

# Router-Made Bandings

Dress up your work  
with these unique designs

BY MARK ARNOLD

Most woodworkers associate banding with Federal period furniture, when its primary role was protecting the edge of a veneered panel. However, the use of banding is not restricted to veneered work or to period furniture. It is a great way to embellish solid pieces of almost any style.

The advantages of making your own banding are that you can customize the wood to match a project, create designs with curved elements not available commercially, and make them to a length that suits you. As I'll demonstrate, you can make two such bandings

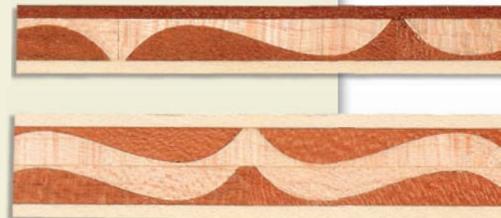
easily using readily available router bits. I demonstrate a third on FineWoodworking.com. Not only will these bandings give your projects a dramatic effect, they'll also give them that personal touch.

## Design starts with a router bit and the right woods

When selecting the woods for a particular banding, consider where it will be inlaid. A banding easily can be lost in the motion of a highly figured burl or crotch, or it can appear as an afterthought if the species or colors do not complement the primary wood. Contrast is desirable, but it should not detract from the subject being framed. The most successful bandings are

## OGEE BANDING

Use contrasting woods and a reversible ogee bit to make either a narrow banding (below) or a wider one (bottom).



those that appear three-dimensional, like the banding I demonstrate on FineWoodworking.com, or make use of chatoyancy, like the ogee banding (above). Certain woods, such as the curly maple in this example, change in color and luster when viewed from different angles.

A banding blank will yield less than half its width in usable strips and the rest will end up as sawdust, so always make more than you'll need. A 1-in.-wide blank can yield up to 10 usable strips.

*Mark Arnold is a woodworker near Columbus, Ohio.*

## SCALLOP BANDING

A pair of matched beading and fluting bits yields identically shaped bandings whose woods are reversed. Use one to edge an apron and give your table a touch of sophistication.



FineWoodworking.com

Learn to rout and assemble a third type of banding, a lunette, with step-by-step photos.

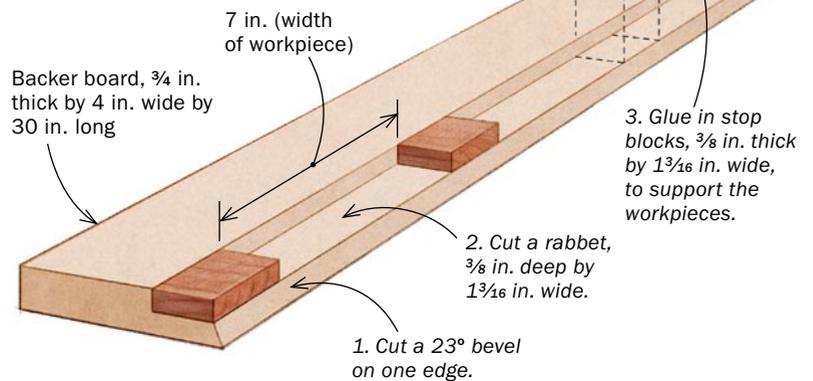


# An ogee bit yields two types of banding

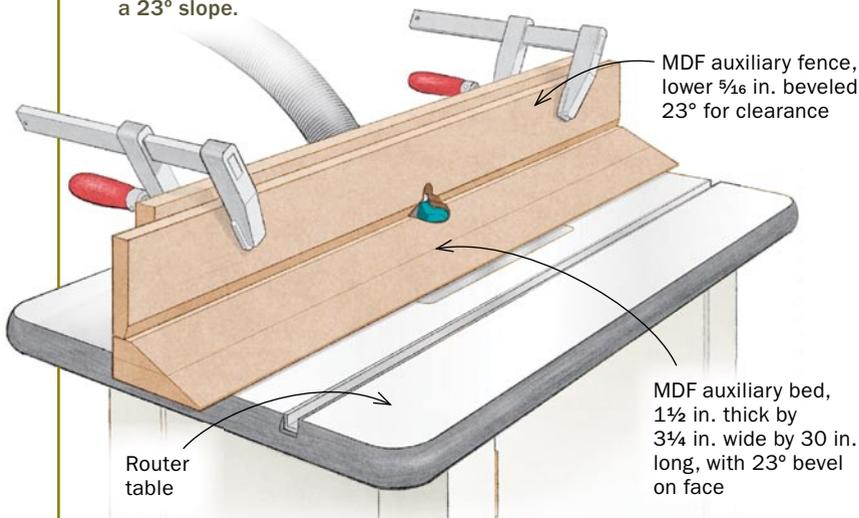
A router bit with a symmetrical S-curve is used to create nested pieces of contrasting color. These pieces can be veneered for a narrow banding or stacked and veneered for a double-wide design.

- 1 MAKE THE BLANKS**  
To begin, mill equal amounts of contrasting woods, in this case cherry and maple, to  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. thick by 7 in. wide by 30 in. long. Then cut them into strips,  $1\frac{3}{16}$  in. wide for this specific bit (see below).

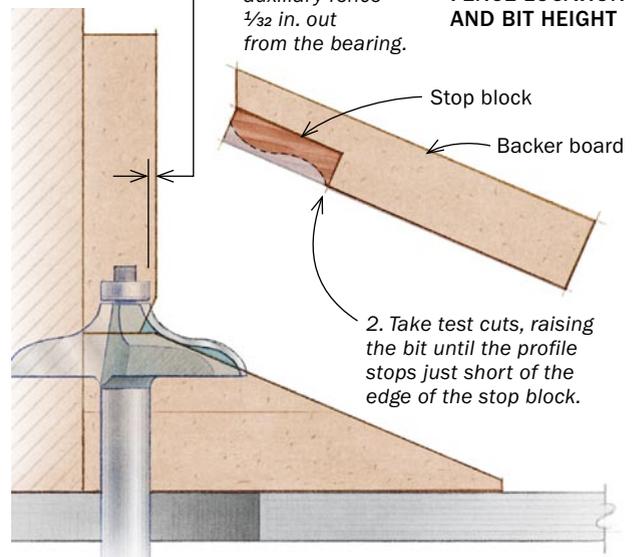
- 2 CREATE A BACKER BOARD FOR ROUTING**  
To safely rout the ogee profile, make a backer board out of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. MDF to house the blanks.



- 3 MAKE AN ANGLED BED FOR THE BACKER BOARD TO RIDE ON**  
The centerline of the workpiece must be aligned with that of the router bit's cutter, so you need to build an angled auxiliary bed with a 23° slope.

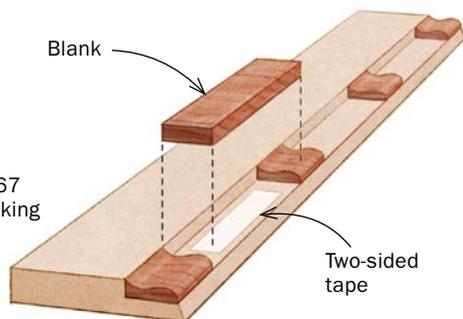


- SETTING THE FENCE LOCATION AND BIT HEIGHT**

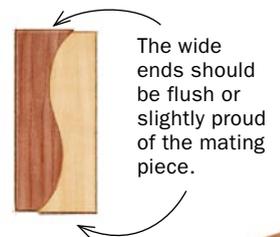


## ROUT THE OGEE PROFILE

Secure the blanks in the backer board with double-sided tape. Use a fresh piece of tape for each run. When routing, keep the backer board tight to the fence.



**Use push blocks to keep the work against the fence. If the backer board moves away from the fence during routing, the workpiece will be ruined.**

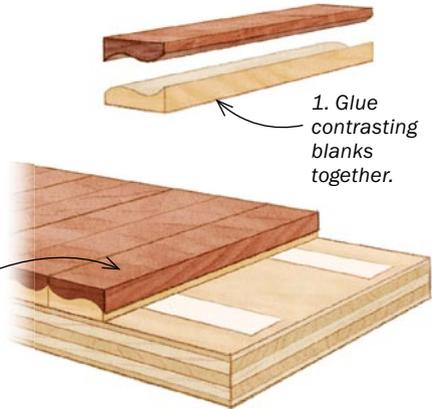




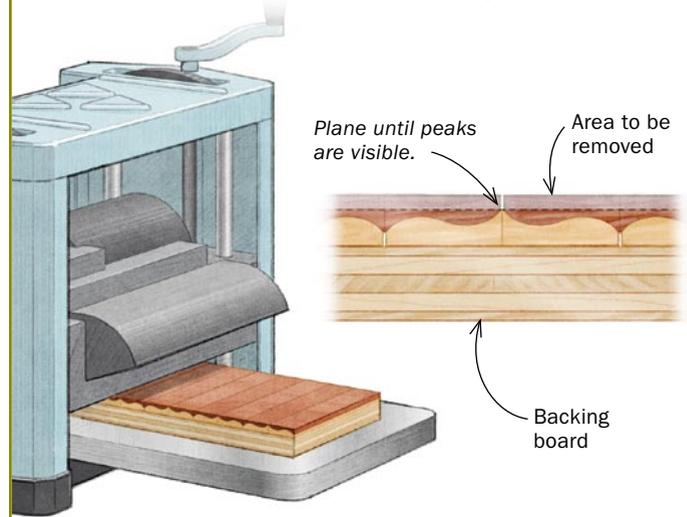
**5 GLUE AND MOUNT THE BLANKS**  
After the glue has cured, tape the pieces to a flat board, maple-side down, so that they form a series of mirror-image pairs that butt together tightly.

**Match the pairs.** Glue each cherry piece to a maple piece by nesting their profiles. Clamp several at a time, placing a layer of plastic between each pair to avoid gluing their flats together.

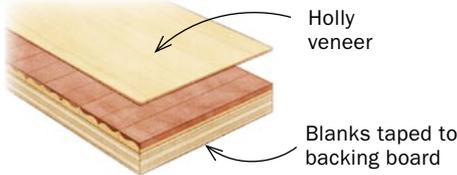
2. Tape the pairs to a 3/4-in. plywood backing board.



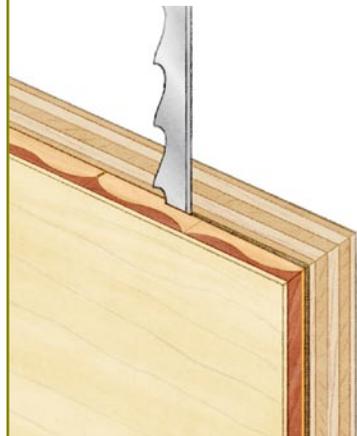
**6 PLANE THE FIRST FACE**  
With the blanks mounted to the backing board, plane the cherry face until the maple peaks are just visible.



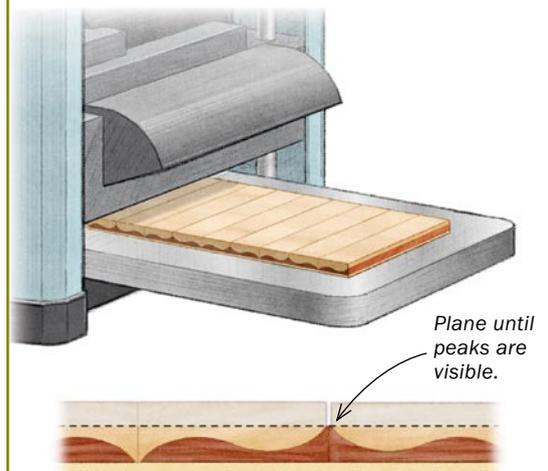
**7 VENEER THE BLANKS**  
Glue a piece of 1/16-in.-thick holly or maple veneer to the just-planed cherry. If you can't get the extrathick veneer, use a couple of sheets of standard commercial veneer.



**8 SAW AWAY THE BASE**  
Prying the veneered blanks off the backing board could damage them, so it's better to saw it off on the bandsaw.



**9 PLANE THE SECOND FACE**  
With the veneer face down, plane the maple side until the cherry peaks just appear.

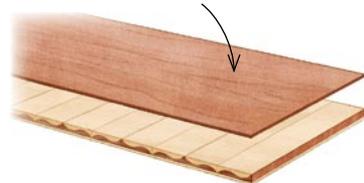


**10 COMPLETE THE BANDING AND RIP INTO STRIPS**  
You have two options at this point. Simply add cherry veneer to the maple face for narrow banding, or stack the blocks for a wide banding.

**NARROW BANDING OPTION**



For narrow banding, apply a sheet of 1/16-in.-thick cherry veneer to the non-veneered side.



**WIDE BANDING OPTION**



For the wider banding, rip the blank in half, then place the two non-veneered faces together, offsetting the top by half a pattern.



**Rip the bandings.** Arnold uses a thin-kerf blade to rip his bandings to 3/64 in. thick. A piece of MDF acts both as hold-down and blade guard. He pushes the strip as long as is safe, then pulls it from the back side of the blade.

# Matched router bits make contrasting bandings



For this banding you'll need two cutters, a beading bit and a fluting bit, whose profiles nest together with the beading bit creating small quirks between the beads.

**1 FLUTE THE END GRAIN**  
 For this specific bit, mill holly and walnut stock  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. thick by 3 in. wide by up to 2 ft. long. Cut flutes on each end.

Lower the bit to cut a half-flute at the bottom.

Woodtek Triple Flute Router Bit  
 No. 921-446  
 (woodworker.com)



**Route the flutes.** Route the end grain of the holly and the walnut stock using a push block and backing board to control the workpiece and prevent chipout.

**2 SLICE OFF THE BLANKS**  
 Use a miter gauge with a stop block clamped to the rip fence to cut off the ends of the fluted blocks. Return to step 1 and repeat until you have enough blanks.

$\frac{5}{16}$  in.

Room for offcut to fall away freely

Stop block

**3 MAKE A SLED TO BEAD THE BLANKS**  
 With the triple-beading bit, bead the long edge of a board. Into these beads glue short pieces of the fluted profiles to act as stops for routing the second side of the walnut and holly workpieces.

Blank

Sled

2. Glue fluted blocks in place to support workpieces.

1. Rout beads in sled.

3 in.

Sled,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick by 5 in. wide by 21 in. long

$\frac{7}{8}$  in.

Woodtek Triple Bead Router Bit  
 No. 921-432  
 (woodworker.com)

**4 BEAD THE BLANKS**  
 Adjust the bit so that it will cut a full bead at the bottom. Insert the pieces in the sled. Pivot the sled into the bit in the middle of the front end block and stop routing before cutting all the way through the rear end block.

Blank

Sled

Extralong fence supports full length of sled.

Align fillet with center of bead.

Note: Don't rout the ends. The unrouted portions ride along the fence.

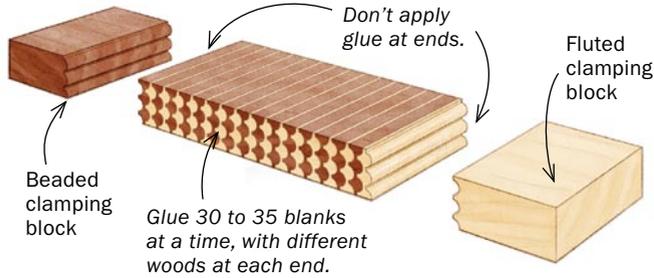
SLED END DETAIL

Rotate sled into bit.

## 5 GLUE THE SECTIONS TOGETHER

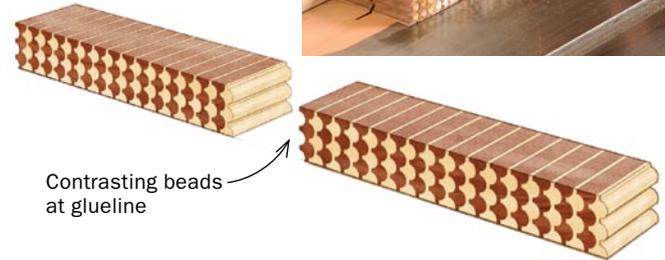


Glue together alternating pieces of holly and walnut. Because the pieces are nested, it takes quite a few to create a long banding.



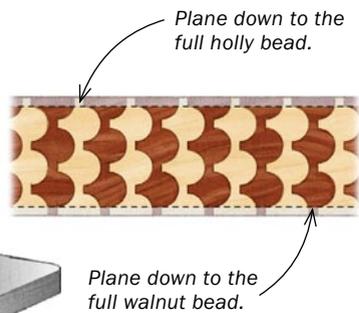
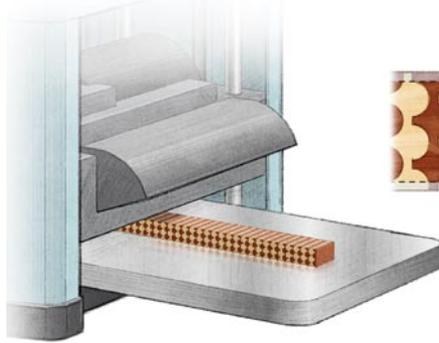
## 6 RIP THE BLOCK TO CREATE A LONGER BANDING

If need be, rip the assembly in half and glue the two halves end-for-end to create a longer banding blank. Use the clamping block to back up the cut.



## 7 PLANE THE BLOCK AND ADD VENEER

After planing both faces, glue pieces of  $\frac{1}{16}$ -in.-thick holly veneer to them.



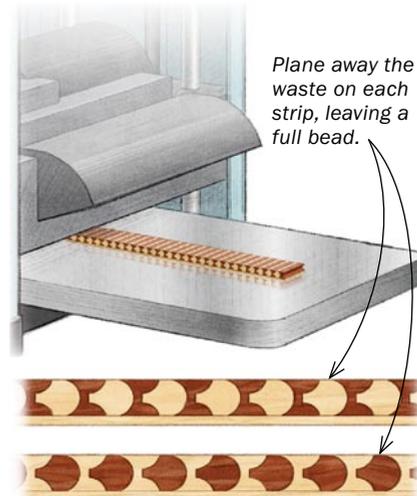
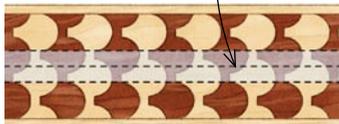
**Veneer the blank.** After planing, glue pieces of  $\frac{1}{16}$ -in.-thick holly veneer to each face.

## 8 RESAW THE BLANK AND PLANE THE STRIPS

Carefully bandsaw down the middle of the blank to create the two contrasting moldings.



Draw a center-line and make a freehand cut on the bandsaw.



## 9 VENEER BOTH BANDINGS

After planing both pieces to the correct width, veneer the planed faces with  $\frac{1}{16}$ -in.-thick holly veneer.

