

Hold Carvings Securely



A plywood base and simple accessories lock down a variety of pieces in perfect position

BY
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For the aspiring wood-carver and professional alike, a carving station is an uncomplicated way to hold a workpiece steady as you carve. The use of a large board with various ways to grip the work is nothing new, but this smaller version is easy to make and extremely versatile. You need only a piece of smooth and dense plywood, 14 in. by 28 in., and scraps of plywood and hardwood.

Different sides of the board adapt to different tasks. One side has fences and various filler strips that hold irregularly shaped workpieces in place with the help of a pair of wedges or cams. The flat side can hold a flat-backed blank screwed in place through the plywood. Mark the length and width centerlines in pencil on the flat side because they will come in handy for

WEDGES WORK WONDERS

Using opposing wedges as clamps is a technique familiar to many woodworkers. In an application such as the one shown here (right), cut the wedges from stock thicker than the 3/4-in. fence material to facilitate removal.

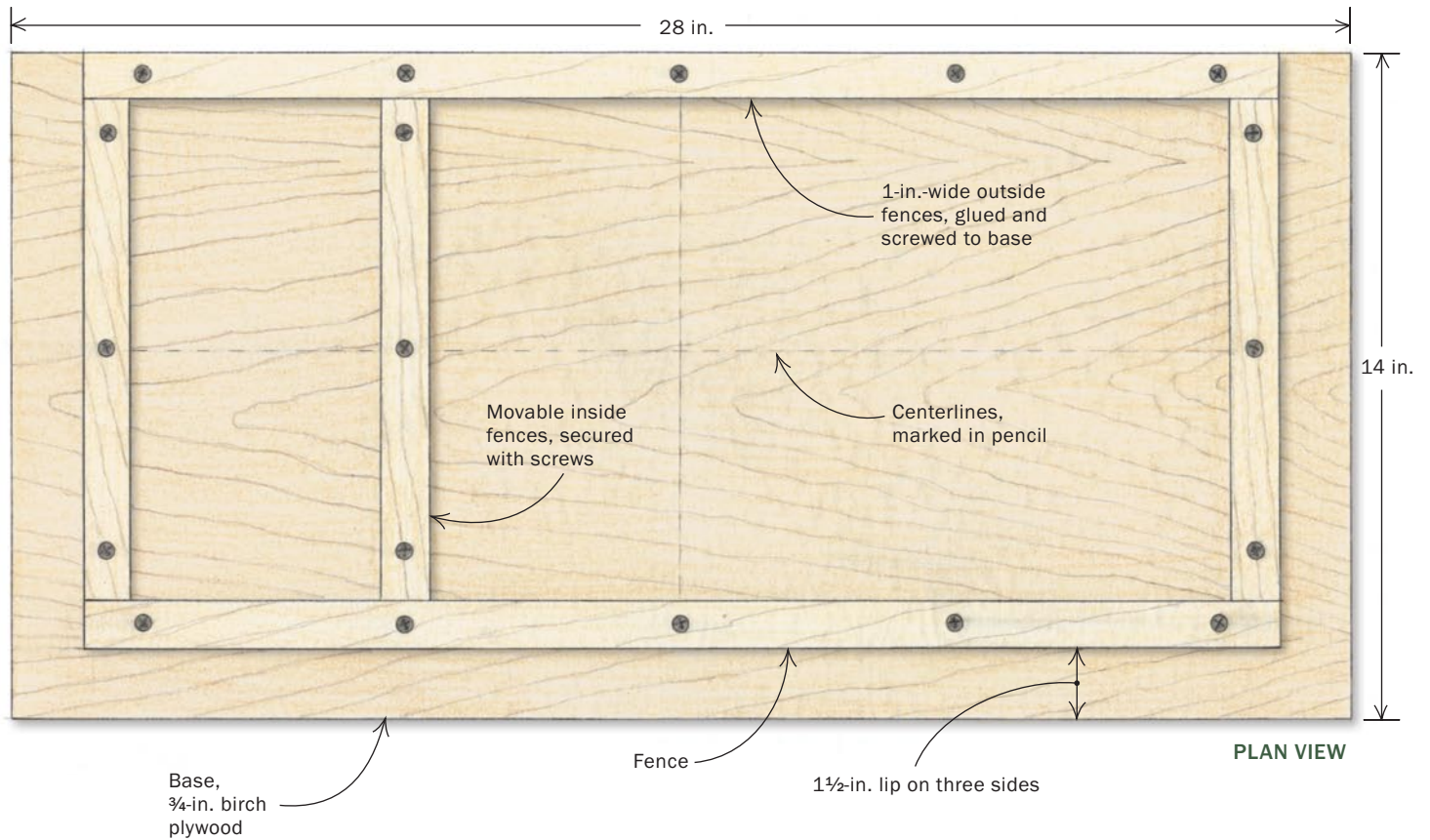


A PORTABLE CARVING STATION

The simplicity of this carving station, made from scraps of plywood and lumber, belies its versatility. With a variety of wedges, cam clamps, and standard shop clamps, you can use the carving station to secure a workpiece of any shape to a bench or table.

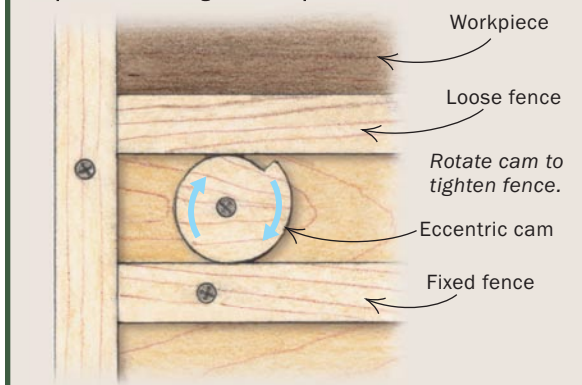
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Visit our Web site to watch an audio slide show on using Wilbur's jig.

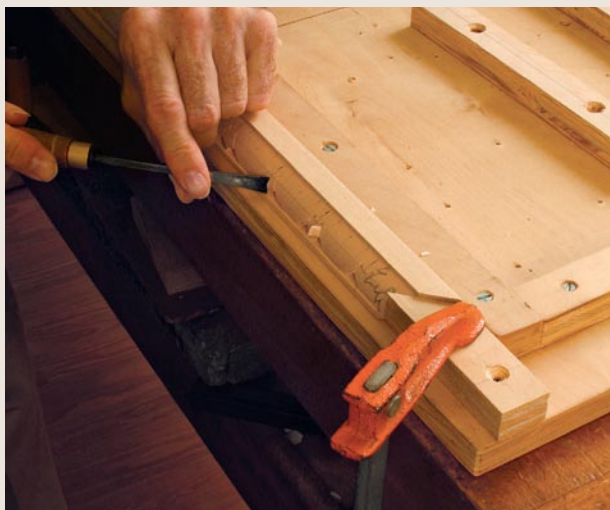


ECENTRIC CAM CLAMPS ARE QUICK AND STURDY

Wilbur secures an irregularly shaped corbel by screwing a movable fence to the base. Against that fence two cam clamps rotate, pushing against another, loose fence that presses against a scrap from the bandsawn corbel. He adds a cushion of foam rubber to prevent marring the workpiece.



TWO WAYS TO HOLD MOLDINGS



A fence set back from the edge of the base leaves a perfect space to support long pieces of molding, which Wilbur clamps in place using scraps of wood cut to the shape of the molding and cushioned with foam rubber padding (right). Shorter, mitered pieces can be locked in place with mitered cleats that are screwed or clamped to the base (above).



locating screws and aligning blanks. Also, for work that has symmetrically curved silhouettes, you can draw a system of grid lines on the plywood.

On the side that has four fences screwed and glued to it, place three of the fences set in from the edges by 1½ in. or so. Set the fourth fence flush with the edge of the plywood base. The longer inset fence provides a long edge that is perfect for holding pieces of molding in place, and the flanges created on the shorter sides allow you to secure the carving station to a bench or table.

Many wood-carvers who do detailed work prefer to carve on a slanted surface so that they can see the workpiece clearly without having to lean over. I made an angled easel that fits snugly into the fence side of the carving station. The ends are two 30°/60° right triangles made of ¾-in. plywood, connected by two rectangular pieces that overlap the triangles. The triangles are located to fit between the short fences on the base. I also notched out the ends to fit over the two long fences. □

*Frederick Wilbur is a professional wood-carver in Lovington, Va. Material for this article was excerpted from his book, *Carving Classical Styles in Wood* (GMC Publications, 2004).*

SMALL ROSETTES NEED SOME EXTRA CARE

To hold really small workpieces such as these rosettes firmly in place as he carves them, Wilbur drills shallow holes in a scrap of plywood. A piece of double-faced tape on the back of each rosette keeps it from slipping around in its hole.





USE BOTH SIDES OF THE BASE



When carving blanks with flat backs, screw the blank to the base of the carving station (above) to hold it in place. Take care to locate screws where they will not damage carving tools (right).



A DROP-IN EASEL FOR MORE COMFORT



An angled easel places workpieces at a more comfortable height and angle. The four bottom corners are notched to fit within the fences on the base (above), and the easel is held in place by its own weight. Lips on the top outside edges allow for clamps to hold some workpieces in place (right); others can be secured with screws from behind.

