

Turn the page. The simplest grain match is like reading a book. Open two consecutive leaves along the long-grain edge. The grain patterns on the open pages are a mirror image of one another.

Create beautiful grain patterns with veneer

BY TIMOTHY COLEMAN

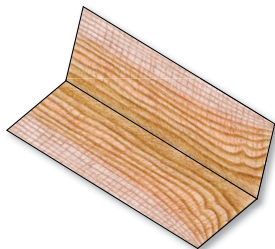
Online Extra

For an interview with Tim Coleman, go to FineWoodworking.com/269.

FOUR WAYS TO MATCH GRAIN

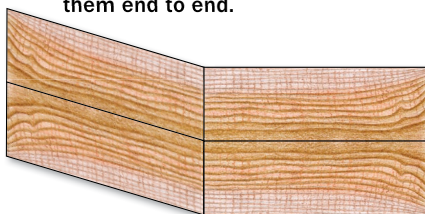
1. BOOK IT

Open the leaves like pages.



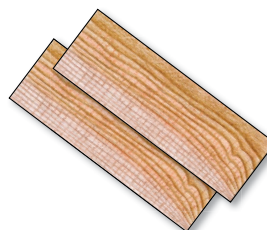
2. BOOK IT TWICE

Open two pairs of leaves down the middle, then book-match them end to end.



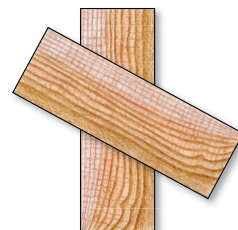
3. SLIP IT

Slide a leaf to the side, with the same face up.



4. SPIN IT

Open them like a book and spin one leaf end for end.



I love experimenting with grain patterns. And when I bandsaw my own veneer, I can slice 12 or more pieces from a 2-in.-thick board. With so many consecutive leaves of veneer to play with, I can array them in patterns that range from pleasingly rhythmic to bold and stunning. You can do the same with commercial veneers, as long as they are flichsawn.

I'll show you the four techniques for arranging veneer that I use most often. In all of them the leaves are edge-glued, with the grain on all the pieces running parallel. So, the veneer can

be glued either to a solid-wood substrate (as long as the grain on the veneer and the solid wood runs in the same direction) or to sheet stock.

Finding the best way to arrange a set of veneer leaves can require you to handle the leaves quite a bit—flipping, rotating, and sliding them around. Don't hesitate to work the leaves into as many arrangements as you can imagine. Shopsawn veneer, which should be about $\frac{1}{16}$ in. thick, is tough enough to handle it.

Timothy Coleman is a professional furniture maker in Shelburne, Mass.

BOOK-MATCH

The first match most woodworkers use is the book-match, which is a natural and beautiful choice in many situations. Two consecutively cut leaves of veneer are opened along their long edges like the pages of a book, and the grain on one mirrors the grain on the other. The pattern created across both leaves can be mesmerizing. The impact of a two-leaf book-match across the front of a cabinet can range from subdued to wild, depending on the grain of the veneer. The look will be affected by which edge of the leaves is used as the spine.



Shift for a better match. Because resawing removes a bit of wood, the grain on consecutive leaves might not match perfectly. Slide them back and forth along the adjoining edges until the grain aligns without interruption.



Soothing symmetry. Book-matched along the edge where the two doors meet, the quiet grain of these Argentine cedar veneers creates a balanced and harmonious front facade on this case piece by Coleman.



Dynamic symmetry. Four leaves of veneer book-matched both vertically and horizontally create a geometric grain pattern that travels around the panels, circling the point where the four leaves meet.

FOUR-CORNER MATCH

The secret to this technique for matching grain is a double book-match. One takes place along the long grain, but for the other, the end grain is used as the spine for the book's pages. The patterns created by the grain as it runs around the four leaves of veneer are always dynamic and dramatic.

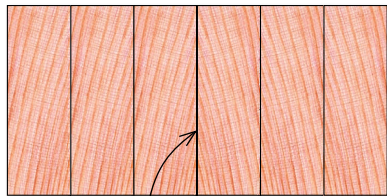


Double book-match. Start with four consecutive slices of veneer, make two book-matches, and place one on top of the other. Then use the end grain as the "spine" and open the two leaves on top.

SLIP-MATCH

Take a stack of veneer. Slide off the top one, and then the second one, laying them down side by side. Repeat with as many leaves as you'd like. This is a slip-match. It works very well with narrow pieces of veneer and quarter- and riftsawn veneers. However, it can be a bit repetitive. To liven things up, start with a book-match in the center and then use slip-matches on either side.

SPICE UP A SLIP-MATCH



Begin with a book-match at the center and continue with slip matches.

Slide it over.

Creating a slip-match is like dealing from a deck of cards. Take the top leaf and lay it down. The next leaf is laid down next to the first, and third next to the second. Keep the same face up on all of them.



Quiet and uniform. Matt Kenney used narrow, slip-matched leaves of riftsawn cherry veneer to create a cabinet back that doesn't distract the eye from the dramatic end-grain drawer fronts.

SPIN-MATCH

This is my go-to matching technique for large surfaces like tabletops. It's a two-step process. Start with a book-match and then spin one leaf 180°. Instead of having grain that creates cathedrals, you'll get grain that spills across the surface fluidly and without interruption. The joints between leaves often disappear as a result. The spin match is great for figured woods, because light will reflect off adjacent leaves in the same way. The chatoyance across the surface is consistent, rather than alternating from dark to light.

BOOK-MATCH

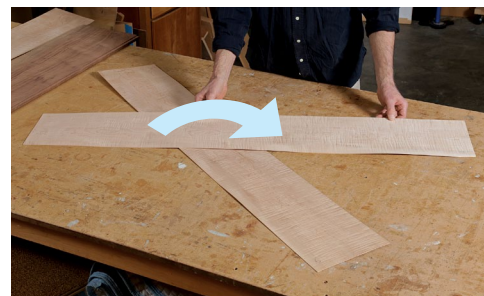


SPIN-MATCH



Cathedrals created by book-matching emphasize that two leaves are joined in the middle. Spinning one 180° creates a grain flow that helps the leaves look more like a single board.

Calm wavy grain. The wild undulations of the bubinga veneers in this table by Coleman would create unattractive chevrons if they were only book-matched. When you spin a leaf in each pair, the undulations "straighten" out and flow more gently across the tabletop.



Spin it right around. When book-matched, figured woods can reflect light differently on the two leaves. To get the same effect on both, first open the two leaves for a book-match (top), and then rotate one of the leaves 180° (bottom). The two leaves will look more like a single wide board.