

Fine line dresses up a drawer front

BY JEFF HEADLEY

Adding a narrow oval of stringing to a drawer face (see “How to Tackle a Serpentine Drawer,” pp. 70-75) will impress woodworkers and friends alike. However, this is a case where less equals more: Lining, a delicate form of stringing, should reward closer inspection of a piece and not jump out at you like white road markings in a car’s headlights.

On the other hand, bear in mind that the contrast may lessen as the fine line yellows, and some dark woods, such as walnut, fade with age. With these points in mind, for this piece I selected lining that is $\frac{1}{32}$ in. thick by $\frac{1}{28}$ in. wide, the smallest size available from Dover Inlay (www.doverinlay.com; 301-223-8620), but you could go with material as wide as $\frac{1}{16}$ in.

The distance from the lining to the edge will depend on the size of the drawer or apron. The smaller the piece, the closer to the edge the lining should go. However, when lining a graduated set of drawers, keep the distance uniform on all the drawers. I chose to place the lining $\frac{11}{16}$ in. from the drawer front’s edges, but it will end up a shade under $\frac{9}{16}$ in. from the inside of the cock beading.

Draw a pencil line $\frac{11}{16}$ in. from the top and bottom of the drawer front, and then mark a similar distance in from the center of each side. Now connect the side points to the top and bottom lines with semicircles. Do this with a compass, protecting the drawer front by applying a piece of wood or veneer with masking tape.

Shopmade tools cut the channel

There are a couple of tools to cut the straight sections of the channel in the veneer. You can use the corner of a cabinet scraper with the burr



Lay out the oval

Draw two lines parallel to and the same distance from the top and bottom edges of the drawer front. Then mark the same distance from each end. With a compass, draw a semicircle connecting the three lines at each end of the drawer front. Use a thin piece of wood and masking tape to protect the drawer front from the compass point.



Two ways to cut a straight channel

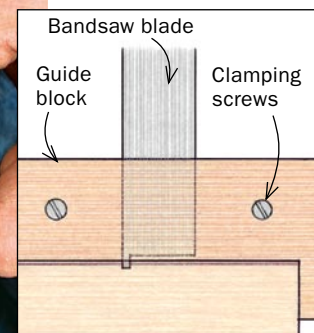
1. SCRAPE

Hone the burr off a card scraper, sharpen two adjacent edges, and use a corner to cut a channel.



2. SCRATCH

A section of bandsaw blade filed to a point and held in a shop-made scratch stock is another way.



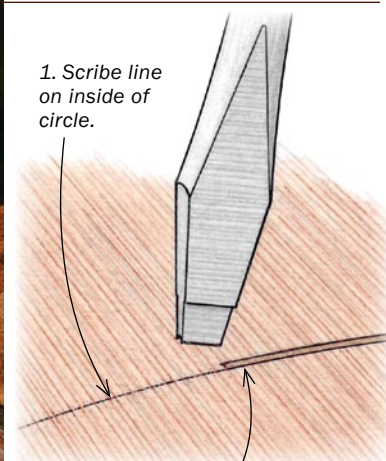
Cutting a curved channel



Compass guide. With the sharp point of a compass, scribe a very light line along the inside of the circle.



Punch a curved channel. Register a modified screwdriver in the compass line, and cut around the curve with a series of sharp taps.

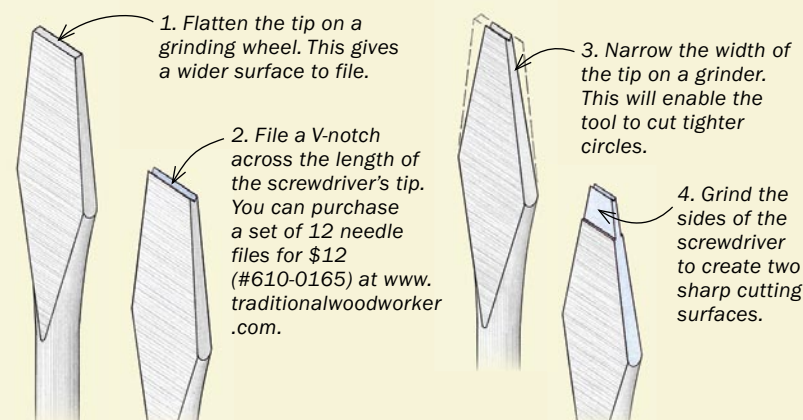


removed. Clamp another drawer-front core to the drawer to act as a fence when scraping the channel. Alternatively, you can use a scratch stock with a built-in fence, with the scraper made from an old piece of bandsaw or scraper blade filed to the correct width.

Cutting the circular channel is more of a challenge. The undulation of the serpentine shape rules out using a laminate trimmer or Dremel-type tool. Simply cutting the wood with a knife would still require the channel to be excavated, while using the point of a compass risks tearing the veneer. I use a tool my father created by modifying a screwdriver (see drawings, right). When tapped, it cuts a channel with clean sides rather than mashing the veneer,

MAKE A CURVED-CHANNEL CUTTER

Begin with a regular flat-head screwdriver whose tip is about $\frac{3}{16}$ in. long.



Install the stringing



Dry-fit the line for length. Fine lining generally comes in yard lengths, so a couple of joints will be required. Cleanly cut joints will be practically invisible once the piece is finished.



leaving a slot for the fine line. I find it helpful to score a very light line on the inside of the channel using the point of a compass. This gives you something to register the V-channel tool in. Then walk the tool around the circle, giving it a light tap with a mallet at each step. You should aim to create a channel slightly shallower than the thickness of the lining.

Glue in the stringing and clean it up

Don't worry if your channel doesn't appear machine-made perfect. The lining will spread and expand when pressed home, and scraping and sanding will conceal small voids.

Dry-fit the fine line for length. It mostly comes in yard lengths so you'll probably need a couple of joints. If you plan to have an escutcheon, this can conceal one joint, but if cleanly cut with a chisel the joints are nearly invisible anyway.

Squeeze some Elmer's white glue into the slot and then insert the fine line. Ideally it should sink home by running the face of a hammer lightly over it and not require any clamping. If the fit is a little loose, you can apply some masking tape until the glue dries.

Wait until the next day to scrape off the excess glue and fine line. If you scrape too early when the fine line is still moist, it will shrink as it dries and then will be slightly recessed. This will be very noticeable when the drawer is finished. □



Insert the lining. The channel should be tight enough so that when the lining is pressed in, it requires no clamping. When dry, use a paint scraper or a cabinet scraper to bring the lining flush with the veneer and remove all excess glue.



