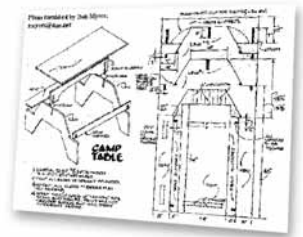


Collapsible PICNIC TABLES

by Allan Yates



When we needed a set of tables for the Voyageur Council Cub camp, *Mufferaw Stomperee*, we decided to construct a set that would do us proud. No picnic tables were provided at this camp, so we took this as an opportunity to make something that would last for many years.

Many groups have built the collapsible picnic tables that are constructed from a single sheet of plywood. The standard plan is widely available on the internet. We found an improved plan at www.familyfun.go.com/deco-rating-ideas/building/feature/famf0502_proj_pictable/. The key difference is that all the corners are rounded for a more elegant finish. They also give instructions for a carrying clip (which we don't actually use). Complete and easy to follow plan directions can be found on the Family Fun web site address listed above.

When building items for use by a Scouting group, close attention needs to be paid to the environment in which they will be used. These types of items are generally used outdoors, left out in the rain, transported a lot, and often dropped by eager little hands. To ensure stability and resistance to warping, we chose 3/4 inch signboard rather than the typical spruce plywood. This is the same material used for highway signs. It is waterproof and the faces are covered with resin impregnated kraft paper to give a smooth surface for painting. Look for it at specialty plywood suppliers.

Templates Aid Assembly

Most people build these types of tables one at a time, adjusting each piece as they go to get a good fit. The prob-

lem is then that the parts aren't always interchangeable requiring labeling each piece. Assembly becomes a lesson in frustration. We overcame this problem by first constructing templates of all the components using 1/4 inch hardboard. A router ensured all components were the identical size and shape. Great care needs to be taken with the templates to ensure their accuracy. Allowance also needs to be made for the diameter of the router bit (we used a 1/4 inch carbide bit for the template), so all templates are a little smaller than the final components. This method means that all pieces are the exact same size, so they are all interchangeable.

Once the templates were completed, all the pieces were roughly cut out with a jig saw. Clamping the appropriate template to each piece in turn, we cut it out using a straight pattern following bit. Don't try to do this step without the rough cutting first; your router bits will break!

All edges were routed with a roundover bit and touched up with sandpaper, leaving no edges to splinter. Wood filler was used in any voids showing in the edges. All pieces received a coat of oil primer and two top coats of oil paint. Oil paint was used for its resistance to water. Our group colours of red and yellow made the tables really stand out.

The tables are the perfect size for Beavers and Cubs. Scouts don't really need tables, but if they did, taller gable ends would be beneficial.

The end result was a set of picnic tables that are both a joy to use and a pleasure to look at. Don't throw away the templates; they can be used in the future to make additional tables identical to the first set. X

- Allan Yates is the group chair and part time Cub leader with the 1st Merrickville Scout Group. He can often be found puttering in his workshop when not out Scouting. Contact Allan via the groups web site: www.1stmerrickville.ca.



Photos: Allan Yates

The finished product.



This table is perfect for our camping trips.