

A Contemporary Corner Table



When rough milling the wood for a table, I typically make an extra leg, in case something goes wrong while cutting the mortises or sawing the tapers. Years ago, after making a pair of Shaker-style desks, I ended up with three extra legs (I was prone to making more mistakes back then). I couldn't just toss them into the firewood pile, and I didn't want to backtrack and make a fourth leg, so I created this three-legged table.

I designed this table to fit into a corner of a dining room, where the recessed front wouldn't impede movement and an extra drawer is always useful. But the table would also work well in a narrow hallway. If you are certain that the table will stay in a corner, you can make the side rails from

a secondary wood and not extend the beading beyond the front. However, in a really large room this kind of table can also anchor the corner of an area rug and be visible from all sides.

A template simplifies the process

The first step in the project is to make a full-sized template. Draw the plan view of the table on a piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.- or $\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-thick plywood. The template serves several purposes: It shows you the exact size of the parts and how they join together; it can be used as a flush-trimming template for the tabletop; and you can use it when you want to make another table. I lay out the curve of the tabletop using a thin wood batten ($\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick by 1 in. wide), stringing

One template is the key to shaping and fitting this elegant project

BY TONY O'MALLEY



Draw the curve on the template. A thin wood batten and a piece of string yield a curve whose radius is adjustable. It's easy to transfer the curve to the template.



Rough-cut the tabletop after tracing the template. Minimize the waste of wood by stepping the glue-up to create a semi-triangular shape.

it like a bow to the correct arc (see the bottom left photo on the facing page).

Making the top out of a single board ensures consistent grain and color

Make sure the front piece is at least 6 in. wide to accommodate the curve and still leave a couple of inches of stock at the thinnest point in the middle. Plane the boards to their finished thickness of $\frac{7}{8}$ in., joint the edges and then glue them together. Clamp the assembly between battens to keep it flat.

Transfer the shape of the top from the template to the glued-up planks, making sure the sides of the template are 45° to the seams. Cut out the top on the bandsaw or with a sabersaw, then flush-trim the edges using the template. I routed a chamfer on the bottom edge of the top and a stepped roundover on the top edge.

Frame construction is unique

Because the front apron is laminated, its construction is handled separately from the other two aprons. For the two side aprons made of solid wood, be sure to allow for the tenons in their overall length, unless like me, you use loose tenons and cut mortises in both the legs and the rails.

Mill the wood for the legs and cut them to length (see the drawing on p. 52). Then lay



A place for your stuff. The drawer blends in with the front apron, making it nearly invisible. A fingerhold in the false front is easy to grab.

out the two mortises in the back leg and one in each of the front legs.

Now's the time to cut the kerfs in the legs for the decorative beads—before tapering them (see p. 55). To saw the leg tapers, use a simple taper jig and make the cuts on the tablesaw. Clean up the sawn surfaces with a plane or on the jointer.

Now glue up the three legs and two rails right on the template, which ensures that the rails are square to each other.

To make the front apron, use a simple one-piece bending form made from $\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-

thick plywood and faced with bending plywood. To get a $\frac{3}{4}$ -in.-thick lamination for the apron, I cut five plies, each approximately $\frac{3}{32}$ in. thick, on the bandsaw. If your bandsaw balks at resawing 4-in.-wide stock, make a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-deep cut into each edge of the board on the tablesaw, then finish the resawing on the bandsaw. Then plane them to thickness.

Select and mark the best piece of thin stock for the face. Then do a dry run of the lamination process. Add one or two layers of $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.-thick Masonite or medium-density fiberboard (MDF) to the outer face, to help distribute the clamping pressure. Clamp the laminations into the form without glue. Use blocks across the face of the form. With the dry run you'll find out exactly how many clamps and blocks you'll need.

For the actual glue-up, I use plastic resin (urea formaldehyde) glue because it reduces springback. Glue just one face of each lamination to minimize squeeze-out, using a roller or notched spreader for even coverage. Remember not to apply glue to the outside of the face piece.

Stack the laminations together and secure them to the form with a single clamp in the middle. Then work your way out to the ends. It's better to get all of the clamps on with a moderate amount of pressure before cranking down with full force. Allow



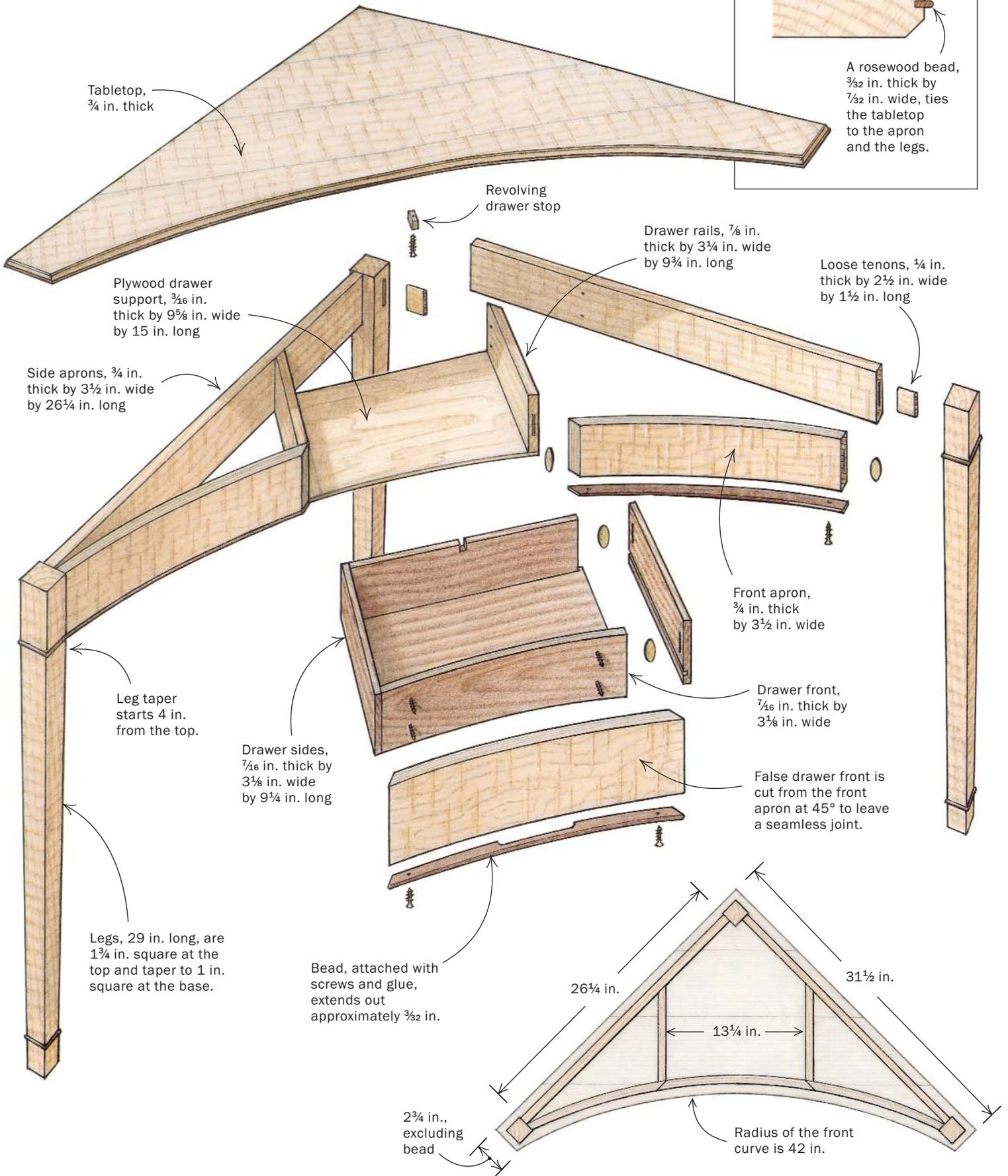
Flush-trim the edges. Using the template as a guide, flush-trim the edge of the tabletop. The arrows on the template indicate the routing direction to minimize tearout.



Assemble the rear of the table. After the legs and the side aprons have been cut, glue them together using the template as a guide to squaring them up.

A CONCAVE CORNER TABLE

The clean lines of the exterior hide the structural complexity of the interior with its concealed drawer.



the bent lamination to dry overnight. Remove the lamination from the form, then scrape as much glue squeeze-out as possible from the edges with a shave hook; any dried glue may chip your plane blade or jointer knives. Next, true one edge on the jointer or with your longest handplane. If you're using the jointer, set the fence for the maximum-width cut to provide the most table support for the workpiece.

Next, saw the apron to width. If you've never cut a curved part like this on the tablesaw, it probably looks a little daunting. It is more dangerous than cutting a flat board, but not unduly so. Practice the cut before actually making it: Set the fence wide of the actual cut, raise the blade, and pass the curved apron over the table. The goal is to keep the contact point of the wood consistent—right at the blade—and not rock the piece. Use a push stick for the last 6 in. or 8 in. of the cut. You may also want to have a second person receive the piece on the outfeed. Once you feel more familiar with how the curved piece will move over the table, set the fence using the kerf already sawn in the upper leg as a guide, and make the cut.

Drawer frame is secured with screws and biscuits

Fitting a drawer in this table is a challenge because of the combination of a curved front apron and side rails that converge toward the back. (If you decide not to add a drawer, simply join the curved apron to the front legs as described and proceed to attaching the tabletop.)

First crosscut the apron into three parts—the false drawer front and two fixed apron pieces. Use the template to transfer the locations of the cuts and the angles onto the apron. The goal is to keep the grain continuous across the apron to conceal the drawer. Try to make each cut a good one so you don't have to recut it and lose some of the grain match. I made the crosscuts on a chopsaw, then cut the two front apron pieces to fit against the front legs. To create a shadow line where they join, I planed a slight bevel onto the ends of the aprons and the top of the legs to form a tiny V-groove when the parts are assembled.

Clamp the front apron pieces to the template. Then cut the two drawer rails to fit, and predrill holes through the back of them into the side rails (see the top left photo on p. 54). Cut biscuit slots to join the



Laminate and trim the front apron

You'll need lots of clamps to laminate the front apron. The secret to a good lamination is to apply firm but even pressure across the whole piece.



Cut the front apron to width. Before making the actual cut, practice sliding the curved apron past the stationary blade. Maintain a steady angle at the cutting point.



Trim the front apron on a chopsaw. The false drawer front is cut at an angle to preserve the seamless appearance of the apron.

Screws and biscuits secure the drawer frame



Install the drawer rails. Once the rails have been cut to length and aligned with the side rails using the template, secure them with screws.



Biscuits join the apron to the drawer rails. The sharp angle at the end of each front rail demands care when using the biscuit joiner.



Firm yet flexible. The tabletop is attached with figure-eight fasteners, which allow for seasonal movement.

front of the drawer rails to the back of the front aprons (see the middle photo above). Last, cut biscuit joints to connect the other ends of the front aprons to the legs.

At this point there's nothing connecting the two apron-rail assemblies on both sides of the drawer opening, with the result that the whole table frame is free to flex quite a bit. That's one reason why I clamp everything down to the template in the

previous steps. However, once the top is in place, it will tie the elements together, giving the piece structural integrity.

The top is attached with figure-eight fasteners, which allow for seasonal wood movement (see the right photo above). After screwing the fasteners to the frame, position the frame on the upside-down top. Set the drawer front in place so that it fits perfectly against the ends of the aprons,

then clamp the frame to the top and attach it with screws.

Drawer box has its own bent-laminated front

Made on the same form as the front apron, the front of the drawer box is thinner, with three plies instead of five. After cutting the other drawer parts, saw grooves for the bottom and assemble the parts with biscuits. Try to make the drawer the same size as the opening, then plane the sides until it slides freely. Before fitting the false drawer front, cut a fingerhold in the bottom using a 1-in. cove bit on the router table.

Fit the drawer and false drawer front with the base upside down. Handplane the back face of the false front so that it mates with the curve of the drawer box. Next, shim the drawer rails so that the box slides flush with them. Trim $\frac{1}{16}$ in. from the top edge of the false drawer front so that it clears the tabletop. Now clamp and glue the false drawer front onto the drawer box. After the glue dries, remove the drawer and add some screws from inside the drawer box for good measure.

Last, screw a panel of $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.-thick plywood to the drawer rails (see the photo at left), and fit a drawer stop to the bottom of the tabletop. When the stop is aligned with the notch in the back of the drawer, the drawer can be removed. □

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The drawer panel serves as a runner for the drawer. It also adds rigidity to the structure.

Decorative beads refine the table

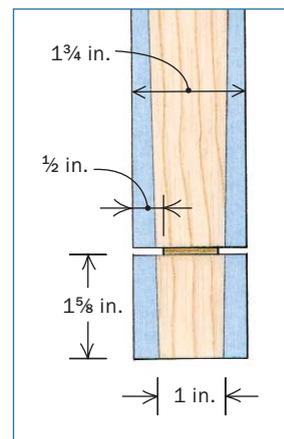
LEG BEADS ADD DEFINITION

Before tapering the legs, cut kerfs for the beads. I cut the kerfs on the tablesaw using a sharp crosscut blade. First cut the kerfs for the top bead that runs around the front two legs and meets the apron bead. The fence should be set at the intended width of the apron (less the bead), and the kerfs are $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep. To cut the kerfs for the bottom beads, set the fence $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the blade, and raise the blade to cut $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep (the taper will remove $\frac{3}{8}$ in. of material). The bottom beads go around all four sides of each leg.

Plane the bead stock (in this case rosewood) so that it fits perfectly into the kerfs. (Plane the stock for the apron at the same time.) Then shape the

bead on the edge of the stock. I used a scratch stock, but a block plane or spokeshave will also do the job. After the bead has been sanded, rip it to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the wider stock.

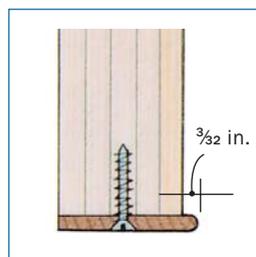
Cut and fit the foot bead pieces before assembling the legs to the rails. The bead is cut in two steps. First miter the end of a long piece on a chopsaw. To cut the second end of the small pieces, make a little miter fence and use a small backsaw. To trim just a little from one of the bead pieces, rub the mitered end against a piece of 120-grit sandpaper. Glue the bead into the kerfs, fitting one piece to the next around each leg. Wait to inlay the beads in the upper part of the leg until they can be aligned with the bead under the front apron.



Hand tools are safer. Although these small pieces of beading can be mitered on a chopsaw, it is safer to use a backsaw with a shopmade miter box.



Fit the beads. The lower beads are best fitted before table assembly. Those near the top must wait until the front apron is attached.



APRON BEAD ALSO CONCEALS THE LAMINATIONS

Trace the shape of the apron onto the bead stock, allowing about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. to protrude along the face. Use three pieces to help avoid steep grain, which is harder to shape. You don't want the seams too close to where the drawer front will be cut, and you don't want screws where the drawer fingerhold will be. Next, screw and glue the bead onto the bottom edge of the apron.

Plane the back edge of the bead flush with the apron and use a spokeshave to trim the face edge of the bead to a consistent overhang. I shaped the bead with a simple shopmade scratch stock.



Use the apron as a template. O'Malley cut the beading material in three sections.



Screw the bead to the underside of the front apron. Avoid the area where the drawer will be cut and in the center where the fingerhold is routed.



A shopmade scratch stock. O'Malley filed a notch into a scraper to make a scratch stock. Masking tape protects the apron.

A BEAD IN THE TABLETOP UNIFIES THE PIECE

After putting everything together, the top seemed to need a little something more, so I decided to add a rosewood bead around the edge. To do so, first rout a groove using a template guide in a small trim router. It took two passes with a $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. wing cutter to get the $\frac{3}{32}$ -in.-wide groove. An auxiliary base helps prevent the router from tipping. Using the same bead stock you used for the apron, scrape the bead profile onto both edges of a long strip about 1 in. wide. Then rip the strips to a width of $\frac{5}{16}$ in., which is narrow enough to bend easily.



More stability. An auxiliary plywood base makes the router more stable when cutting the groove in the edge of the tabletop.