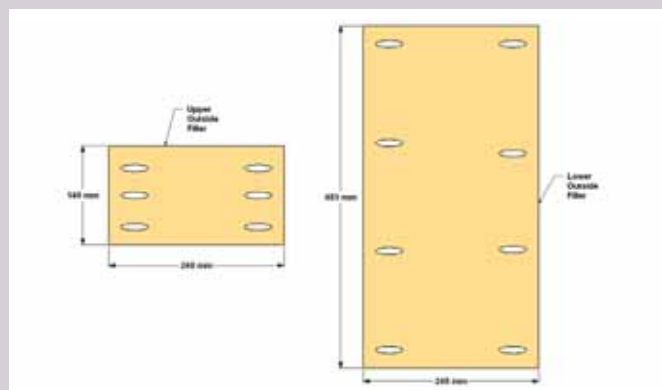
Step 4: Now attach the Corner Frame to the outside frame assembly using 32mm coarse-thread Pocket-Hole Screws, as shown.



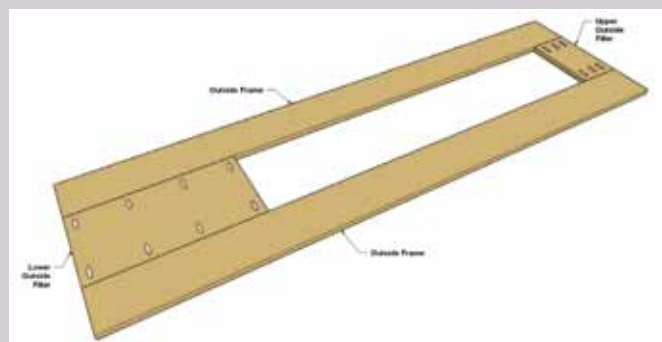
Cutting diagram 1



Cutting diagram 2



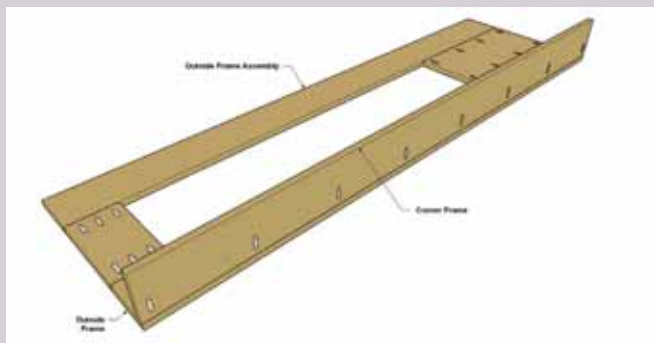
Create outside frame fillers



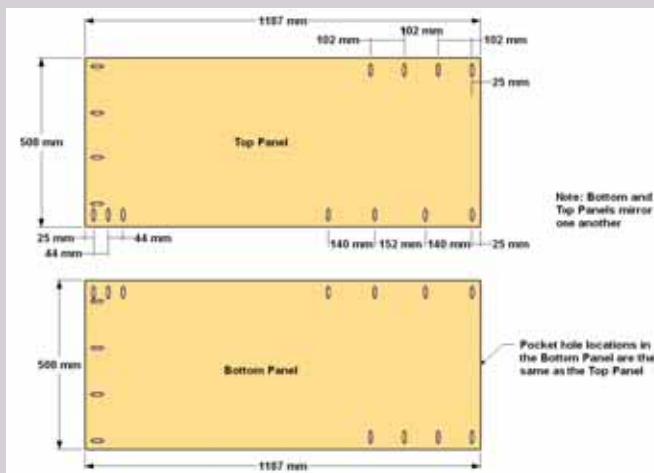
Assemble the outside frame



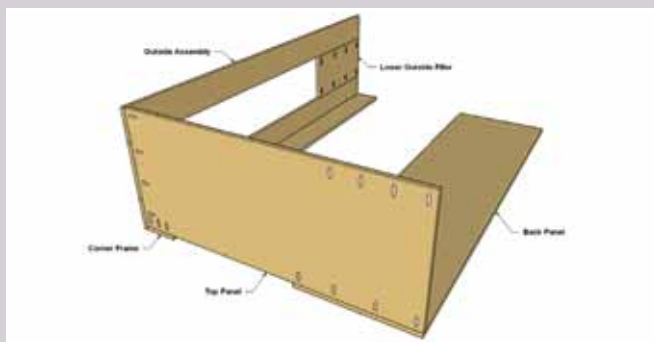
Create a corner frame



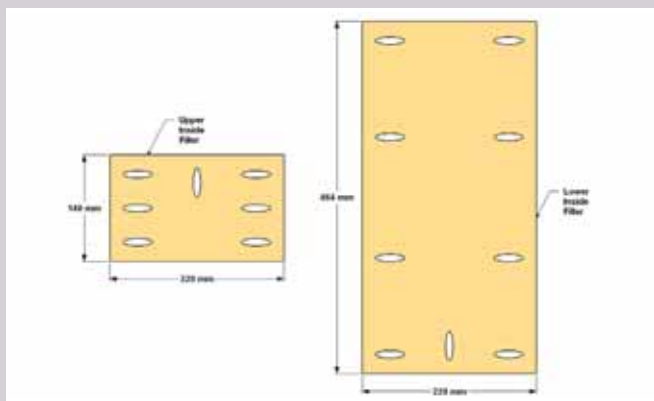
Attach the corner frame



Make the top, bottom, front and back



Start the case assembly



Create inside frame fillers

Step 5: Cut one Top Panel and One Bottom Panel to size from 19mm plywood, as shown in the cutting diagram. While you're at it, you can cut the Back Panel and Front Panel, as well. For the moment, set the Back Panel and Front Panel aside. Next, lay out the location of the pocket holes in the Top Panel and Bottom Panel, as shown. You'll notice that these panels are 'mirror images' of one another. For these panels, it's more important to position the pocket holes at defined locations. So, take your time to lay them out. Then, drill all of the holes. Sand the pieces as needed.

Step 6: Lay the Back Panel and the outside/corner assembly on a flat work surface, as shown. Position the Top Panel as shown, and then attach it to the Back and corner assembly using 32mm coarse-thread Pocket-Hole Screws.

Step 7: Cut one Lower Inside Filler and one Upper Inside Filler to size from 19mm plywood, as shown in the cutting diagram. With your pocket-hole jig still set for 19mm thick material, drill pocket holes in the Fillers, as shown. Once again, the exact location of these pocket holes isn't critical. Sand the pieces as needed.

Step 8: Cut two Inside Frames to length from 19 x 140mm boards, as shown in the cutting diagram. Drill pocket holes in each board at the locations shown. Sand the pieces as needed.

Step 9: Now you can attach the Upper Inside Filler and Lower Inside Filler to the Inside Frames, as shown, using 32mm coarse-thread Pocket-Hole Screws. Make sure that all of the pocket holes are oriented correctly before you screw everything together.

Step 10: Attach the inside frame assembly to the Top Panel and the Back Panel, as shown. Make sure that the frame is straight. You'll see that this assembly stops 19mm short of the lower end of the Back Panel. This is correct. The Bottom Panel will fit into this gap.

Step 11: To complete the main case, you just need to attach the Bottom Panel and the Front Panel using 32mm coarse-thread Pocket-Hole Screws. Attach the Bottom first, then add the Front, as shown.

Step 12: Next, it's time to add a set of shelves that fit between the Front Panel and Back Panel. Cut four Shelves to size from 19mm plywood, as shown in the cutting diagram. Then drill pocket holes in all four Shelves as shown. Pay attention to the two pocket holes along the back edge. They need to be within 115mm of the Shelf ends so that the screws will hit the Inside Frames when you install the Shelves. Sand the pieces as needed.

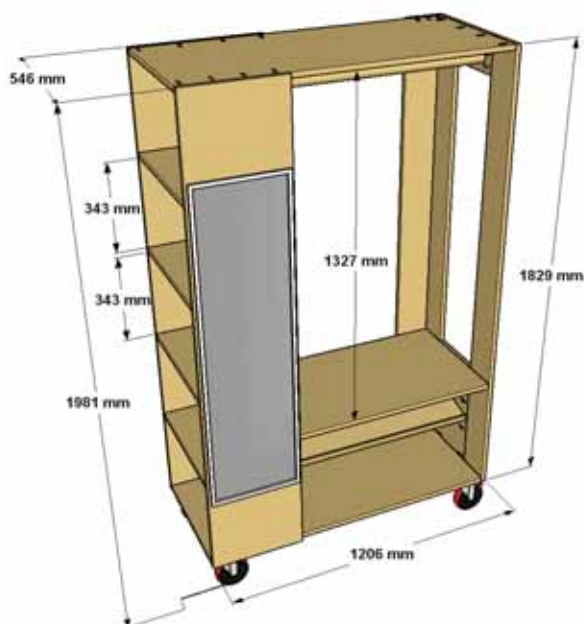
Step 13: Position the Shelves at the locations shown, and then secure them to the Front, Back, and Inside Frames using 32mm coarse-thread pocket-hole screws.

Step 14: The last additions to the freestanding closet are another set of Shelves: The Middle Shelf and Shoe Shelf. Cut these Shelves to size from 19mm plywood, as shown in the cutting diagram. Drill pocket holes in the Shelves where shown. Pay attention to the location of the pocket holes along the rear edge of each shelf. Also cut one Shoe Stop from 6x32mm Pine lattice, as shown in the cutting diagram. Glue and nail the Shoe Stop to the front edge of the Shoe Shelf so it sticks up above the surface. This will prevent shoes from sliding off the shelf, which gets installed at an angle. Sand the pieces as needed.

Step 15: Attach the Middle Shelf at the location shown using 32mm coarse-thread Pocket-Hole Screws. Then position the Shoe shelf (with the Short Stop pointing upward) and attach it as well.

Step 16: With the assembly complete, you can decide how you want to finish your freestanding closet. We chose to paint the flat surfaces and leave the edges natural. This provides an interesting look, but the exposed plywood edges don't look as good as the solid-wood edges. If you want to cover them up, just cut pieces of screen molding, and then glue and nail them to these plywood edges. We applied it to the edges of the Front and Back Panel, the Top and Bottom, the four Shelves, and the exposed edges of the Middle and Shoe Shelves.

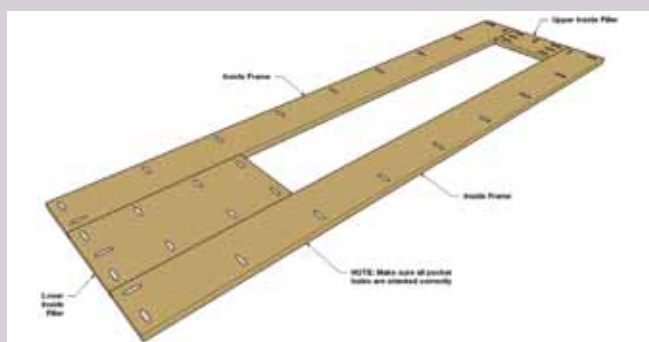
Step 17: Finally, cut a Closet Rod to length from a 32mm dowel, as shown in the cutting diagram. Then you can install the Rod using closet rod hardware and attach a set of casters. We chose big industrial-style locking casters for our freestanding closet. We also added a mirror to the Front Panel.



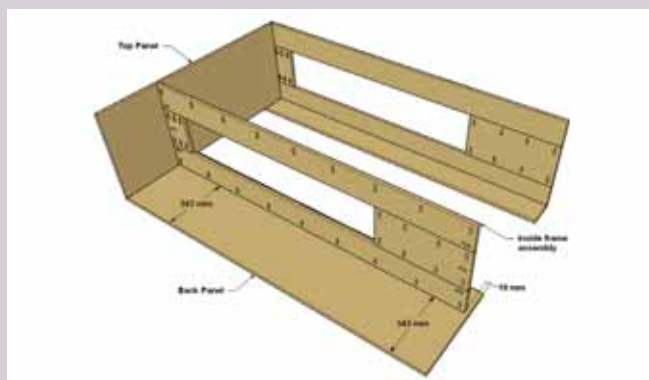
Dimensions of the closet



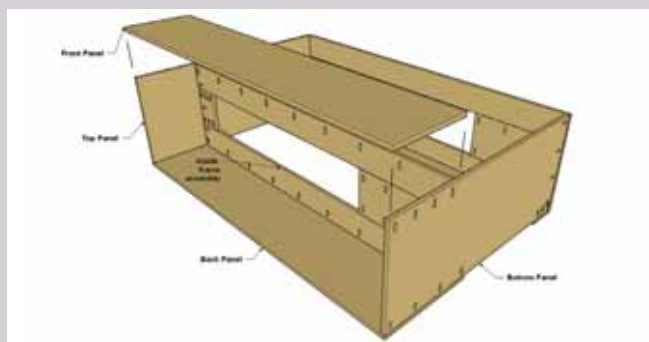
Create the inside frames



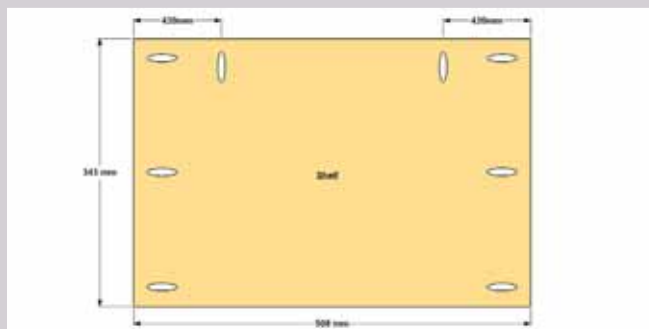
Assemble the inside frame



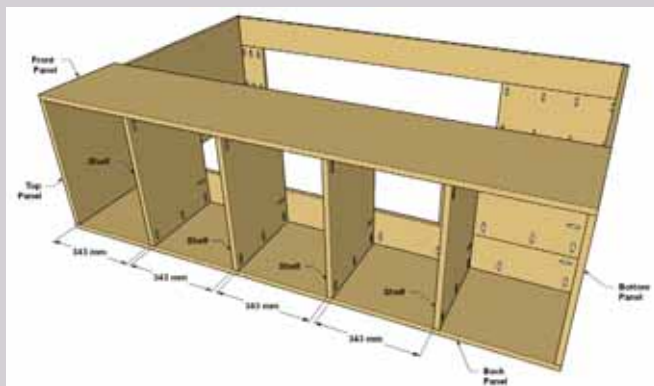
Attach the inside frame



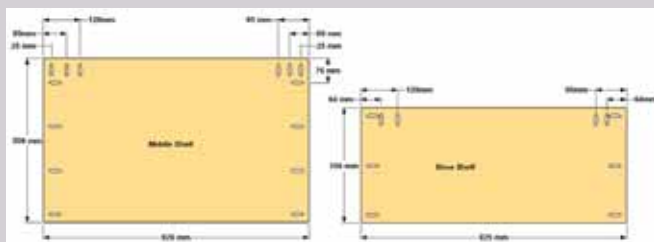
Attach the bottom and front



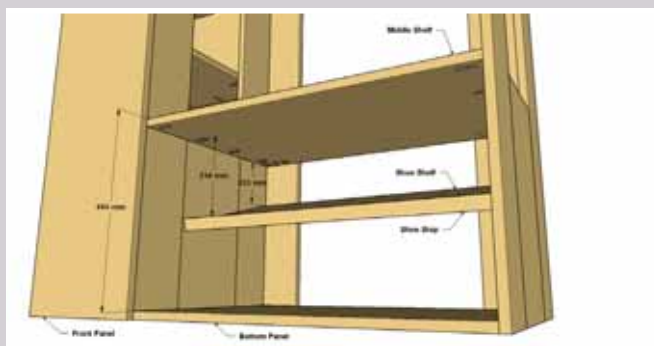
Make the shelves



Install the shelves



Make the remaining shelves




Install the remaining shelves



Cutting board diagram



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 A full-page photograph of a child swinging on a wooden monkey bar structure in a garden. The structure is made of thick wooden poles and horizontal bars. The child is in mid-air, holding onto one of the bars. The background shows a grey fence, some potted plants, and a house with a green roof.

Learn how to make monkey bars for your garden.

Get swinging!

Playing inside on the computer and with toys is fine for kids, but getting outside to play is important. Running free and playing games outdoors is fun, but having a jungle gym, slide or monkey bars gives your kids a focus for their activities. Playground equipment is expensive, but you can make your own monkey bars with a few supplies.

As with any project, planning is your first step. Find a suitable spot in the garden to first ensure you have the available space. For our project, there was a slight downward slope so that had to factored into the lengths of the gumpoles (as well as the fact that you need a decent

length cemented in underground). If the monkey bars will be used by a child, take into account their future growth before ordering your poles.

We haven't provided measurements, as all designs will differ, but we ordered and had cut to size, four upright supports, one brace piece and the two horizontal beams. We also ordered 10 lengths of steel pipe at a metre in length for the 'bars'.

Once all your material has arrived, place the horizontal beams on the lawn where you plan to install the monkey bars, and use spray paint to mark where to dig for the four uprights.

Dig decent sized holes, roughly 30 x 30cm across and at least 50cm deep. Stabilise the uprights with bricks or stones before mixing and filling the holes with concrete. Ensure that the poles are straight before leaving the concrete to dry – the longer the better.

Once ready, start off by adding the brace on the one side with suitable fasteners for your chosen material. Next, secure the two horizontal beams before measuring and drilling holes through the steel bars and installing. Depending on your child, the gaps between the bars will be different – we originally installed eight bars, but this was then reduced to six after the first trial run.



Dig your holes for the uprights



Holes dug and uprights in



Support the uprights in the holes



Mix your concrete



Pour the concrete in



The four uprights in place



Add the brace



Fit the horizontal beams



Securing the beams to the uprights

Use monkey bars to build strength and improve posture

Monkey bars aren't just great playground equipment, they are a fun and great way to improve your posture and strength too. Many of us spend our time in front of a computer or TV and are unable to maintain focus on posture. Monkey bars provide a great exercise that can help maintain a postural strength. This in turn, will reduce fatigue at work.

Areas of the body that monkey bars will improve:

Latissimus dorsi muscles: 'Lats' stabilise the movement as you pull upwards from bar to bar. Using these muscles is key in order to lift yourself up as you move forward along the monkey bars and gain momentum.

Deltoids or shoulder muscles: Monkey bars provide a unique exercise for your shoulders. They extend whilst contracting in order to stabilise the movement.

Biceps: As with the Latissimus Dorsi muscles, they are both an agonist in the movement along the monkey bars and a muscle responsible for the stability of your body. As you keep your body up, the agonist action is needed during each swing forward.

Abdominal muscles and obliques: As you move forward your abdominal muscles are used to provide stability as your body moves left to right. Monkey bars can also be used as Chin-Up bars; yet another great exercise that works your upper body using your own body weight.

Grip strength: Monkey bars are a great bit of fitness equipment to work on your grip strength. Extension of your finger forward and rolling back as you reach for the next bar gives you a full hand workout that you can really feel. Good grip strength is very important in your day-to-day life and obviously improves your ability to use other upper body fitness equipment.

10



Drill holes in the steel bars

11



Fit steel bars to the beams



Ready to go!

MAKE A FIRE PIT IN 4 EASY STEPS

The perfect addition to any home, an outdoor fire pit can be used both for your summer braais as well as cosy winter get-togethers.

>> Laura Gummerman
www.abeautifulmess.com

What you will need

- Coloured spray paint
- Gravel to fill your pit
- Shovel or other digging tool
- Concrete landscaping stones and metal fire pit ring (optional)
- Masonry adhesive
- Rubber mallet

While not everyone may be the outdoors-type, a common favourite camping-related activity is a campfire. It's warm, it's cosy, and there's usually some sort of yummy snack involved in the process.

Last autumn we bought a mini portable fire pit for our backyard, and we liked it so much that we decided we wanted to build a proper fire pit this year so we could have fires more often. After doing some research, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that it's really not that hard to build your own professional-looking fire pit. It's a pretty easy process to plan out, and although it does take a bit of muscle to complete, it is totally worth a bit of cardio.

Before you start your fire pit, you'll want to make sure that you locate it at least 3m from any building structures, trees, walls, or other obstructions. Keep in mind also that you don't want anything hanging above your fire pit, so even if a base of a tree is a few metres away, you don't want to have branches hanging directly above the fire pit.

You can get your landscaping stones from your larger hardware stores but make sure to also check smaller local hardware stores (and specifically stone and landscape businesses) to see what other types of stones are available. You can also either do two or three layers of stone, with or without the metal ring – it's up to you and your budget.



Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Outline your fire pit. Lay out the bottom ring of your stones in the grass where you want the fire pit to be. If you are going to use a metal ring, like we did, you can use that to build a few stones around to find your circle. Remove a few stones so you have space between them and use the spray paint to mark where the outside of the stones would sit. Remove those remaining stones and complete your painted circle.

Step 2: Dig your fire pit. Use a shovel or whatever other digging tool you need to dig out your circle around 15mm deep. Depending on where you live, this will be an easier or more difficult task. Our grass has crazy strong roots and we have lots of giant rocks in the soil, so this was quite an arm workout for us!

Step 3: Fill your fire pit. Once you have a hole dug, you'll want to pour your gravel into your hole until the gravel is level with the ground. The gravel will give your fire pit an important drainage area when it rains.

Step 4: Build your fire pit. Place your first ring of stones around the edge of the gravel circle and use a rubber mallet to tap the stones flat and even with each other. Again, if using a metal ring you can keep that in the middle to make sure you are fitting your stones right up against the ring. When placing the second row of stones, place some masonry adhesive on the bottom of each stone and stagger the placement of the second row (the middle of each stone should sit on the end seams of the row beneath it). Use the rubber mallet to even and tighten the stone placement. Repeat the process with the third row.

After you've had several fires, you'll want to scoop out (or use a vacuum) to remove most of the ashes so they don't build up too high and blow around. If you will be using the fire pit for braaing, first investigate the available grill sizes so you can purchase a grill and build your fire pit to the correct size.



Dig the circle to size in your grass



The step-by-step process



All done and ready to be put to the test



No matter what season, a fire pit will always be used



Keep pests out of your home

**Nobody likes them, but chances are you have them.
Yet how do you get rid of pests in your home?**

Spiders

Spiders are most likely to enter your home in the autumn in search of a warm place to spend the winter. The best advice, in general, is to leave them alone. This can be difficult for the millions of people who have a real fear of spiders.

The majority of spider infestations are more of an annoyance – particularly their webs. However, on occasions, more serious situations can occur especially when it involves some of the dangerous spiders we have here in South Africa.

- Vacuum regularly, high and low – particularly sheltered spots such as beneath worktops, backs of cupboards or under/behind large furniture.
- Remove noticeable webs – on a regular basis.
- Fill in gaps – in walls, around pipework and under doors to deter entry.
- Remove sheltering sites – like firewood

piles, garden bags, compost piles and general clutter from near your property.

- Deter all insects – use lighting in a way that is less attractive to the insects (flies) that spiders feed on.

In general, spiders can be found in dark, secluded areas, both in your home and garden. Look for spider webs - The size and shape of spider webs vary by species. Some are orb-shaped while others are funnel-shaped.

Some spider species live in burrows rather than webs, while others are free-ranging and take refuge in crevices. Some species of spiders are attracted to moist environments. Check your basements, walls, sheds and other damp locations. Other species can be found in places such as attics, the junction of a wall and ceiling, closets and storage boxes.

Spiders feed on other insects and prey on ants, flies, woodlice and other spiders, so

where there is a plentiful supply of other insects, spiders will wait to find their next meal.

As the temperature drops in autumn, spiders become more active, looking for a mate and come out of their hiding places. Towards the end of autumn many die, but some hibernate until the following spring. Spider eggs are laid into a silken sac, on average about 100 eggs in each sac, which may be fixed to a surface, hidden in the web or carried by the female. Signs of the sacs fixed indoors indicate that soon there will be more spiders around.



Termites

Termites are widely regarded as a damaging pest to have in your home or business. Termites (sometimes known as 'white ants') can cause extensive damage to the structure of a building if they are not managed or controlled by qualified pest professionals.

All parts of South Africa are at risk. Densely populated areas face a greater risk due to the large concentration of buildings and associated climate.



HOW TO GET RID OF TERMITES

Remove stored timber, debris and cellulose materials from under, in and around the property and under the house: Storing timber against or under your house or property on a soil sub-floor will provide an attractive food source and nesting site for subterranean termites. It can also hide evidence of termites invading your home. Remove any timber and/or debris (dead leaves) away from the house.

Repair leaking taps and pipes: These include leaking taps, pipes and hot water overflow pipes under or around your home. To get rid of termites, you need to repair leaking and pipes to reduce moisture levels, which attract subterranean termites close to or under your property.

Ensure that vents to subfloor areas are never blocked: Substandard ventilation in the sub-floor areas of your property will result in high humidity, and high moisture levels. Good ventilation and extraction fans where necessary are essential to reduce the risk from subterranean termites.

Divert all hot water services and air conditioning overflows away from side of house: Ensure stormwater runoff is properly connected.

Use only termite treated timber in garden beds, retaining walls or fence posts: Make sure that you get rid of termites before they become a problem. Do not use untreated timbers to form garden beds or retaining walls, as these will attract termites around your property.

Construct timber fences and support posts with a 50mm clearance between the timbers and the soil: Often the bases of timber fence palings and/or sub-floor timbers breach the soil surface. This allows termites access without detection. Galvanised post shoes that elevate the timber off the ground are available from any good hardware store.

Don't allow climbing plants or bushy gardens to grow against the structure: Climbing plants growing against the side of the structure of your property provide termites with entry undetected. The roots of some plants can also penetrate the foundations of your property allowing termites access points that are very difficult to locate. Allow at least a 30cm clearance. Do not plant trees that are notorious for sending roots under slabs close to the home.

Remove dead trees or stumps: Dead trees and stumps are ideal sites for termites to nest in. Remove these or have them treated to reduce the risk to your property.

Ensure that termite shielding is not damaged or breached in any way: Metal strips or ant caps around the foundation of your home do not prevent termite entry but force termites out into the open where they can be detected with regular termite inspection.

Be aware: Building alterations or additions can alter or render ineffective previous termite protection: Adding a pergola, new awnings or veranda, concrete slab extensions, or even new plumbing can provide a route of entry for termites into the property across the termite protection barrier previously applied.

Where a house is a concrete slab on ground construction you should leave a minimum of 75mm of slab edge exposed: Weep holes in between brickwork, found immediately above the slab, should also be left exposed. If you construct gardens, allow soil to be deposited above the edge of the slab, or above pavers over the slab face, otherwise termites can gain entry undetected into your property and breach the previously applied termite barriers.

Ensure all formwork timber is removed after construction: Termites can often attack formwork and use it to gain access into your home.

How to choose a reputable pest control provider

Mario Pluke, Technical Manager at Rentokil South Africa, says choosing a professional, registered and reputable pest control partner is critical if you want to combat pest infestations in a safe and environmentally responsible fashion. Rentokil urges the public to ask the following questions when choosing a professional pest control partner:

1. How many years has the pest control company been in business?
2. How are employees trained?
3. Is the company registered with the South African Pest Control Association (SAPCA)?
4. Are the pest control technicians who work for the company registered with the Department of Agriculture?
5. How does the company keep its staff informed of changes in regulations, products, techniques and safety?
6. What is the company's attitude towards health and safety of both employees and customers?
7. Does the company adhere to the Department of Agriculture's approved product list?

Pluke says while do-it-yourself pest control options may seem appealing, one must remember that if administered incorrectly, pesticides can be hazardous to the health of humans, as they are designed to kill living organisms.

"It is therefore essential that the use of pesticides around people, especially small children, is carefully controlled. When selecting a pest control partner, consumers are urged to choose a reputable, professional pest control company," he says.

DIY pest control remedies

Cucumber peels

Ants are turned off by cucumber peels, and sprinkling them around areas of your home that serve as entrance points for ant colonies is a great preventive pest control method.

Mint leaves

Plants such as peppermint and spearmint are natural insect deterrents, especially for ants and aphids. Plant a few varieties around your home, and you should see a noticeable drop in ant populations.

All-natural sprays

There are a number of great eco-friendly pest control sprays you can make at home. Mixing water with isopropyl alcohol, concentrated garlic oil, salt or boiled elder leaves makes deterrents that you can spray on indoor and outdoor plants to help control infestations.

Baking soda and powdered sugar

If roaches are your problem, try mixing baking soda and powdered sugar, and sprinkle it around problem areas. The sugar attracts the pests and the baking soda kills them.

Eucalyptus oil

Drop a bit of eucalyptus oil on a cloth and place it near areas of infestation of flies and moths.



Ants

If you're worried that you might be at risk from an ant infestation, you can put in place some simple ant repellent and ant control measures. The checklist below will help you keep your home or business free from ants, or make sure the infestation doesn't grow.

Most ants only come into your home to look for food. They are attracted to anything that's sweet and sticky, which is why you find ants in kitchen cupboards or areas where food is kept. With that in mind it's important to not leave temptation in their path. To get rid of ants you must remember the following ant control tips:

- Clear up – food and liquid spillages immediately.
- Sweep up – any food crumbs from under your kitchen appliances and units.
- Store your food – in airtight containers wherever possible.
- If you have a pet – clear away any food that isn't eaten straight away.
- Block off – the entry points for ants by sealing all cracks and crevices around your doors and window frames.
- In the garden – keep your compost enclosed and make sure all rubbish bins have tightly sealed lids.

Above all, cover any food in storage areas; you don't know where ants have been walking before they march across your food. Did you know once an ant has discovered a food source it leaves a pheromone trail? This chemical helps other ants from the colony to find the food too.



Flies

Flies are synonymous with South Africa. They're as part of our culture as braaing and rugby. However, they are a pest in every sense of the word. They pose a health risk to humans, pets and livestock and can infest your home or business and spread diseases like Salmonella and E. coli. A few species may even bite humans and animals.

- Deny flies access – keep windows and doors closed.
- Flyscreens – fit flyscreens to windows especially around kitchen and waste areas.
- Cover food – flies spread diseases by landing on food before we eat it.
- Clear away – clear food debris and liquid spillages from food consumption and preparation areas, under kitchen benches and appliances.
- Dustbins/Compost bins – ensure all waste containers have tightly sealed lids.
- Pets – exercise fly control by cleaning up after pets. Not only are faeces a perfect breeding place for flies, they may land there before landing on your food.
- Clear up dead flies – they provide a tasty snack for other pests such as carpet beetles.
- Water butts – cover these with well fitted lids.
- Standing water – do not leave standing water (in watering cans and pot plants for example) as this offers mosquitoes opportunity to breed.
- Ponds – if you have a garden pond, introduce goldfish as they will eat mosquito larvae.

- Drains – ensure drains are kept clean and free of debris to reduce fly breeding sites.



FACT

Common house flies are attracted to decaying organic waste such as faeces and rotting meat, whereas fruit flies will look for sugary substances and feed more commonly on overripe fruit, spilled soft drinks and alcohol.

Bed bugs

A traveller's biggest fear is waking up in a hotel bed (or even your own bed!) with tell-tale bed bug bites and droplets of blood on the sheets. As more and more South Africans travel abroad and international travellers visit this country, so the chances of a bed bug infestation in South African hotels and homes increase.

Bed bugs hide in tiny cracks and crevices and usually visit their host for a brief feed in the few hours just before dawn. To an expert pest controller, signs of bed bugs are easy to spot. But to the untrained and inexperienced eye identifying bed bugs is a little harder. Here are a few of the common signs that there may be bed bugs in one of your rooms:

- Dark/black stains – on the mattress and surrounding area from bed bug excreta.
- Sweet scent – an unpleasant, sweet, sickly scent.
- Small dark spots – small dark blood spots on bedding known as 'faecal pellets'.
- Live insects – despite being small (adult are only 4-5mm long) it's possible to spot live bed bugs and shed skins.
- Blood spots – on the sheets or mattress.

HOW TO PREVENT BED BUGS

Bed bugs or their eggs get into clothing, furniture or suitcases and are then transported wherever these items go. As they are so small and like to hide in cracks and crevices during the day, it can be very easy for bed bugs to move into your home or hotel.

If you are worried you have brought bed bugs back home after your travels, there are a few things you can do to prevent them from spreading to your home:

Leave your luggage in your garage or in the bathroom. Bed bugs don't like the tiles or concrete and if they are present you will see them easier than on carpet!

If you're very worried, take your clothes off in the garage or bathroom and put them straight into the washing machine.

Wash and dry clothes at the highest possible temperatures.

Treatment by a professional pest control expert is always the best solution to get rid of bed bugs. However – as a precaution and if possible – you can put your suitcase in the sun, away from the house for a couple of days to help eradicate any bed bugs.

Vacuuming can greatly reduce the size of the bed bug population, but only when they're clearly visible. It cannot guarantee total elimination. (Empty and clean the vacuum to avoid transferring eggs to other rooms).

For more information, visit www.rentokil.co.za

DIY pest control remedies

Soapy water

If you want to instantly kill an insect in your home, mix water and soap into a spray bottle – you can kill all bugs on contact. This is because the soap component breaks down the waxy exoskeleton and lets the water enter the bug, killing them quickly.

Cedar oil

Cedar oil is very lethal to termites but totally non-toxic, organic, and chemical-free. It is a very effective contact killer and repellent to termites, and can be used on any wood structure. The way it works is that the product penetrates the wood, and the aromas from the cedar oil disrupt termite pheromone systems in a lethal manner.

Lemon juice as bug spray

Simply add lemon juice and water 50/50 in a spray bottle and add essential oils. Various natural oils are also effective:

- Lemongrass against fleas, ticks, mosquitoes and flies.
- Lavender against fleas, ticks, flies, lice, nits, silverfish, mosquitoes, moths.
- Tea tree oil against centipedes, fleas, flies, and other insects.
- Lemon, orange or other citrus against fleas, ants, roaches, lice, nits, flies.



Prepare your lawnmower for spring

As the days start to warm up and rain inevitably falls, your grass will need to be mowed more often. But is your lawnmower up to the task?

Your lawnmower will probably have been packed away for the winter months, but as spring and summer approach it will need to be dusted off and prepared for use again. There are some essential elements of maintenance that will need to be carried out before you can use it.

Clean under the lawnmower

Ideally, after each use, you should clean your lawnmower. This will prevent the mower from getting clogged up with garden debris. Make sure that the lawnmower is turned off and cannot restart whilst you are cleaning it. Remove all old grass and leaves that have collected around the blades. Do not use any sharp implements to clean the mower as this will scratch it and encourage rust to develop.

Sharpen the blades

You should also clean and check the blade at the beginning of every spring. A dull blade will not only make your lawnmower less efficient, but it can also damage your garden. Remove the

mower blades and sharpen their points using a metal file. If you do not feel that you can do this will take them to a hardware store and ask them to do it for you. If the lawnmower blades appear to be very chipped in places, you will need to purchase new blades. To clean the blade, you just need to wipe it down to remove any excess grass clippings that have built up on it.

Tighten the mower's hardware

Lawnmowers can generate a significant amount of vibration when they run. Over many seasons of using your mower, this can cause some of the fasteners and parts to come loose. When you are getting your lawnmower ready for spring, you should check all of the hardware to make sure it is tight. If you find anything that seems loose, use the appropriate tool to tighten it up.

For petrol-driven lawnmowers

Change the mower's oil

Certain lawnmowers will need to have their oil changed and topped up to ensure that they can perform at their best. If you have never changed the oil on a lawnmower before then simply place a container under the drain plug and remove the plug. When all of the old oil has been drained, dispose of it correctly then replace the plug and fill with new oil. Ideally, you should change the oil on your lawnmower about once a year.

Remember, there may be laws about recycling motor oil. Improper disposal is a very serious environmental hazard. Simply store the used oil in a container like an old milk jug until you're able to drop it off at a designated location.

Spark plugs

The spark plugs on your lawnmower should be changed if you



Remove grass and debris simply by spraying the deck with a garden hose or leaf blower

notice rust or corrosion forming around them. If they are not changed, your lawnmower will not function correctly. Even if you are not replacing the spark plugs, they should be removed and cleaned on a regular basis. When you replace the spark plugs, make sure that all of them are refitted correctly otherwise the lawnmower won't cut your grass correctly. Spark plugs will need to be maintained at least once a year, especially if it is used regularly during the spring and summer months.

Belts

Turn your lawnmower upright and check the condition of the belts. If they appear to be loose or show signs of dry rot or cracking, you will need to replace them with new ones.

For electric lawnmowers

Electric-powered lawnmowers are starting to grow in popularity for a variety of different reasons. The fact that these machines are much easier to maintain than their petrol-powered counterparts tops the list of reasons why most people choose an electric push lawnmower.

While a cordless or corded electric lawnmower may require less maintenance, it still needs some care if you want it to operate well and have a long life. To accomplish this, you may need to change your lawnmower blades or recharge your machine.

Since spring and summer are the times when lawnmowers get the most use, the beginning of spring is the ideal time to perform some annual maintenance on your electric powered lawnmower. Below we will go over some of the steps you should take to get your machine ready for work.

Find your lawnmower manual

Every lawnmower is different, so it is important to follow the care instructions that come with the machine. Some electric lawnmowers may also have special features that require specific maintenance procedures. Before you start your annual lawnmower maintenance, find the manual that came with the mower. If you can't find it, you might be able to download a copy from the manufacturer's website.

Check the cord

Having a safe, reliable power supply is important. Before you take your corded electric lawnmower out for the year, you should check the cord to make sure it is in good condition. This is another reason why it's beneficial to have the manual on hand. Some manuals will have information about replacing or repairing the cord, which could be useful if you have any problems.

Of course, this may be one reason that some people might choose to go with an automatic over an electric lawnmower. New models have plenty of power and can cover a lot of area with a single charge. Additionally, you do not have to worry about the cord getting damaged and you have more freedom

with the battery-powered design than you do with most corded electric lawnmowers.

Clean the deck

Each time you mow the lawn, a significant amount of grass and debris is going to accumulate in the mower deck. Over several uses, this debris can build up and clog the machine.

To clean the deck, you want to start by making sure your corded electric lawnmower is unplugged. Once you know it is unplugged, you can tip it on its side to get an idea of how dirty it is. You should be able to remove most of the grass and debris simply by spraying out the deck with a garden hose or leaf blower. If you have a lot of build-up that is hard to remove, you may need to scrub the mower deck with a wire brush.

Check the vents on your electric powered lawnmower

Your electric lawnmower should have some air vents on the body. These vents help to keep the components from overheating when the machine is in operation. Just like much of the rest of this machine, the vents can get jammed up with debris, and this can limit the airflow to the motor and other parts. Some people use compressed air to remove the debris from the vents on the bottom of their lawnmower, but you could just wipe them down to get them clean.

A well-maintained lawnmower can last over ten years. However, improper care can cut that lifespan in half. Remember to always clean your lawnmower so there is no build up over the season, properly store it for winter, and check on all the components when you take it out of storage.

Blade height

Once you are satisfied that all of the essential maintenance work has been carried out and your lawnmower is properly cleaned, you should check the height of the blades. If the blades are too low then they will weaken and tear your grass. The optimum height for lawnmower blades is around 3cm. This can vary depending on the type of grass in your lawn and personal preference for your home's landscaping.



Certain lawnmowers will need to have their oil changed and topped up to ensure that they can perform at their best

Regardless of whether a jigsaw is being used as a corded or cordless version, it is crucial to choose the right saw blade

SELECTING THE CORRECT JIGSAW BLADES

All you need to know about jigsaw blades and cutting from the experts.

Regardless of whether the jigsaw is being used as a corded or cordless version, in addition to the correct saw settings, it is crucial to choose the right saw blade. This depends on what the main aim is: a high cutting quality and/or fast working progress. It is important to note the aspects that have to be considered when choosing the jigsaw blade.

Sawing tailored to the material

Saw blades are designed for specific materials. For example, saw blades for metal are not suitable for sawing wood, and vice versa. This is why it is advisable to change the saw blade for every new application, even if this may

seem inconvenient at first. In the long term, it is certainly worth it – not only because of the working results but also for cost-efficiency reasons.

When choosing a saw blade, note the manufacturer's corresponding colour coding. What type of sawing work is to be performed? In straight lines or curved cuts?

Curved saw blades usually have cross-set teeth since these allow the sawing direction to be changed with ease at any time when making cuts. Whether cutting straight lines or curves, the aim is to achieve a consistent cutting angle along the entire cutting edge being worked on. The saw blade width plays a crucial role in achieving this objective. Wider saw blades are ideal for extremely accurate

angles, while tighter corners are easier to saw with narrow saw blades.

Cross-set teeth for free-cutting of curves

The material thickness is tailored to the saw blade length and pitch, the saw blade length depends on the thickness of the material. In any case, we recommend using a saw blade that is ideally 2.5cm longer than the material thickness, obviously depending on the jigsaw blade stroke. In addition to the saw blade length, the pitch must also be noted as this describes the distance between the teeth. The pitch chosen has an effect on the cutting quality and the working progress. For instance, a larger spacing of 4mm, for example, achieves

faster working progress. By contrast, a pitch of 2.5 or 2.8mm usually results in a finer cut but with slower working progress. The pitch indicates the spacing between teeth.

Tooth geometry

The tooth geometry depends on the material being machined and is crucial for the cutting quality. This means that the outcome changes depending on how the teeth are arranged on the jigsaw blade and the way in which they are ground. A 'free-cut' refers to the fact that the cut has to be wider than the saw blade, as this is the only way of preventing the saw blade from becoming stuck in the material. This free-cut can, for example, be cross-set, rippled or have a ground clearance angle. With a cross-set saw blade, the teeth slope to the right and left over the blade and therefore result in a rougher cut while making faster working progress – with excellent manoeuvrability for curved cuts.

This is advisable for quick cuts in hard and softwood, aluminium and plastics. This is recommended for cuts in non-ferrous metals, aluminium and stainless steel in particular. If the cutting quality needs to be precise, fine and clean, a free-cut with ground clearance angle is ideal. This means that the saw blade has a conically ground end, making it perfect for fine cuts in wood and plastic in particular. In general, ground saw blades can achieve a higher cutting

quality but do not allow you to progress through your work as quickly. For example:

- Cross-set teeth for a quick cut
- Rippled saw blade for cuts in metal
- Conically ground saw blades for a clean cut

Saw blade material

We recommend selecting the tooth material on the basis of the material being machined. The tooth material should be harder than the material being machined. As a general rule, hard saw blades are often brittle and therefore liable to breaking, while flexible saw blades usually become blunt quickly. This is why manufacturers often use flexible basic bodies with hard bimetal or carbide teeth. Although these jigsaw blades are usually more expensive but cut cleaner and last much longer.

HCS High-grade carbon tool steel – for use in softer materials such as wood, fibreboard and plastics.

BiM Bimetal – high-temperature-resistant, wear-resistant.

HS bimetal – for use in hardwood, hard plastics and metals such as steel, non-ferrous metal and aluminium.

HM Carbide – high-temperature-resistant, wear-resistant saw blades – for use in abrasive materials such as glass fibre-reinforced plastics, hardwoods, cement-bonded fibreboard and plasterboard.

Expert tips

"In addition to choosing the right saw blade for the material you are machining, we also recommend paying attention to the setting of the jigsaw," explains application engineer at Festool and master joiner, Simon Illing, before going on to explain that: "While high speeds in settings 4-6 are ideal for machining soft, temperature-resistant materials such as wood, low speed settings 1-3 are better for temperature-sensitive plastics such as acrylic glass or PET. In the same way, a low speed setting minimises jigsaw blade wear and the production of dust when working with metals and building materials," according to the expert.

He also advises paying attention to the setting of the piston stroke: This is because a higher pendulum stroke makes it faster and easier for the jigsaw to work through the material and to extract chips and dust effectively. "This can be achieved when the working progress, i.e. the speed at which work is carried out, is important but not the cutting quality, as working in this way usually results in significant splintering. This can be avoided by deactivating the pendulum stroke. Doing so ensures low-splinter, accurate cuts at a low working speed and is therefore ideal for precise adjustment work and curved cuts.

For more information, call 011-314-7711 or visit www.vermontsales.co.za



A selection of commonly used jigsaw blades

HOW TO MAKE A SHELF BRACKET

Shop-bought shelf brackets are almost exclusively made of metal in some form, but brackets were traditionally made from wood. In this project, Clifford Roberts and woodworker Andries Eygelaar show how it's done.



The handmade shelf brackets are easy and inexpensive to make but contribute to the aesthetic finish of your shelf

We wanted to put up a shelf in our bedroom, but the style of most shelving these days is contemporary. We wanted old-school. It turns out that the DIY job is super easy, can be made with the most rudimentary tools and barely costs anything to make.

Plus, it allows you to show off your woodworking skills even though you may think you have none.

Project info

Cost: Less than R50

Skill level: Easy

Time: ± an hour

What we used

For a single bracket:

- 3 x 40mm chipboard screws (for a single bracket only)
- 22 x 22 x 600mm SA pine timber
- G-clamp
- Drill
- Cold wood glue (optional)
- Table or handsaw
- Sandpaper
- Tape measure and pencil

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Start by identifying the size shelf you require. Keep in mind the load it will have to bear; this will determine how many supports you'll need to make. We simply wanted a narrow shelf above our headboard to carry three or four pot plants.

The shelf itself measures 20 x 150 x 1100mm and comprises SA Pine, sanded down and painted standard gloss white. The relatively short length and load-bearing requirements meant we would only require two brackets and therefore only a short length of timber.

Our local hardware store sells lengths of 22 x 22mm SA Pine in 1800mm

lengths priced at around R30 – perfect for the job. We just needed one to make two brackets, with wood leftover.

Step 2: You'll want to start by making one bracket, which will serve as the template for the others you may need.

The structural proportion of the bracket is created by a vertical length that is 1,5 times longer than the horizontal, whose length is determined by the width of the shelf. A third length that extends diagonally, connecting the furthest tips of the vertical and horizontal lengths, is determined by the scale of the first two.

We wanted the exposed tip of our horizontal length to be 5mm shy of flush with the shelf, simply as an aesthetic preference. If your shelf is substantially wider and requires a marked change in dimension, you must be assured the structure is sturdy enough can carry the load intended. It may require sturdier joins too. As stated, our intention was to use the shelf as a lightweight décor feature, so only a few screws would suffice.

Step 3: Cut the horizontal and vertical portions to size and place them on the workbench to meet at right angle. The horizontal portion should overlap the top of the vertical. Mark where you intend to drill a hole through the horizontal, which will take a screw to fix the portions at a right angle and drill the hole. Now, place the upright in position, clamp the portions in place and to your workbench, to make it easier to screw tight. At this point you may want to add a thin spread of cold wood glue to provide extra support in the join, and screw in place.

Step 4: To make the diagonal support, lay the remaining length of timber across its intended position. It should be placed for one end to meet nearest the tip of the horizontal.

On the underside where it meets the completed frame, draw a line where it intersects with the vertical and horizontal portions.

Cut the timber, either with your table saw or handsaw. Make sure you position the blade one or two millimetres outside the line to give yourself room to sand down the remainder and ensure the correct angle and a snug fit.

Step 5: Holding the diagonal in place, draw a line to indicate the drilling route that will fix it where it meets the horizontal and vertical points. The purpose of the line is also to ensure the screw makes the strongest join and its tip doesn't exit the timber. The best route may also be at a very slight angle, which is another reason for the guiding line.

Again, before clamping the join, drill the hole only through the first portion. Then smear a little wood glue if you're using it, and finally, add the screws to lock the two joins in position.

Step 6: Now is the best time in the assembly process to make the screw holes in the vertical that will be used to fix the bracket to the wall. Two or three holes should suffice. Note that the location of the diagonal will force you to eventually screw at an angle, so you may want to drill accordingly to make life a little easier. Alternatively, you can drill straight-on and then use a short, offset or right-angle screwdriver.

Step 7: From here, you can begin making the other brackets. Once done, sand down any sharp edges and stain, varnish or paint the brackets as your preference.

Step 8: To fix the brackets to the shelf, line them up on the underside – the parts to meet the wall must be flush with each other. Identify and mark two screw entry points, at either side of the horizontal; and, fix as you did the components to each other – by drilling through the first layer, which will be the shelf, and adding the screws to finish.

To hide the screw-heads, make sure they're recessed into the wood and then use wood filler or wood or shop-bought plastic plugs.



The horizontal must overlap the vertical. Mark the location of the drill-hole



Clamp the loose components in place and fix the join with cold wood glue and the screw



To determine angle to cut for the diagonal, place the timber across the horizontal and vertical portions and mark the underside, where it meets. That will be your cutting line



Identify the location of the screws for fixing the diagonal in place, by placing the screw in the ideal position and draw a drill guideline



The first bracket will serve as a template for the remainder that you may need, based on the load bearing requirements



10 Ways

TO MAKE SPRING CLEANING FUN

Check out ingenious ways to help get you motivated to tackle your home cleaning chores this spring

1. Make a plan

Before getting started, make a list of what you need to do and then bundle the more time-consuming tasks with the simple jobs. Everyone seems to despise one thing more than the rest, so whatever that task is for you, do it first and get it out of the way while you still have both the energy and the patience.

2. Cleaning games

Do you have a hard time getting your family to help clean? Turn tasks into games, sort of like the game show *Minute to Win It*. Nothing like a little friendly competition to get your kids motivated and distract them from what they're actually doing – cleaning. Make a race out of picking up toys, raking leaves, pairing up mismatched socks, or who can find the most money in the couch cushions.

3. Make a cleaning playlist

Open up the windows, turn on the speakers, and let your favourite songs take it away. Good music can make even the worst of tasks – yes, even cleaning the highest of windows – somewhat tolerable. Before you start your spring cleaning fun, take some time to make the best playlist of your life. Put those oldies that take you back to high school on there, and before you know it your house will be clean enough to even make your mom proud!

4. Use vodka

No, not for that... Vodka is a great disinfectant and a natural deodoriser. Use it to clean mould and mildew in the bathroom, to refresh fabrics and to clean jewellery. And if a good Moscow Mule cocktail is called for after the cleaning, go for it.

5. Turn tasks into a workout

If you don't already know, spring cleaning is an incredibly effective way to add more physical activity to your routine, get your body moving and get fitter, especially if you have let yourself go during lockdown. The key is to add more steps, more movement and more speed (that's right, more intensity) than what you're typically used to. For specific tips and tricks to shed calories, stretch and tone muscles, as well as dos and don'ts, check out WebMD's spring cleaning workout.

6. Give away what doesn't bring joy

Before you put on your cleaning overalls and get down and dirty, a good way to start is to bring out the junk, pile everything on the floor and sort it out according to category (e.g., books, clothes etc.). Then decide what needs to be tossed out. In her *New York Times* bestseller *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, Japanese lifestyle expert and decluttering diva Marie Kondo outlines a general rule of thumb in deciding what to save and what to toss. Ask yourself "Does the item spark joy

in my life?" If you answered in the affirmative, it's a keeper. For those possessions that no longer generate happiness, she advises that you acknowledge and appreciate their services and memories before donating or disposing of them. Ridding yourself of material clutter and tidying up your home in this manner will leave you feeling happy, lighter, relieved and like you've engaged in some good karma. Plus, donating the items to those in need is another boost for the soul.

7. Upcycle old clutter

Challenge yourself. Find clever ways to repurpose your old junk. There are tons of ideas on Pinterest and all over the Internet. Use old t-shirts to make pillows, rugs or even a headboard and old dishes to create something new.

8. Learn new shortcuts

Dreading and dodging spring cleaning because of the amount of time and elbow grease involved? Don't despair. Thankfully, there are several genius ways to make the process easier, quicker and even lighter on your wallet, using high school chemistry, a little common sense and what's already available at home. Do some digging online and look for trustworthy advice on intelligent and imaginative techniques, or 'hacks', for dusting, cleaning and organising every room in your house. Not only will you learn a new trick or two, the job will also be over before you know it.

9. Plan a party then use it as your incentive to clean

If having company is usually the best motivation to get you to clean, plan a party for the following weekend to spur you on. The party will be your reward and you'll feel great when your friends say "your house looks so good."

10. Use the opportunity to redecorate

The best thing about spring cleaning is the finished result, when your desk is de-cluttered, your windows are shiny and your floor is spotless. So, what better time than now to redecorate? While you are motivated, consider giving the walls a fresh, new coat of paint in a different colour. If you have some spare cash, splash out on new curtains or, if you're a woodworker, create some new shelves or a feature piece for the lounge wall.



Nothing like a little friendly competition to get your kids motivated

"One man's trash is another man's treasure."

– Yotam Ottolenghi



TEN GREAT IDEAS FOR YOUR WORKSHOP

DIY'ers and woodworkers are always looking for ideas to solve problems or simply for better ways of doing things. Here are ten problem solving ideas that you may find useful.

>> Willie Marneweck

1. Breaking the joint

Sometimes things just go wrong with a glue-up. Panels may end up out of square, wrong sides glued-up, etc. How can we break a joint and start over? Modern woodworking glues are extremely strong and fairly water resistant. Watertight glues such as Belcotan, Alcolin Ultra, etc. cannot be broken by the following method (toughies!). Ordinary cold glue joints, be it mortise and tenon, Dominoes, biscuits, etc. can be broken. Carefully pour boiling water onto the joint. Allow the water to creep into the joint, adding more hot water little by little. Try to find even the smallest opening and get some water in there. Carefully hammer and shake the items in the direction to open the joint and try to get a paint scraper or something else somewhere into an opening. By persisting you will find after a while the joint will start to give, more hot water and more prying and eventually the pieces will come apart.

Be careful with this method if the items are of chipboard or MDF board (medium density fibre board). Nonetheless, if the joint was made with 'biscuits' it can still be broken without much damage.

For cabinetry I prefer ordinary white glue. It gives more clamping time and joints are strong. Recently I cut about 20mm off a solid wood tabletop along the cross grain. To discard the strip, I tapped it on the rubbish bin to break it in to shorter lengths. None of the breaking points were at the glue joints!

2. Sponge holes and cylinders

If you need a cylindrical piece of foam sponge or want to cut a hole in a piece of sponge here is your solution. Holes or cylinders from say 6-40mm diameter or larger can be made, depending on your available hollow punches. The sponge may be fairly thick, say up to 50mm. I have not tested the limits of diameter or thickness of sponges.

Lay the sponge on a flat piece of plank which in turn is set down on a sturdy table. Put the hollow punch at the selected spot and push it straight down all the way. Hammer the punch hard down onto the wood. A cylinder comes out of the punch and in the sponge a similar diameter hole.

The picture shows a piece of 40mm thick sponge with holes/cylinders of 8/40mm diameter. Note how smooth the holes and cylinders come out.



3. Avoiding veneer and melamine tear-out

When cutting veneer board on a regular table saw across the grain, or melamine covered board (in any direction), irrespective of whether it is chipboard or MDF, one finds tear out directly below the cut. Panel saws have pre-cutting blades to avoid tear out, but these saws are only found in industry.

Instead of using a saw with pre-cutting, blade tear out can be avoided by supporting the wood fibres directly below the point where the blade teeth exit the board. Someone may say that he uses a zero-clearance blade insert for this purpose and still finds tear out, though to a lesser extent. The reason is that use of the insert starts leaving a slight gap.

Use a piece of 3mm thick MDF or Masonite as a sacrificial zero blade clearance. Because the 3mm thin board will be cut together with the board above it, zero clearance is obtained.

Cutting along the fence: The 3mm MDF should lie the length of the cut underneath the board where the cut is going to be made. I make use of strips of sacrificial MDF and often find it necessary to add balancing strips on one or both sides of the cut. Press firmly down during the cut.

Cutting with mitre guide: The principle is the same. Just keep the sacrificial MDF under the cut and press down during the cut. If you also do cross cutting with a sled, once again just lay the MDF under the cut.



Board with 3mm MDF cutting melamine under the cut



Melamine board turned over after cut (minimal tear out)

4. Organising sanding paper sheets

Sanding paper sheets always show an annoying tendency of curling up towards the grit side. No doubt there are many ideas on how to control it, e.g. a box with many slits to accommodate various grits. Here is a solution that is simple, effective and organises the sheets.

Use an ordinary lever arch file. Put into it a number of page separators, those with the tags on the right-hand side, as many of them as you have different grits of paper. Mark the tags with the grit numbers, e.g. 80, 100, 150, 220, 320 etc.

Now put up to 10 or less sheets neatly on top of another, grit faces down. Mark two spots on the top sheet about 10mm from the long edge, and 100mm from each side. The spots will correspond to the holes that a paper punch will make. Lay the stack of sheets on a plank which is on a firm surface. Punch two holes with a hollow punch of about 5 or 6mm diameter. Make sure you punch right through. This way you can quickly punch 50 or 100 sheets. File each grit of sheets below the tag indicating the grit.

When using this system, simply open the file, turn the 'pages' over the arch until the selected grit comes up. The file also keeps the sheets from curling up.



Filing of sandpaper sheets

5. Repairing cracks in wood

All woodworkers have on occasion found a solid wood plank with a crack at the end (check). One can simply cut the plank shorter to remove the crack, but what about the case where when cutting the cracked piece off, it is going to be too short? Instead of rejecting the plank and perhaps having to buy another, try this solution.

Gently force the crack wider open with a screwdriver, then thoroughly run some thin super glue into the crack (it runs into the crack like water). Quickly put a clamp or two across the plank and tighten until the crack disappears. After machining and sanding, chances are the crack will be unnoticeable and it will not reopen.



Badly cracked plank- crack forced open with screwdriver



Crack filled with super glue and clamped



Joint after gluing and planeing

6. Lengthening clamps

Sometimes when clamping up a woodworking project, one finds that the available clamps are all too short. To overcome this lack of long sash clamps and assuming you have enough shorter clamps, two can be joined end to end. Remove both loose heads and join the shafts at the suitable length with two M6 nuts and bolts. The hole spacings of different clamps normally coincide.

Pipe clamps can be lengthened by attaching another piece of pipe by using a pipe joint. The pipes are always standard $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Of course this will require that the pipe of the clamp be threaded at both ends and the extension must have one end threaded. It is a good idea to have all pipe clamps threaded at both ends with a couple of extension pieces at hand.



Joining two short sash clamps

7. Customising sanding discs

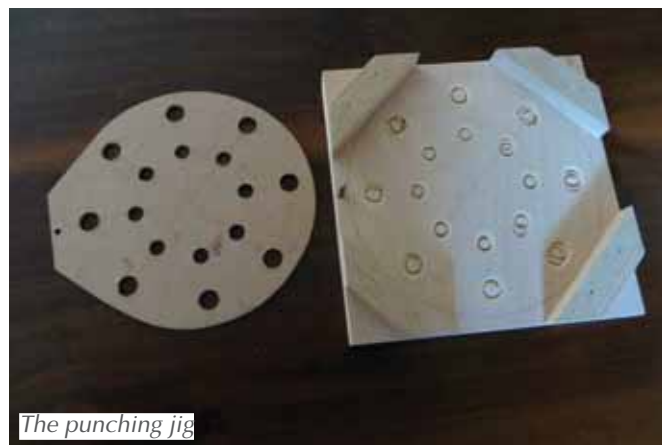
Here is another sanding paper solution. If you have a Festool 150mm diameter orbital sanding machine, such as a Rotex or any other Festool, you may find the proprietary sanding discs much more expensive than non-proprietary discs. Of course, the former is of outstanding quality, but on the other hand we all want to save a bit. The problem is that the substitute discs have no holes (if you can find it) or holes that do not correspond with Festool machines.

The solution is to make a jig as pictured. The 'index' plate that is used to space the holes is shown. This is made from 3mm

thick MDF. The base of the jig must be of hard wood such as oak sized 20 x 170 x 170mm. Note the 3mm diameter pin that locates the index plate. It keeps the index plate from revolving during punching. You will need two hollow punches, 7 and 10mm diameter. Up to ten sanding discs can be punched, grit side down, in one go.

Although preferable, it is hard to find discs without holes already punched. Don't let this put you off, just ignore these holes and do your own punching.

If you have an orbital sander other than Festool, you will have to work out the positions of the holes for the index plate to suit your machine.



The punching jig



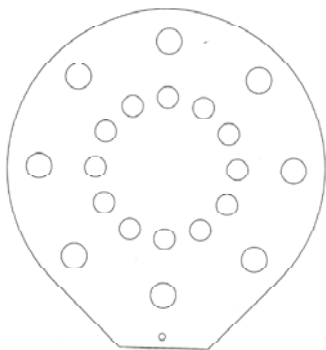
The punching jig ready for punching (10 discs ready)

8. Organising sanding discs

Continuing with sanding discs, here is a great way of storing and organising the discs in an orderly manner. Make sufficient disc separators as per picture from either 3mm MDF or cardboard. The circular part is 150mm diameter. Then make a stand using a wooden disc of 150mm diameter and say 20mm thick. Drill a hole in the centre to accommodate a dowel of 12mm diameter and say 200mm long. The picture shows the stand with a metal tube, but this is optional. Sanding discs seem to be sold with central holes of 15mm, so there is no need to punch these. You can now stack the various grits followed each

by a separator with the grit number written on the separator tag facing upwards.

To use this stand merely select the required grit discs, grab those above it along with the separator and carefully pull it off the peg. Take away the selected disc(s) and replace the stack.



Index plate drawing



Stand for 150mm sanding discs



Stand with sanding discs and separators

9. Repairing dents in wood

Mishaps occur in the workshop and we may find a prepared wooden item with a dent somewhere perhaps caused by a falling item. Say e.g. a heavy clamp is dropped by accident on a workpiece and leaves a dent too deep to be sanded out. You may have to consider making a replacement or perhaps filling the dent. Both options are unattractive!

The way out is at hand. Warm up your soldering bolt. Next drop a little water in the dent and allow to soak in. Bring up the tip of the hot bolt carefully directly above the dent and steam the water puddle. Don't overheat and burn the wood. After working the area carefully with heat, the dent will start rising up. Stop when it appears that the dent is not rising anymore. When the water is dry, a good sanding of the area will finish the job.



Dent in a piece of maple wood (peen hammered for illustration)

Dent after working with water and soldering bolt

Dent after hand sanding – slight spot still visible

Unfortunately, this remedy will not work if the injury caused some wood pieces to be removed, say by an accidental saw cut. The method only works where wood fibres have been compressed by the accident. It will, however, also produce positive results to a slight dent in veneer board. Even a turned wooden piece that has been dropped by accident can be repaired this way. The pictures show the before and after.

10. Organising your pliers

How about organising all your pliers? The picture shows a rack with 10 spaces for different pliers. The rack is made of a piece of wood 20 x 80 x 400mm (or longer depending on your number of tools). The holes are 20mm in diameter. These are drilled 30mm centre to centre along the length and spaced 40mm centre to centre front to back. It will be noticed that the holes accommodate various sized pliers and other two-legged tools.

The rack will of course need some kind of bracket to attach it to a wall or some other suitable place.



Rack for all sorts of pliers

"We can not solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."

– Albert Einstein

Easy-build large vegetable planter

Here's a vegetable planter that is strong, easy to build, and large enough for a number of garden projects.

Tools and supplies

- Bench mitre saw (recommended), or alternatively a tool for cutting wood such as a circular saw or jigsaw
- A small and large square, protractor and clamp
- Cordless drill
- 10mm wood drill bit
- 3m tape measure
- Scissors
- Staple gun
- Two trestles will help if you don't have a workbench.

Materials list

- 4 side panels; 220 x 1200mm
- 2 end panels; trapezoid 220mm wide, 536mm long edge, 198 short edge, 52.5° angle
- 2 end panels; isosceles triangle 198mm long side, 163mm short sides, 75° angle
- 4 legs; 900mm to centre of 37.5° angled cut end

>> Max Stone

For supplies, you'll need three 20 x 220mm 2.4m pine boards, two 32 x 67mm 1.8m pine boards, 28 6 x 50mm screws, two 10 x 100mm bolts with nuts, and four large washers. To finish, you'll need to sand the wood, apply a suitable weatherproof coating and line the interior with 2 x 1m porous landscape membrane. One 10kg bag of stones for bottom drainage and two bags of 60dm potting soil is sufficient to fill the planter.



This vegetable planter is easily adaptable to different sizes, with the one I designed based on regular pine timber available from many hardware stores in South Africa. It can be built in a couple of hours, using little more than a suitable wood cutting tool, a small protractor, and a cordless drill.

Cut the parts

This design relies on getting the most from the wood you buy with minimal wastage. The length of the planter is 1.2m, which is half the length of the 2.4m planks. The legs are 0.9m long, which is half the length of the 1.8m timber. There is no finishing required after you've cut the timber in half, but it's best to start with timber lengths that are equal, so that the side panels line up and the legs are all the same length.

If you are using a mitre saw, set the angle at 37.5° for cutting the legs and end panels. The 'V' of the planter is 75° once assembled. When cutting the legs, ensure you mark the 37.5° angle so that it passes through the halfway centre point of the timber, so that each piece once cut is the same length.

The two trapezoids and two triangle end panels can be cut from half a 2.4m 220mm board. Save the other half for your second planter. Mark the long edge starting 4-5cm from the corner, so you can use the short offcut for the small triangle. This will leave you enough for the second trapezoid and triangle. If you are using a mitre saw, to save you from resetting the saw, flip the board over for the angled cuts that run in the other direction.

Assembly

Starting with the legs, drill a 10mm hole 513mm from the top (square) end of each leg. Bolt each pair together with the feet the correct way around, and the gap at 75° . Don't tighten too much as you may need to make adjustments when fitting the sides. I made each pair of legs identical, with

the 'order' of each leg overlap the same.

For assembling the sides, it helps to have a couple of trestles to clamp and square everything. Starting with one of the top side panels, clamp it so it is flush with the top of the leg. Recess the leg 32mm (if an 'outer' leg) or 64mm (for an 'inner' leg), so that you have access to screw in the end panels later.

After positioning, clamping and squaring-up the top side panel, test the meeting point of the bottom panels. The bottom panels should meet at their edges, which provides a drainage



This vegetable planter is easily adaptable to different sizes

1



Assembly of the vegetable planter

2



Before finishing

3



After sealing

4

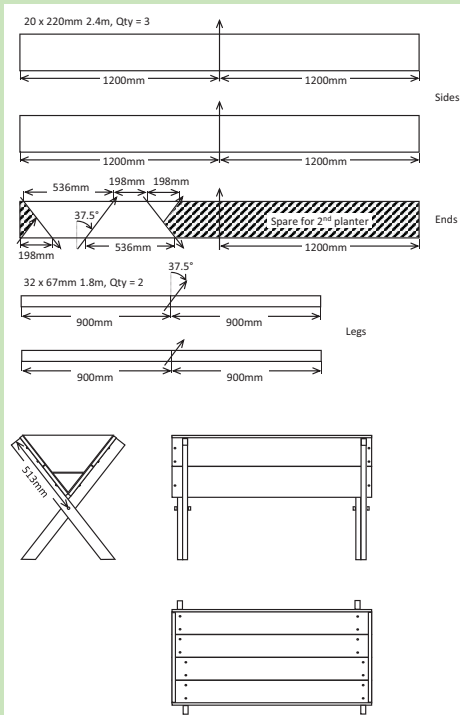


To create a boundary between the soil and the wood, line the planter with gardening membrane

5



For better drainage, fill the bottom with some stones



Measurements

slot along the base of the planter. Adjust the position of the top panel until the alignment where the bottom panels meet is correct, and remember to keep the legs at 75°. Use the small end triangle as a guide to set the leg angle. You may find that the top panels sit slightly low or proud of the top of the legs, depending on the final geometry of your particular assembly.

Screw the panels to the legs on one side first, then position, clamp and screw together the other side's panels. I used two screws to secure the end of each side panel, 50mm in from each edge, so a total of 16 screws are needed for the side panels. For neatness, countersink the pilot hole to get a flush screwhead. It can help to open the leg angle to 90° to give you access at the lowest point.

For the end panels, assemble the small triangle first, but don't screw it in tight, otherwise it is difficult to get the trapezoid top panel to sit flush with it. I found that I only needed one screw on each side of the triangle to secure

it, and two screws on each side of the top panel. Before screwing, I clamped both panels into place, pulling them down into the 'V' of the sides to get a good fit.

Once the sides are all on, you can go back and tighten the 10mm leg bolts, and you're done!

Finishing

After sanding down, apply several layers of water-based sealant to protect the pine from the elements. I used a sealant with a teak stain to give the pine a bit of colour. I added small rubber feet to the legs to keep the wood off the floor, as this is often the place that gets water damage.

To create a boundary between the soil and the wood, line the planter with gardening membrane, secured to the inner sides using a staple gun. For better drainage, fill the bottom with some stones. I found that I needed two bags of 60dm potting soil to get a good depth for growth.



BRIGHT IDEAS

Readers share their time-saving, space-saving or innovative ideas



My wheelchair



This is not a showpiece. It was not done by an expert. It was done without pre-planning. But it serves its purpose.

My wife's health is slowly deteriorating. I constantly have to adapt to new circumstances and the time to use a wheelchair has come. The space in the house, especially the bathroom, are too limited for a usual wheelchair. I needed something that could move like a crab – in all directions. If you can't get one, make one!



I had two broken chairs and scrap material. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. So, I rushed in and mounted the frame on a board and fixed the castors. Fixing the seat of the other chair on the frame, I realised I had a problem. Due to the overhang of the seat, the tipping point had changed. I had to extend the base and move the castors forward.

Then I started to figure out how to make the footrests. Somehow, they needed to flip up and

move out of the way. There were obstacles such as limited room space, where and how could I fix hinges on? Suddenly a bright idea entered my mind: make it slide forwards and backwards.

I still had to answer a few questions. What would stop the footrest from not sliding too far forwards or backwards? How would I keep it from flipping up if weight is applied on the front part? The end result works perfectly.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In the 'eating' I ran into another problem. The surface of our bathroom's tiled floor is so smooth that the chair runs away even if you just touch it. I needed a third hand to keep the chair steady.

Again, my mind rushed around for ideas. The idea of a handbrake won. By trial and error, I eventually made a handbrake that works very well. Planning as you go, is not the best way.

Chris Erasmus, De Doorns

A useful homemade garden fork



The photograph I have provided is of a garden fork which I have made from three pieces of metal as follows: Two pieces of 20mm conduit pipe, with the lengths of 700mm and 220mm, a piece of flat bar with the sizes 25mm x 6mm x 160mm for the fork. I cut a slot of 50mm at the bottom and I have

sharpened the teeth and have bent the flat bar 40mm forward for more leverage. The pieces were then welded together in a form of a 'T'.

The advantages of the fork are that it is long enough to use it in a standing position and strong enough to remove clumps of grass or obstinate weeds. It is also suitable for elderly

persons as they do not have to go on their knees to do the job.

You just have to push the fork into the roots, turn it around with the handles and the weeds will be out with roots and branches in a few moments.

Chris Mans, Klerksdorp



WIN!

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Please include your name, physical address and a contact number (office hours). You may also include a photograph (300kb) of your bright idea (where applicable).

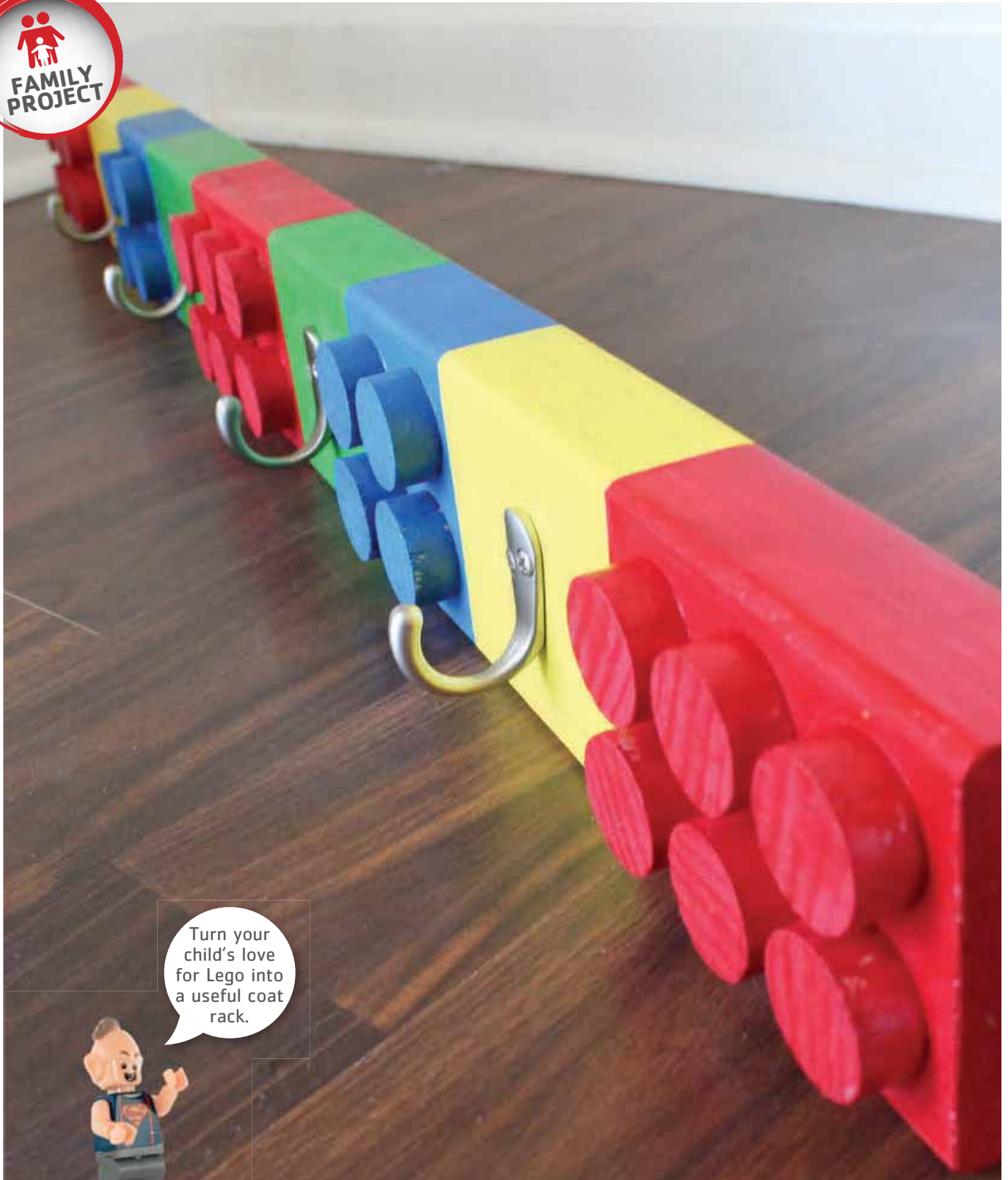
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Congratulations to Chris Erasmus who wins an Energizer Rechargeable Hybrid Pro Spotlight from Vermont Sales.

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of power tool accessories



Turn your
child's love
for Lego into
a useful coat
rack.



DIY Lego coat rack



Designed to look like Lego blocks, this colourful coat hanger is perfect for any little boy's bedroom – or spray in shades of pink, lilac and purple for a little girl's bedroom. This is an easy project to make that will only take about an hour, allowing for paint to dry.

Tools & materials

- Electric drill
- Mitre saw
- Sander
- Brad nailer
- Piece of wood for the rack
- Thick wooden dowel
- Coat hooks
- Wood glue
- Nail filler
- Acrylic paint
- Foam brushes
- D-rings
- Sealer

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: First, cut down your wood to the size you desire. The one we made is just less than a metre long, and we used a mitre saw. Use a sander to sand it smooth. Cut your dowel rod into around 10cm thick slices – we also used a mitre saw for this. Sand the edges as they will most likely be a bit rough or splintery after you've cut them.

Step 2: We decided to create the following pattern: long Lego (with six dowel pieces), coat hook, short Lego (with four dowel pieces), coat hook, long Lego, hook, short Lego, hook, long Lego. We didn't do much measuring at this point, just laid out the dowel pieces in the position we wanted them (leaving the 'hook' spots blank at first) and eyeballed it to make sure everything was even.

Step 3: Next, we dotted a little bit of wood glue on the backs of the dowel pieces and nailed them in place with a brad nailer. We made sure the brad nails sank into the wood enough that we could patch over them so they would not be visible. Using a putty knife and paintable nail hole filler, we camouflaged the brad nails. You can also choose to glue the dowel pieces in place, and when dry, secure them with a screw from the back.

Step 4: After the nail hole filler had dried, we began the process of painting the 'Legos.' This was the most difficult part of the whole project! We wanted nice, crisp lines, so we used painter's tape to divide the Legos. We did one colour at a time, allowed it to dry, then reapplied the tape to paint the Lego next to the one we had already painted.

If you are not too worried about the overall neatness, this is the part of the project where you can get the kids involved. Let them choose the colours and help with the painting. We used a combination of a foam brush and a small artist's paint brush to get in all of the nooks and crannies. Once dry, follow up with another coat, and when that is dry, use a sealer to protect the finish.

Step 5: Position the hooks where you want them and mark the holes with a pencil, then drill small pilot holes. We screwed the hooks on, and then attached D-Rings to the back to hang it on the wall.

This Lego coat rack is the perfect addition to a kid's room; it is ideal for little coats and backpacks to hang on – anything to encourage kids to hang up their gear after school is a bonus!



1



Planning out the project

2



The dowels which are used to create the Lego shape

3



Using a brad nailer to fit the dowels

4



Painting underway

5



Drilling pilot holes for the hooks

ASK OUR EXPERTS

Our panel of experts answer your questions on DIY problems

Lining for old spanner set



The plastic lining in my Gedore Socket Spanner set that I purchased in 1974 has disintegrated. I would welcome a DIY suggestion to make a new insert to hold all the components in an orderly fashion and stop them rattling around.
Duncan Geach, Alberton

Ed replies: If you do not have any luck through Gedore directly (you can contact them on 0861-433673), DIY options which we have seen used successfully include using a hot knife to cut foam to size, as well as using kid's air drying clay. Simply place the clay in the box ensuring it is thick enough to then 'push' the spanner/

accessories in. Carefully remove them and then allow the clay to dry for at least 24 hours or until hard.



Finishing a pine table top to give it an aged look

Hi there *The Home Handyman*. I have a newish pine table that is currently varnished and has an orange colour to it. I would like to age the table top by sanding the varnish but I am unsure how to finish it. The thoughts I had were to use caustic soda to age? Use vinegar and wire wool? Use wax? Or strip and do nothing at all and let it age over time? I am concerned about waxing it as I suspect the wax will need constant applications and like the idea of leaving it with nothing on? Does anyone have any experience of doing this and using the above methods alone or in combination? Thank you
Dan Stewart, by email

Ed replies: Although I have not tried this myself on a table, there are certainly ways to age its appearance. A quick Google brings up quite a few different techniques. One such site gives a few examples and their resulting appearance:
www.countrydesignstyle.com/this-old-wood

In terms of the wax, as you say, it will need re-coating regularly to maintain its appearance so there's a little work involved if you go down this route.

Leaving it bare will produce an appealing finish (I certainly like this look) but the surface will be left open to any spillages, water etc., that may cause damage.

If you do opt for ageing the surface, it's always a good idea to try it on an

inconspicuous area first to see what the final finish will look like and that you are happy with it.



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Our winning query comes from Duncan Geach who wins a subscription to *The Home Handyman* for a year.

How much rebar in foundation?

I am building a large (215mm) thick garden wall. The foundations are 32cm deep and 50cm wide. 17.5m long before turning a corner and continuing for another 12m.

I plan to use rebar due to the size of the foundation but could someone tell me what thickness I should be using and how many bars across the width should I use. The ground is firm clay and the lower section of the wall will be retaining 30-40cm of soil.

Total height of the wall will be 1.8m maximum.

Dylan Poe, Kempton Park

Ed replies: I have consulted with a general contractor, and according to him, that is quite an undertaking. I suggest you contact a

structural engineer for suitability on foundation depth.

Assuming your foundations will be deep enough to avoid the issues of clay expansion/contraction, I would suggest you use strips of 4/5mm weld mesh embedded within the concrete.

Where you have a retaining element you will need to increase the width of the foundations with the widest part on the retaining side.

You will also need an expansion joint on each side with stainless reinforcing bars in the mortar courses. I would repeat, you do really need professional on-site advice.



Best way of measuring opening for new exterior door frame

I am looking to replace an exterior door frame. What would be the best way to get suitable measurements because I'm planning to order online and I don't want to make a hash of it. Also, how much tolerance would there be given that I'm intending to paint the frame before it is fitted?

Jaco Hayworth, by email

Ed replies: Use a hammer and flat screwdriver and take off a piece of the external plaster at the sill height, both sides you should be able to see the brickwork. Use a spirit level and check the frame for plumb, and see if the frame is out, allow for the tolerance. Measure the internal plaster and check for the difference in measurement.

You may need an add on 20mm for the hinge side of the door, as the hinges are on the frame of the new door so allow for that. So, if the door for example is 900mm wide brick to brick, the door will be 870mm plus 20mm add on, allowing a 10mm tolerance for paint and the like.





UTILISE THAT WASTED SPACE IN YOUR HOME

The saying: "You can never have enough clamps," is known to most woodworkers. I am sure householders have a similar adage: "You can never have enough storage." Both apply to me.

>> Denis Lock

The move from a double-story house to a two-bedroomed retirement unit left me short of storage space. Thank goodness for my biscuit joiner (the subject of my July/August article): it allowed me to construct a number of storage additions without too much time and effort. Having realised my plight I started looking for wasted spaces.

The first wasted space was found in the built-in cupboard in the main bedroom. We no longer needed a lot of full-length hanging space and I fitted the six-drawer unit seen in photo 1 into the BIC. The painted carcass is 900mm wide, 550mm high and 500mm deep. It is made from veneered chipboard. The front edge of each component and the edges of the top have a 6mm solid wood edging to hide the ugly chipboard edges. Iron-on edging is banned from my workshop. The carcass and drawer components are built with butt joints reinforced with biscuits. The carcass has three biscuits per joint: a total of 18 biscuits. The drawers are each built with eight biscuits. That is a total of 64 biscuits!

The drawers slide on simple wooden runners attached to the carcass sides and divider. The drawers on the lady's side have a cut-out with glass fitted. These openings were pattern routed and are exactly the same size and shape. I have to guess which of three drawers my socks are in. As can be seen in photo 1 some 160mm of full-length hanging space remains on the left. This is sufficient for our needs as dressing gowns are hung behind the bathroom door. The drawer box does not butt up tight against the right side of the cupboard as there is a hinge in the way. I guess I could have cut a slot inside of the box. As it is the gap is an ideal place for storing those large X-ray envelopes.

The next wasted space I tackled was the cupboard under the kitchen sink. The developer had made no attempt to fit any sort of shelf (photo 2). The shelf I fitted is shown in photo 3. I deliberately did not make the shelf the full depth: it is 420mm deep versus the 580mm depth of the cupboard. This allows a few very tall items to be stood in the front of the base of the cupboard. You will agree that

my addition makes much better use of the under-sink space (photo 4). I estimate that I have increased storage by at least 60%.

The fitting of this shelf presented two major challenges. The first is that centre stile makes it impossible to fit a single full-length shelf. The second is that there is a lot of potential for a plumbing leak and the shelf must be easy to remove in order to gain access. The first problem was solved by using two half-width shelves resting on vertical supports. Patterns giving size and shape of these supports were made using a pair of scissors and some cardboard. The supports were made from 16mm melamine with a 6mm solid edging. To repeat: iron-on edging is banned from my workshop. Photo 5 shows the left- and right-hand supports. The left-hand support is more complex to cater for the electrical outlet for the dish washer. These two supports are simply attached to the cupboard sides with chipboard screws. The centre support is positioned by using two 8mm dowels let into the cupboard base (photo 5 LHS). The

bottom edge of the centre support was drilled to take 8mm dowels. Dowel points were then used to transfer the dowel positions to the cupboard base. Biscuits would have worked as well as positioning aids, but I decided it was easier to use a cordless drill inside the cupboard than a corded biscuit joiner.

A close look at photo 5 shows two biscuits on the top of the left and right support and four in the centre support. The eight biscuits are glued into position. It will also be noted that the centre support has been doubled in width at the top. This is because it has to support two shelf edges. The top half of photo 7 shows the underside of the two shelf pieces. Note the biscuit slots. The left shelf also has a cut out for the drainpipe: another cardboard template was used. The two shelves are tapped into place and held in position by the biscuits in the uprights (lower half of photo 7). The shelf pieces and the centre support can be removed (a few taps) in a minute or two. Full access is available for plumbing repairs. When the plumber is done, they go back just as quickly. Once again, my biscuit joiner was put to good use.

Shoes are often stored on some sort of rack in the bottom of a bedroom built-in cupboard. I had already used

that space for a drawer box. Putting shoes in drawers is not a good use of drawers so I had to come up with another plan. The passageway past the on-suite bathroom into the main bedroom was quite wide: 1300mm versus a 'standard' 1000mm. This leaves 800mm by 200mm of unused space behind the open door and 510mm by 300mm next to it (photo 7). The idea of vertical cubby-hole storage for shoes came to me. Would 510mm by 300mm of floor space be enough for such a unit? I built a partial prototype with some MDF and a couple of screws (photo 9). After experimenting with our existing shoes, I decided on the following cubby hole sizes: width of male shoe cubby holes – 240mm, width of female shoe cubby holes – 210mm, height 140mm for shoes and 110mm for slippers and slops. Neither of us wear boots or high-heel shoes so some larger cubby holes we not needed. The design I settled for had two columns (his and hers) each with six cubby holes (three 140mm high and three 110mm high). The cabinet was made from white melamine. The front of each piece was edged with 6mm red oak. Photo 10 shows the finished cabinet. It consists of fifteen pieces: a top, a base, two sides, five shelves and six dividers. The construction was simple butt joints reinforced with biscuits (72 of).



Drawers added to BIC



No shelf – wasted space



Shelf added



A lot more storage



Shelf supports – left and right



Shelf support – centre



Shelf pieces



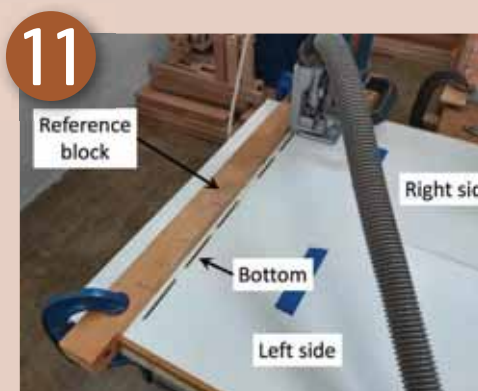
More wasted space



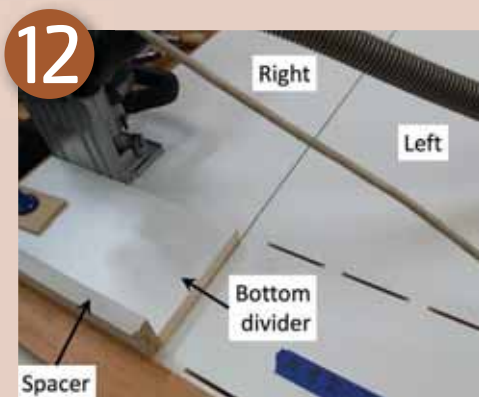
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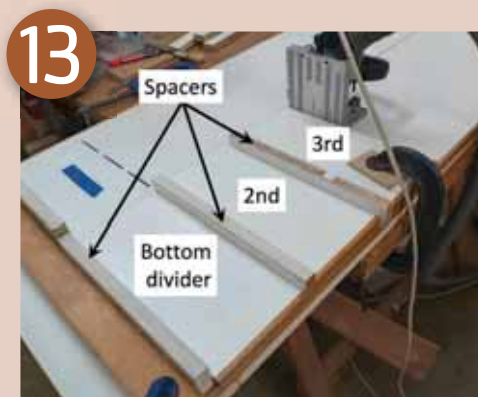
Finished unit



Biscuiting setup #1



Biscuiting setup #2



Biscuiting setup #3

That could be a lot of measuring and marking out. I will show you that it doesn't have to be.

My students all know that one of my philosophies is "Gauge don't measure." I use gauges, story sticks and clamped stops far more than I use a tape measure and ruler. The job started by ripping sufficient melamine to a width of 300mm (one measurement). Then I ripped and planed sufficient 6mm edging (two measurements). The edging, except for the top, was glued and trimmed (no measurements). I set a stop on my radial arm saw fence and crosscut the base and five shelves to 466mm (one measurement and one mental sum: $240 + 210 + 16$). The dividers needed two fence stop settings to crosscut at 140mm and 110mm (two measurements). The sides were not cut to length at this stage: I will explain why later. All joints had three biscuits and I made a story stick from 6mm MDF to avoid repetitive measuring and marking of 72 biscuit slots. The story stick was 306mm ($300 + 6$) long and had biscuit centre marks at 65mm from each end and one at 153mm (four measurements, one simple sum and one simple division). A 16mm MDF divider positioning gauge 306mm by 240mm was also made (two measurements). That is a total of twelve measurements and three bits of arithmetic. Not a lot for a job this size.

One of the faces of each piece of melamine was marked with a piece of blue painters' tape. This mark shows which face must be visible (up) when biscuiting the edge(s) and which face must be biscuitied. The bottom and shelves were all marked on the top. The sides were marked on the inside. The dividers were marked on the left face. Finally, the top was marked on the

underside. Take your time on this step: an error will land you in trouble. As noted in my last article I always use the base of my biscuit joiner as the reference surface. I never use the machine's fence.

Photo 11 shows the two side pieces being biscuited to take the bottom and shelves. The bottom edge of each is butted up against a reference block and clamped in place. The biscuit positions were transferred (see the marks on the reference block) from the story stick mentioned earlier. No measuring. The base of the biscuit joiner is pushed against the reference block to make the cuts. Photo 12 shows the cutting of the slots for the first shelf. The spacer is cut from an offcut of the melamine used for the project: it is the exact thickness of the bottom. The bottom drawer divider is butted against the spacer and clamped in place. The biscuit positions were transferred from the story stick to the top edge. The base of the biscuit joiner is pushed against the divider to make the cuts. No measuring. Photo 13 shows the steps repeated another two times to cut the slots for shelf numbers two and three. I didn't photograph the identical steps to cut the slots for shelf numbers four and

five. Biscuit slots for the base and five shelves without a ruler in sight. Having cut the biscuits for shelf five another spacer was added, and the sixth divider added. A mark on the sides in line with the top of the sixth divider gave the length of the sides. Instead of mental (or calculator) digital arithmetic $((6 \times 16) + (3 \times 140) + (3 \times 110))$ I performed analogue arithmetic. My arithmetic is a lot more precise than yours. Who says the melamine is exactly 16,0mm thick. Who says the dividers were cut at exactly 140,0mm and 110,0mm. The exact fits seen in Photo 10 were achieved without any adjustments after the initial cuts.

Photo 14 takes us back to the start of the article: "You can never have enough clamps." The exact fits I have just claimed makes assembly a lot easier. I hope that I have convinced you to give up your love affair with your tape measure, ruler and calculator. Start gauging and transferring.

Not only did the new cabinet (photo 15) provide easily accessible storage for our shoes it also provided a new home for one of our ornaments. The duck is really pleased to have his own dedicated display space.

14



Assembling

15



Unit in use



ABOUT DENIS:



Denis Lock runs a woodworking school and shop. During the COVID-19 pandemic he will be offering online courses. He can be contacted at denis.lock@tacazze.co.za or 082-267-5948. Visit his website at www.routingwithdenis.co.za
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WOODWORKER'S CORNER

Sharing techniques, ideas and a love of wood

Product review: Howard leaders internationally in quality wood preserving and restoring products, have a solution for all wood treatment

Preserving any original wood finish while restoring an antique can mean preserving the authenticity and value of an original. Conversely, stripping the existing wood finish can mean making it less antique, and can literally translate into stripping the value of the piece.

In 1969, founder Douglas G. Howard set out to solve this dilemma as he was unable to find an answer at his local hardware store, he went to work in his garage to create his own range of quality products. Today Howard are the international leaders with the widest range of tested and proven quality wood preserving and restoring products.

The problem was how can you eliminate blemishes in wood finishes and restore the original colour and lustre without removing any of the existing finish. This Howard achieved creating a product that would be much more than just a surface treatment, yet nothing like a stripper or a refinisher. They developed a formula that could restore the surface, penetrate the finish with stain and evaporate before the finish was removable. The end result was Restor-A-Finish, Howard's first success in his entire line of wood care products. For over 40 years, Howard's Restor-A-Finish has been a standard choice in the antique industry worldwide.

Almost any existing wood finish, from Birdseye Maple to Jacobean, can be closely matched using one of or a

combination of the nine available finishers, these are available in a Neutral, Maple-Pine, Golden Oak, Walnut, Cherry, Mahogany, Dark Walnut, Dark Oak, and Ebony Brown covering all the popular wood types.

It is the stain in Restor-A-Finish, combined with its unique ability to penetrate without removing any of the existing finish that enables anyone to easily and permanently eliminate blemishes in wood finishes. This being scratches, oxidation, white heat rings, water marks, smoke damage, sun fade, etc making them quickly disappear. Kitchen cabinets can be successfully restored in hours instead of days. An old garage sale piece can be transformed into attractive furniture in just minutes.

Technically speaking, Restor-A-Finish amalgamates with the finish just enough to allow the stain in the product to pass through the finished surface. The solvents evaporate before any of the existing finish is removed, restoring the original colour and lustre while blending out the blemishes and minor scratches. The Restor-A-Finish concept is to permanently revive and restore the original colour and lustre in one step, without removing any of the existing finish. Most wood finishes that seem to need a complete refinishing job can be completely restored in a few minutes with this simple wipe-on, wipe-off process.



The Howard range

With so many years of success in the antique industry, Howard's Restor-A-Finish has passed the test of even the most scrutinizing of wood care experts. The Howard operation went on to create a quality range of wood caring products which are now utilised internationally joining the now famous Restor-A-Finish is the new Finish Fixer, Feed N Wax, Orange & Lemon Oil, Butchers Block Conditioner, Cutting Board Oil, Citrus Shield, Premium Paste Wax, Leather Conditioner Cream, Pine-Ola copper brass and silver polish, Sun Shield, Restor A Shine, Polishing Compound, Clean A Finish, Leather Cleaner, Granite & Marble Cleaner, Stainless Steel Cleaner, Upholstery Cleaner and Wood Cleaner and Polish.

For more information on the product range and their features, visit www.vermontsales.co.za

Router courses move online



Like many other businesses Denis Lock must move online. He successfully ran his first online course *Fundamentals of woodworking joints* on June 27.

Two further online courses have been scheduled. These are *Understanding wood* and *Dealing with wood movement*.

Details are available on his website: www.routingwithdenis.co.za

..... Cave-like wooden hotel features a thousand pieces of hand-cut spruce



More than 1 100 hand-cut spruce wood panels line the walls of Greece's Wooden Cave hotel, located 3 600 feet above sea level off the slopes of the country's Mount Kyllini.

Each suite is split in half design-wise. The rear-half is primarily made of curved wood and is made to feel like a protective outer shell – similar to the walls of a cave. The other half is designed to be more inviting, featuring a more linear and traditional design.

“This division intends to create a clear distinction between the hard, ‘protective’ shell and the curved, ‘inviting’ interior, reminiscent of the form of a cave that has been used as a refuge and a haven throughout human existence,” the architects say.

Tenon Architecture used an algorithmic program to plan the layout of every spruce piece. The wood was then cut to size on-site by the studio's lead architects Apostolos Mitropoulos and Thanos Zervos. Pieces were then put together to make 55 modules, which were shaped and smoothed by hand.

“The absence of any digital fabrication methods in the construction resulted in the adoption of a more sculptural approach towards the final form,” the architects continued.

Many of the room's other elements, like the cupboards and floor, were built with knotless pinewood.

..... The history of woodturning

What we know about the historic craft of woodturning is limited because of the nature of wood, with its fibres prone to rotting. Early lathe workers would use their bare feet to hold the cutting tools in place while using their hands to power the lathe.

Our first knowledge of bowls and cups being made through woodturning date from between 500 and 1500 AD. This comes from excavated shipwrecks such as the Oseburg burial ship and the Mary Rose.

As early as the 1500s, a separate fly wheel would power the lathe, but as time progressed the machine adapted to use power sources such as water, electricity and steam.

With an understanding of some basic woodturning techniques and the correct equipment, it is possible to produce anything from traditional wooden items to avant-garde creations.

- **Spindle turning:** This is the most common and basic technique in wood turning, and is the simple process of turning the spindle once mounting the wood between the head and tailstock of the lathe. There are several types of spindles that can be used, chosen according to individual applications.
- **Decorative spindle turning:** This differs to normal spindle turning as it includes roughing, sizing and smoothing stocks of wood. This process needs a more elaborate form of

cutting which can make more intricate grooves as well as curves and shapes.

- **Segmented turning:** This turning method involved several pieces of wood taken together to form a wood blank. Every segment of the wood is glued together before turning. The segmented turning process can create some of the most exciting formations and patterns.
- **Faceplate turning:** This single fluid technique differs to spindle turning and allows much more freedom. A faceplate is a circular metal plate which fixes onto the end of the lathe and can help to hold and save time.
- **Bowl turning:** An experienced turner can use a bowl gouge to get the required result. This technique requires a gouge bevel held on a wood blank and transformed into a bowl shape. With the help of scraping tools, it is possible to create the perfect bowl.
- Alternative techniques include eccentric turning, therming, green turning, ornamental and more.



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Finding motivation

About Annalien:

Annalien started her career at the *SABC* on *50/50* before moving to Germany after she met her husband. Later, they returned to South Africa and she took on various freelance projects, eventually getting hooked on DIY. Annalien was part of the team on *The Home Channel's Get It Done!* series.



>> Annalien Grensemann

After all the months of lockdown and watching as my house turned from an artistic and interesting home into practical areas of extra 'offices' and a 'gym' for my virtual Dance Barre classes, I realised my home had become a house that was functional, but a real mess... Board games we had rediscovered were stacked in huge piles on the dining room table and electrical cables curled from the inverter throughout the house like snakes so we were prepared for load shedding.

I am a stickler that everything has its place and all areas should be organised. But strangely, I am just letting go and I am wondering where my motivation has gone? It's not only my home, as I battle every morning with the question of why should I put make-up on? Why should I not wear my comfortable tracksuit? Even my dogs are tired of looking at it...

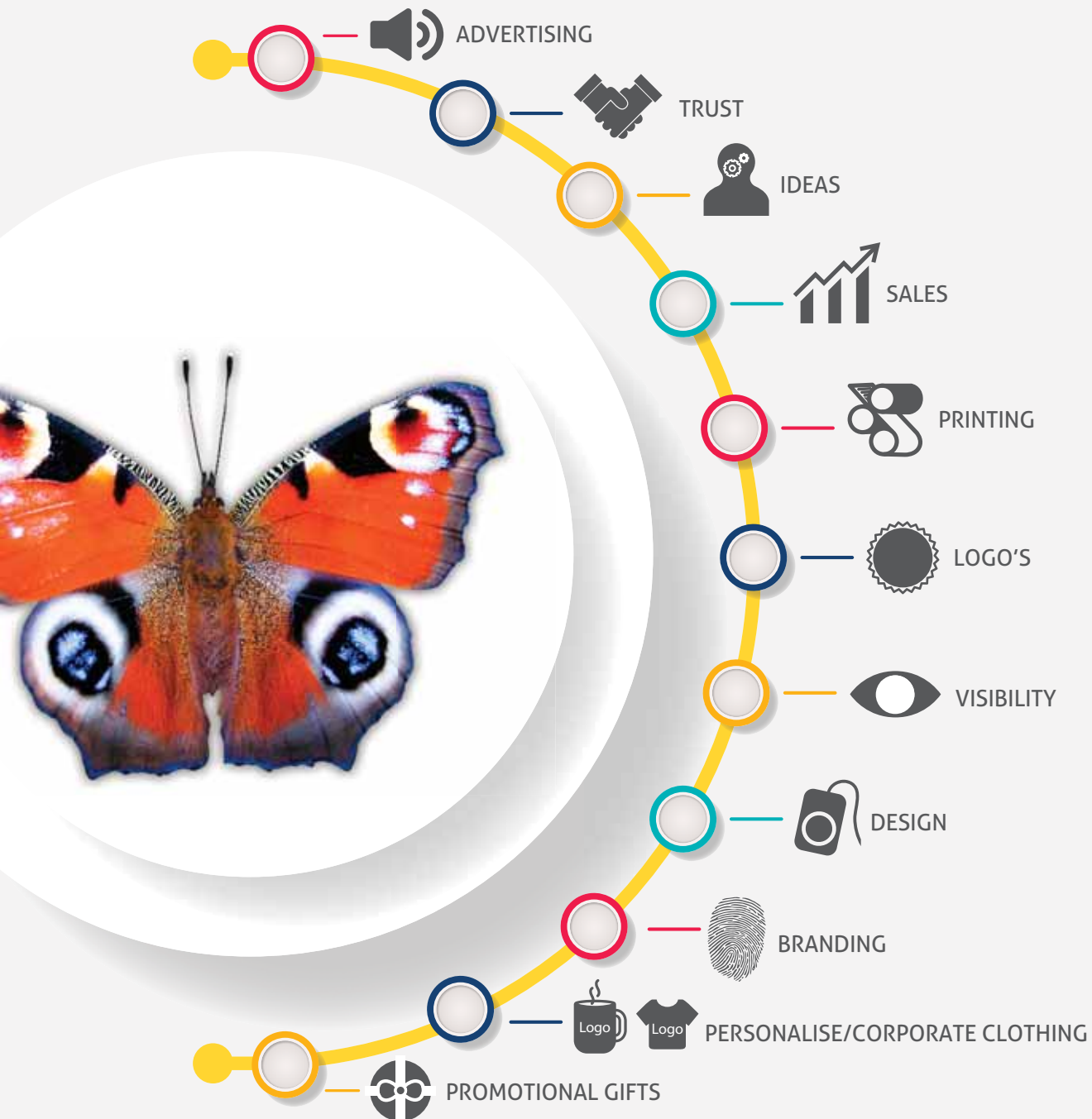
All this sounds very negative, but is it? While doing a bit of introspection, I found that this strange time of lockdown has pushed me into rediscovering what is really important in life. While we are wearing our masks to stay safe, at the same time we are also ridding ourselves of those 'society masks' of keeping up with the Jones's. I am sure you have also realised that your health, family, and true friends are precious and that they don't

mind about your make-up, your house or fashion sense. One has always known these values, but it never really hit home, until now. So, letting go has been a huge learning curve for me these last five months!

Yet there are things that will have to get back to normal and that brings up one of my biggest concerns: How am I going to get my mojo back?

Mel Robbins has a wonderful and simple way of tricking your brain. It works amazingly for a procrastinator like me. You start a countdown from 3,2,1 and then you just get up and start with whatever you have been postponing. You have to count backwards like the blast-off from the Space X launch, because there is nothing after 1, only the blast-off that lifts your bum from the couch. I do it with my DIY and crafts as well. Once you have started, the mojo is there, and the energy and passion arrive immediately. I am sure we will be amazed at our own creativity and love for life when we start living to the full again, visiting our families and our friends, hugging and laughing together. What a lovely picture to look forward to.

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