



I POT YOU BABE

A dream potting bench for the eternal gardener. Made from cedar so it lasts forever and smells good even covered in fish fertilizer.



Materials:

- Cedar, redwood or any variety that has good durability outdoors - it's best to avoid pressure-treated wood, especially if you like working without gloves.
- 1 x 2, 1 x 6, 2 x 4, 2 x 6
- Wire mesh
- Castors
- Screws - exterior grade zinc, galvanized or deck screws - 1 1/2", 3"
- Sixteen - 3/8" x 4" carriage bolts, each with one washer and one nut

Tools

- Saw
- Square
- Drill and driver
- Drill bits
- Driver bits
- Wrenches or tongue and groove pliers
- Eye protection
- Jigsaw
- Wire cutters

Cut List:

- Cedar **2 x 6**; 2 - 46", 2 - 24 1/2"
- Cedar **2 x 4**; 2 - 46", 2 - 24 1/2", 2 - 24", 4 - 32"
- Cedar **1 x 6**; 10 - 48"
- Cedar **1 x 2**; 2 - 24", 4 - 43", 2 - 30"
- Wire mesh 1- 24" x 46"

Steps:



Pre-drill and screw the frame together



Add a 2x4 deck support in the center of the frame

Building the frame

Cut the frame for the top section. From 2x6 lumber you'll need two 46" pieces and two 24 1/2" pieces. From 2x4 lumber, cut one 24 1/2" piece to act as a support in the middle of the frame.

Pre-drill and screw the corners together with 3" exterior zinc or galvanized screws. Use a framing square to be sure the frame is square as you attach the pieces together. The finished frame size should be 24 1/2" x 48".

Add the 2 x 4 x 24 1/2" decking support in the center of the frame and attach it with four 3" screws - two on either end. Be sure it is flush on the top side so that the decking will rest against it.

Repeat for the bottom frame using 2 x 4 lumber instead of 2 x 6.



Attach the legs with carriage bolts



Determine the drill bit size by testing the carriage bolt in the drill index



Offset the bolts to prevent the legs from splitting

Add the legs

Attach the 32" 2x4 legs to the 2x6 top frame. Each leg will be attached to the inside of the 2 x 6 frame using two 4" x 3/8" carriage bolts (with a washer and a nut on the inside to lock the bolt in place).

Choose the right size drill bit to make the holes for the bolts snug. To find the proper size drill bit, insert the bolt into different holes in the drill index until you find the one that just slips in.





Make a jig for the holes out of a scrap piece of plywood



Reverse the jig for the opposite leg

Make a jig for drilling the bolt holes. A jig prevents errors and speeds the whole process up. To make the jig, cut a piece of scrap plywood 6" x 3½". Mark and drill out the holes with the spacing required. Be sure to offset the holes for the bolts so that they won't split the legs along the grain. Set one hole just to the right of center and the other just to the left of center in the bottom and top third of the 2x6 frame.

Screw a ½" piece of scrap wood along both sides of the top edge of the jig so that it can hang on the edge of the frame without you having to hold it in place. As you mark and drill the holes, having a reversible jig allows you to mirror the layout at each corner so the carriage bolts match.



Clamp the leg in place before drilling



Finished top section upside-down on the workbench

Clamp the leg on the inside of the frame so that the wide side of the 2 x 4 lies along the long side of the frame. Make sure the end of the 2 x 4 is flush with the top (we're working upside down at the moment, so the top is actually on the bottom).

Square the leg to the frame, mark and drill the holes. Insert the carriage bolts; you may have to tap them in with a hammer. Put a washer and nut on the end of the bolt and snug it down. Repeat for all four legs and set aside.

Tip: Don't tighten any of the bolts irrevocably until you have both frames bolted together with the legs squared to the lower and upper frame.





Lay out the deck boards on the bottom frame



Even them up using your fingers to measure an equal overhang on each side



Use a straight edge to mark for the deck screws; two screws an inch from either edge of the board

Add bottom decking

Place the bottom frame on your work surface. Lay out five of the 48" 1x6 decking boards across the top of the frame. Space them evenly so that they overhang the edges of the frame equally on all sides. Also, leave about 1/4" between the boards for soil and water to drop through.

Remove the two outside decking boards, being careful not to disturb the remaining three boards. Use a straight edge to locate the center of the framing boards beneath the deck boards and mark the decking boards for screws.

Pre drill and drive in 1 1/2" exterior grade screws - usually called deck screws.



Cut a hole in the deck to accept the leg



Put the board in place and mark the corner from underneath



Put a scrap piece of 2x4 in the marked corner and trace the shape for cutting

Cutting leg holes in bottom decking

Place the remaining two deck boards back on the frame in the place where they will be attached. Slide the frame across your work surface so one corner hangs out in mid air. Use a pencil to reach up under the frame and mark the corner of the frame on the underside of the decking board. Repeat on all four corners. Next, turn the deck boards over and locate the corners that you've marked. Using a scrap block of 2x4 lumber, trace its shape onto the deck boards in each corner.





Jig saw used to cut out the holes for the legs



Drill a hole in each corner for the jig saw blade



Cut out the hole for the leg...

Use a jig saw to cut out the holes you've just marked. On the inside of each rectangle, drill a hole large enough for the jig saw blade to pass through. Insert the jigsaw blade in the drilled hole and then cut on the line. A drilled hole in each corner helps turn the blade more easily when you reach the corners.



.....and test it with the scrap piece of 2 x 4

Once you've cut out the holes, test each one with a scrap of 2x4 lumber to be sure the hole is large enough. Having it a little larger than the 2 x 4 will make it easier for the legs to pass through when it comes time for assembly.

Attach the last two deck boards being careful that the corner of the frame matches the holes you've cut.





Set the top section in place over the bottom section



Line the legs up over the holes and drop into position



Use a hammer and block of wood to tap it into place if necessary

Assembling the frame

Lift the top frame up and drop it into the bottom frame. Move the legs around as necessary to get them started in the holes and then drop them down until they are flush with the bottom of the lower frame. Use a hammer or sheer brute force if necessary to tap the upper frame down and into place.

Tip: Careful not to drop one end too deeply or the other end just gets jammed.



Make a smaller jig to locate the holes for the carriage bolts on the lower deck

Attach the legs at the bottom with carriage bolts in a similar manner as the ones on the upper level. Make a jig that fits the 2 x 4 frame, mark, then drill and bolt the legs to the frame. Be sure that the bottom edge of the legs is flush with the bottom edge of the 2x4 frame.

Check the legs for square to the bottom deck and tighten the nuts down. Check the upper deck for square and tighten those nuts down. Be careful not to suck the head of the carriage bolt too deeply into the soft wood.





Attach the castors to the bottom of the bench



Take care not to hit the existing bolts and screws with the castor's screws!

Installing the castors

Install castors on the bottom frame of the potting bench. Two of them should be the kind that swivel and lock, and the other two should be fixed. This will facilitate steering. Also, choose castors with a fastening plate not larger than 5" x 3".

Turn the potting bench on its side on your workbench. Place the castor's fastening plate against the wooden frame. Mark the holes for the screws, pre drill and drive in the screws. Be careful not to drill into the carriage bolts or the screws used to attach the frame together. You may have to angle the screws a bit to miss the other fasteners.

Note: Alternatively, the legs can be made 2" longer and the castors eliminated.

Decking the top

The bench weighs a lot by now, so with the help of a friend, lift the potting bench down to the floor. Install the decking on the top just as you did on the bottom with one exception; leave the back edge flush to the side of the frame so you'll have the option of attaching a tool storage rack.

Cut, mark, pre-drill and attach the deck boards just as you did on the bottom deck.





Staple the wire to the back frame



The second half of the frame is attached over the wire and front is screwed to the back



Finished Potting Bench

Optional framed wire tool rack

Cut a frame out of 1x2 cedar or redwood. Cut two pieces at 24", 4 at 43" and two at 30". Cut a piece of wire 24" wide by 46" long. Choose a wire that is fairly stiff because it will add strength and rigidity to the frame. Lay out the two 24" pieces and two 43" pieces in a rectangle. Lay the wire over it and staple the wire to the frame with a staple gun. Next, lay the two 43" pieces over the 43" ones and the two 30" pieces over the shorter side pieces. Use 1¼" or 1½" screws to attach the two sides of the frame together. Three per side and four per top and bottom will do the trick

Attach the wire frame to the potting bench on the back edge where the decking is flush. Place it so that the frame sits on top of the bench and the two longer 30" legs drop down the back. Center it and use two 2" screws per side driven into the 2 x 6 frame. Don't forget to pre drill.



Finished Potting Bench without the back

Now you're ready to pot, baby!



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