

Planter Fountain

Combine water and plants for a beautiful outdoor accent BY DAN CARY



This freestanding fountain was featured in the June/July 2010 issue of *HANDY* (see “Simple Water Fountains,” p. 48). It combines the benefits of a water feature and a planter box to provide the perfect focal point for a deck, a patio or even a large balcony. You could also tuck it into a small garden and surround it with plants.

Building this fountain couldn't be much easier. Most of the parts are dimensional lumber that is simply cut to length (see the Cutting and Material Lists at the end of this story and the Planter Fountain Drawing). There's no fancy joinery, and all of the parts are fastened with screws or brad nails.

The cedar-clad frame conceals an inexpensive 2 x 3-ft. utility tub (\$10 at most home centers) that acts as the reservoir. The spout is a 12 x 12-in. tile that is attached to a wood frame. The completed fountain is relatively lightweight, making it easy to dismantle and relocate or transport for off-season storage. Here's how to build it step-by-step.

Prefinish the siding boards

It's easiest to finish the siding boards before they are attached. Place the boards on a worktable or sawhorses and apply a coat of exterior finish to all sides of the boards. Apply at least three coats of finish, following the manufacturer's instructions for application and drying times. Set the boards aside after the final coat has cured.

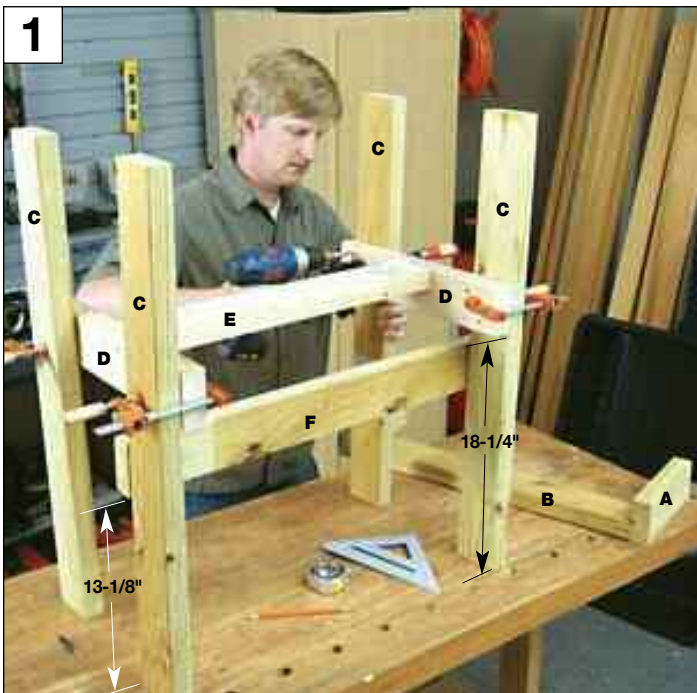
Make the frame

The side panels are supported by two simple frames: a front-leg frame and a planter frame. These frames are made of pressure-treated 2x4 lumber. Cut the frame pieces (A, B, C, D, E and F) to length. Refer to the illustration to position each part, and assemble the frames using 2-1/2-in. exterior-rated screws such as deck screws (photo 1).

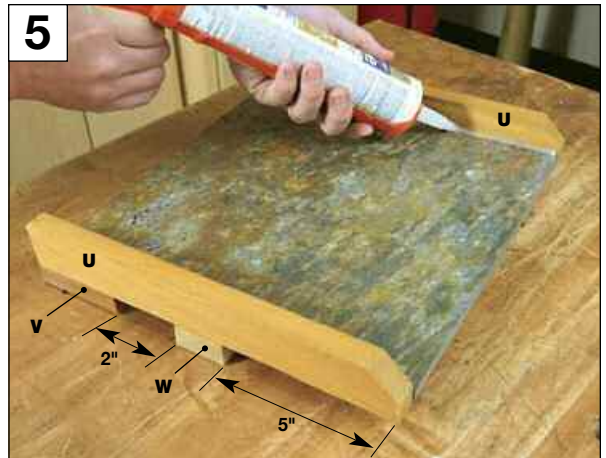
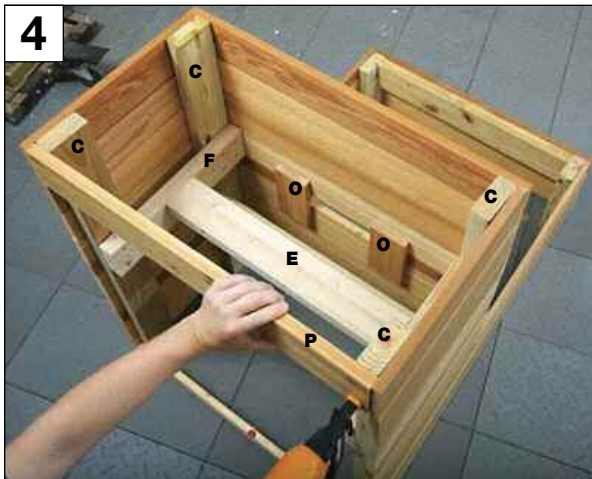
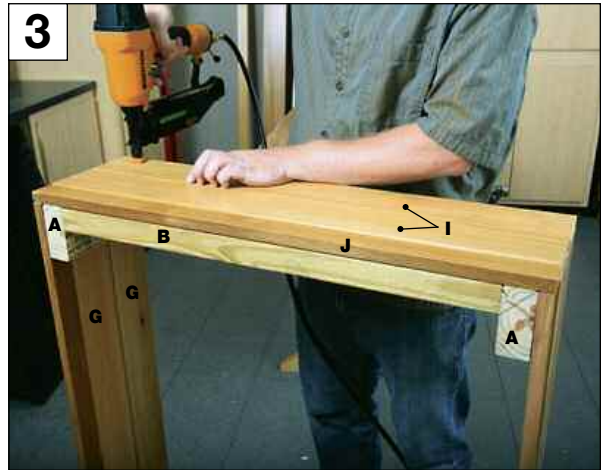
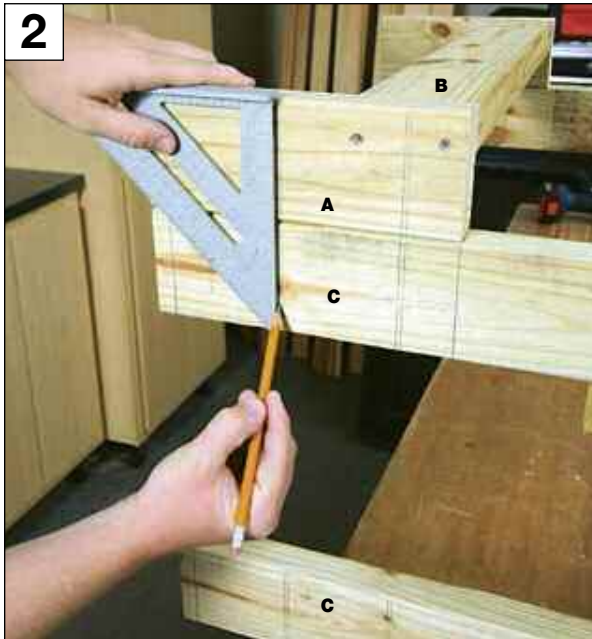
Attach the siding boards

Place the planter frame on its back on a worktable; then place the front-leg frame on top of the planter frame, with the bottom of the legs flush. Mark layout lines across the sides of the legs to designate the top and bottom edges of the siding boards. These lines will help to ensure that the boards are attached at the same heights on both frames.

Start with the location of the narrow pond siding (H). The top of this board should be flush with the top of the front legs. Continue to mark the board edge positions (photo 2), leaving 1/8-in. spaces between boards. Adjust the spacing as necessary as you get closer to the top of the planter so that the top planter-siding boards end up flush



PHOTOS BY DAN CARY AND TRACY WALSH
ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE ANDERSON



with the tops of the legs.

Cut the siding boards (G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N and P) to length. Seal the cut ends with finish. The end grain will be exposed after construction, so continue to apply a few additional coats to the cut ends as they cure.

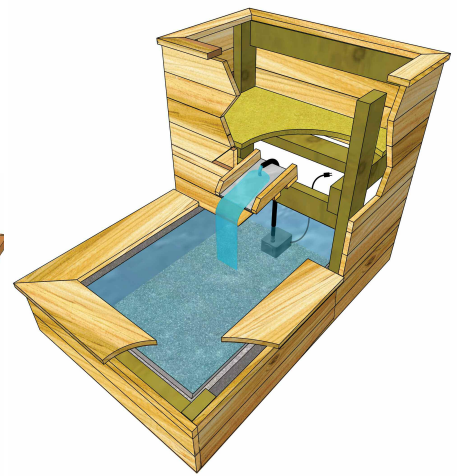
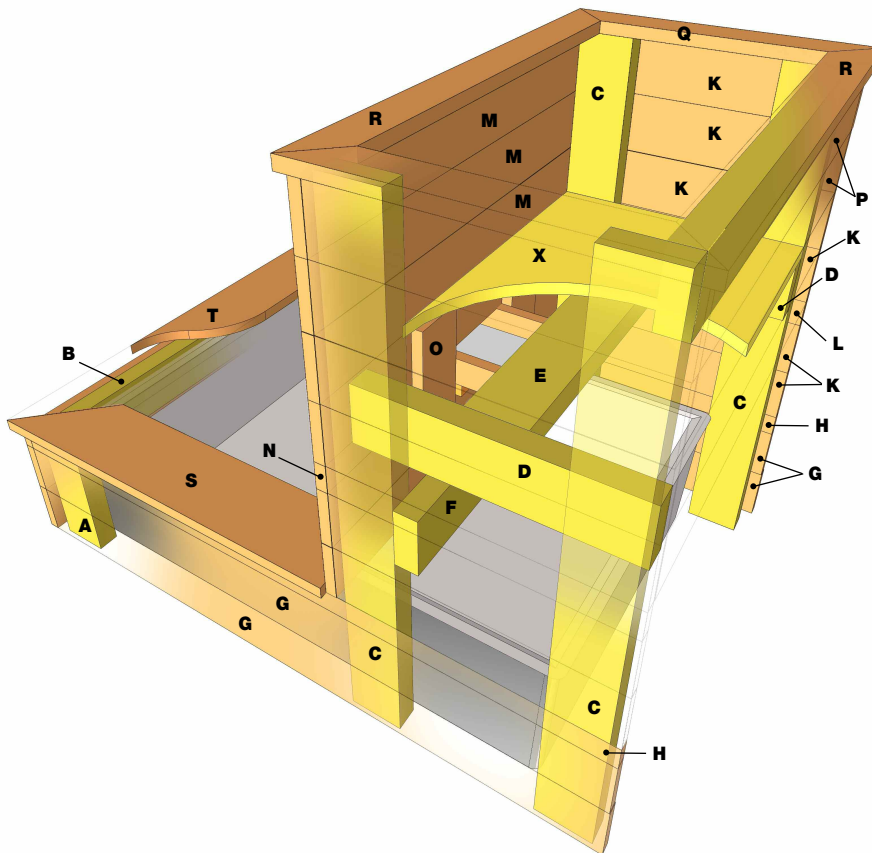
Attach the pond siding to the frames with exterior glue and 2-in. brad nails. Use the layout lines to position each piece on the frames (photo 3). Next, attach the planter-siding boards. You must attach the two planter-front backers (O) to support the inside edges of the narrow planter-front siding pieces (N). The last siding boards to attach are the planter backs (P; photo 4).

Finally, cut the planter cap pieces (Q and R) and pond cap pieces (S and T). Both ends of the planter cap pieces are miter cut to 45 degrees. One end of the pond side cap pieces and the pond front cap piece are miter cut to 45 degrees. Attach the cap pieces with glue and 2-in. brad nails. Reinforce the pond-cap sides where they meet the planter by driving a screw through the inside face of the planter side and into the end grain of the pond-cap side.

Make the tile spout

The spout for this fountain is a 12 x 12-in. tile supported by a wood frame. Tile dimensions vary slightly, so first measure your tile and then cut the waterfall-frame pieces (U, V and W) to fit the tile. Fasten the waterfall supports to the waterfall sides with 2-in. screws. Then attach the tile to the supports and seal the seams between the tile and the wood sides with silicone (photo 5).

CEDAR PLANTER FOUNTAIN



MATERIALS LIST

- 2x4 x 8-ft. pressure-treated pine (3)
- 1x2 x 8-ft. cedar (3)
- 1x3 x 8-ft. cedar (1)
- 1x4 x 8-ft. cedar (7)
- 1x6 x 8-ft. cedar (1)
- 3/4 x 15 x 25-1/2-in. exterior plywood
- 2-1/2-in. exterior-rated screws
- 2-in. exterior-rated screws
- 2-in. brad nails
- Exterior wood glue
- Exterior wood finish
- 2 x 3-ft. utility tub
- 12 x 12-in. tile

CUTTING LIST

All parts cedar except as noted

KEY NO.	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS
A	2 Front legs, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 9-3/8 in.
B	1 Front crosspiece, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 25-1/2 in.
C	4 Back legs, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 32-3/4 in.
D	2 Planter side supports, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 16 in.
E	1 Planter cross-support, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 22-1/2 in.
F	1 Waterfall support, pressure-treated pine	1-1/2 x 3-1/2 x 30 in.
G	4 Wide pond-siding pieces	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 43-3/4 in.
H	2 Narrow pond-siding pieces	3/4 x 1-1/2 x 43-3/4 in.
I	2 Wide pond-front siding pieces	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 30 in.
J	1 Narrow pond-front siding piece	3/4 x 1-1/2 x 30 in.
K	6 Wide planter-siding pieces	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 16-3/4 in.
L	2 Narrow planter-siding pieces	3/4 x 1-1/2 x 16-3/4 in.
M	6 Wide planter-front siding pieces	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 30 in.
N	2 Narrow planter-front siding pieces	3/4 x 1-1/2 x 11-1/2 in.
O	2 Planter-front backers	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 8-1/2 in.
P	3 Planter backs	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 28-1/2 in.
Q	2 Planter-cap sides	3/4 x 2-1/2 x 17-3/4 in.
R	2 Planter-cap front and back pieces	3/4 x 2-1/2 x 30-1/2 in.
S	2 Pond-cap sides	3/4 x 5-1/2 x 27-1/2 in.
T	1 Pond-cap front	3/4 x 5-1/2 x 31 in.
U	2 Waterfall sides	3/4 x 1-1/2 x * in.
V	1 Waterfall back support	3/4 x 3-1/2 x ** in.
W	1 Waterfall front support	3/4 x 1-1/2 x ** in.
X	1 Planter shelf, exterior-rated plywood	3/4 x 15 x 25-1/2 in.

*Length equals the tile depth.

**Length equals the tile width plus two times the thickness of the waterfall side (U).

Finally, create a drip edge under the tile by applying a thick bead of silicone along the bottom front edge. This prevents the water from creeping back underneath (a process known as capillary action) so that it falls uniformly off of the tile.

Install the fountain

The fountain frame must be level for the water to fall evenly off the entire front edge of the tile. Level the ground under each leg and the reservoir (utility tub). The tub slides easily into position from behind the frame. Partially fill the tub with decorative rocks, mounding them along the sides and under the planter's front wall to help conceal the tub sides and the pump.

Install the pump in the back of the reservoir and attach a piece of tubing that is long enough to reach the tile. Secure the tubing to the top of one of the waterfall side walls so that the water exits the tube near the middle and back of the tile. Adjust the tube position and pump flow so the water falls as you like. All that's left is to place a couple of 10- or 12-in.-dia. pots with the plants of your choice in the planter. ♦