



Dress up your drawer fronts

ADD VENEER AND COCK BEADING TO MAKE YOUR FURNITURE POP

BY STEVE LATTA

Burl veneer and cock beading go hand in hand, working together as beautiful and functional details. They are classic design elements that were used a lot in early America, and I used both in the Federal table project on pp. 60-67. Veneering the drawer with beautiful burl gives the table a visual focus; the cock beading provides a frame for the burl while adding a subtle, eye-catching three-dimensional look.

In addition to looking great, cock beading helps protect the veneer by forming a raised lip around the edges, and it cleverly conceals the gap around the drawer. The cock bead also comes in handy when the drawer doesn't quite sit flush, or the sides don't line up perfectly with the opening.

Hammer veneering: low-tech but effective

Traditionally, veneer was applied using the ancient but effective technique of hammer veneering. Laying down veneer with hot hide glue and a veneer hammer is not

GET THE GLUE READY

For the veneering, you'll need to mix and heat hide glue in a glue pot (right). The veneer hammer's flat face is used to press down the veneer like an iron.



Cook up a batch. Combine equal parts hide-glue granules and water in the pot. Latta prefers high-clarity 192 gram-strength hide glue. When the glue is up to temperature (140°), it will stretch between your fingers in fine strings that don't break apart.

Veneer goes on first



Give the drawer front bite. Latta uses a toothing plane to add texture to the drawer front substrate. It's not essential, but it will help the hide glue hold on better.



Brush on the glue. Latta spreads hot hide glue on the drawer front and the veneer (left), and quickly sets it in place. Then he brushes glue on the face of the veneer (above) to fill the pores and lubricate the hammer. Placing paper on the benchtop beforehand keeps glue cleanup to a minimum.

complicated, and doesn't require a big investment in tools—you only need hide glue, a brush, and a glue pot to heat the glue in (I get mine from oldemill.com). You can get a veneer hammer at most woodworking suppliers.

Mix the glue granules with an equal volume of room-temperature water and let it soak for 45 minutes, then plug in the pot to heat it up to 140°F. Hide glue sets when it cools, so you can gain a little more working time by warming up your veneer hammer on a hot plate.

While you're waiting for the glue to heat, prep the drawer front and the veneer. You'll apply the veneer before cutting the joinery, so cut the walnut drawer front $\frac{3}{4}$ in. longer and wider than the final size. It helps the veneer hold on better if you roughen the surface of the drawer front with a toothing plane. If you don't have one, several tool companies offer toothed blades for their handplanes. Cut the veneer slightly smaller than the oversize drawer front, using a razor knife and straightedge. Put veneer tape across any cracks on the veneer's face side.

Brush glue onto the drawer front and the back of the veneer, and quickly set the veneer in place. Then brush some glue on the show face too, and begin to push the hammer over the veneer to force out excess glue and air pockets. This creates suction underneath that

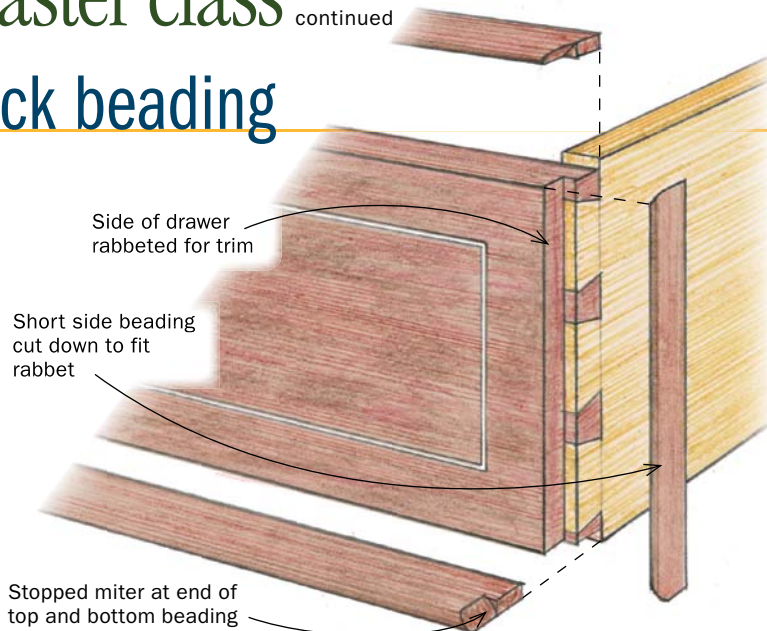


Hammer it down. Use the hammer like a squeegee, starting in the center and pushing bubbles of excess glue and air out at the edges. Keep the edge of the hammer clean with a wet rag.



Clamps ensure a good bond. Clamp the veneered drawer front between cauls. Place a sheet of acrylic or waxed paper on top of the veneer to keep the glue from sticking to the cauls. Using clamps isn't strictly required with hammer veneering, but it's quick, easy, and keeps the veneer flat as it dries.

Cock beading



pulls the veneer tight against the drawer front. Work the veneer with the hammer until it is uniformly flat and stuck down. Next, clamp the drawer front between cauls. Let it dry overnight, and use a card scraper to remove the thin film of glue and smooth the veneer. Then cut the drawer front to size.

Cock beading protects and beautifies

The cock beading is $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick with a $\frac{1}{8}$ -in.-dia. bead profile on the front edge. It covers the edge of the drawer front and stands proud of the drawer face. Make the beading two pieces at a time on a router table, using a wide piece of stock—it will vibrate less and be easier to hold. Rout the bead

MAKE ROOM FOR THE BEADING



Rip the top and bottom, rabbet the sides. After you cut the joinery and dry-fit the drawer, set a cutting gauge to the beading's thickness and score through the veneer at the top and bottom. Rip to the lines on the tablesaw (above). Then with the drawer sides glued in, score lines on the front and sides to mark the rabbet, and cut to the lines using a fence-guided trim router (right).



MARK AND MITER



Use the rabbet to mark the stopped miter. Dry-fit a long piece of cock beading in place, and mark the rabbet's depth on it using a plane blade.



Miter to the mark. Using a 45° angle block and a plane blade, miter the ends of the beading, stopping the cut at the depth mark for the rabbet.

GLUE AND CLAMP



Add a brad. Add glue and get the cock beading into position, then pop a brad in the edge to keep it from slipping around when you put on the clamps. A small piece of wood taped to each drawer side also helps steady the banding.

profile on both sides of the stock, then rip each strip free on the tablesaw.

Before installing the beading, dovetail and dry-assemble the drawer to check the fit in the opening, then take the drawer apart. If you're going to add stringing, do it now. When laying out the dovetails, keep in mind that you'll be ripping or rabbeting $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from each edge to create space for the cock beading. With the dovetails cut, set a cutting gauge to the bead's thickness and score a line at the top and bottom of the drawer front, cutting through the veneer. Then rip to these lines on the tablesaw.

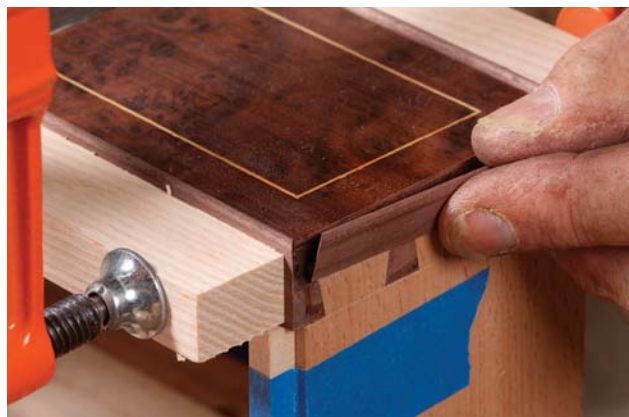
The beading on the ends of the drawer front sits in rabbets, cut after the drawer box has been glued up. With a cutting gauge set to the bead's thickness, score lines across the face at each end of the drawer front. Reset the marking gauge and score a line across the end grain, centered on the thickness of the drawer front. Then cut the rabbets. I use a trim router with a fence attached to the base—it lets me cut right to the lines with no cleanup work.

The cock beading is mitered at the corners. The end pieces are narrower, so the top and bottom pieces get stopped miters. Crosscut the top and bottom beads to length and dry-fit them in place. Use a plane blade to mark the rabbet depth—this is where the miter will stop. Cut the miters using the plane iron and 45° block, checking the fit with an extra mitered piece of beading. Glue and clamp the top and bottom beading in place. When it's dry, miter the cock beading for the short sides, and glue and clamp it in place. □

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Clamp it up. Latta clamps the long top and bottom pieces in place to dry. Cauls spread the pressure and keep the metal clamps from denting the wood.



Fit the short sides. With the long pieces glued in place, fix the beading for the sides. Trim it using a block plane to bring it flush with the top and bottom beading.



Clamp them in place. Once the beading fits perfectly, put on the glue and clamps.