



## Saucy Bench

O, Thou Art a Saucy Bench!  
Classic garden furniture with an English bent

This bench has a stalwart Victorian personality with excellent stability. It will last a lifetime. Plus, it's easy. If you've never built your own garden stuff, this is the perfect entry point.

### Materials:

- Bench seat - One 8' piece of 2" x 12" pine
- Undercarriage - One 6' piece of roughsawn 1" x 8"
- Legs - One 4' piece of roughsawn 1" x 10"
- 2" exterior grade screws
- Shellac
- Milk paint
- Water-based urethane

### Tools

- Japanese handsaw
- Jigsaw
- Drill
- Drill and driver bits
- Chisel
- Safety equipment
- Tape measure
- Pencil

### Steps:



Japanese hand saw



Jigsaw

### Sit to be Tried

Start by cutting the bench seat to a length of six feet, cutting off any splits at the ends. Next, cut the undercarriage 6" shorter than the seat (which will leave a three-inch overhang on each end). Mark the location for the legs, roughly eight inches in from each end of the undercarriage.



Use a pail lid to trace an arc



Make a curvy design from cardboard and transfer it to the undercarriage

Use a plate, pot or pail lid to trace a quarter-circle at each end of the undercarriage. Locate the arc so that, after it has been cut out, there is enough wood left at the top edge to support the overhanging seat (about 2" of thickness).

Next, draw a decorative design on the undercarriage. Use drawing tools or cardboard cutouts to sketch a shape that's pleasing. Cut along the lines with a jigsaw.



Undercarriage and leg

### **Leggin' It**

Design and cut out the legs. Each leg should be 14" - 16" tall. Make sure that your decorative scrolling occupies the middle portion of the leg, so you leave the board full-width at the top and bottom, for maximum strength.

Now you are about to cut a slot joint to join the legs to the undercarriage. This next bit makes no sense until you're actually executing it, so don't worry if your brain contracts peevishly while reading.



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Measure up from the bottom of the undercarriage



Measure down from the top of the leg



Use a chisel to cut the end of the slot

### Slot in My Backyard

Carefully measure the thickness of the boards that make up the legs, because that thickness is the exact width of the slot you need. Mine was exactly one inch thick. The length of the slot is determined by the depth of the undercarriage, because the two boards slide into each other, slot into slot, so the slots must be the exact same dimension. With me?

So measure the depth of the undercarriage carefully and divide that number by half. At the centre top of each leg, draw a slot half the depth of the undercarriage. On the undercarriage, draw an identical slot from the bottom of the undercarriage up to the halfway point.

Cut out all four slots and adjust them if necessary so that the tops of the legs are flush with the top of the undercarriage.

**Tip:** A Japanese pull saw and a chisel will help you make clean, controlled cuts for slot joints. A jigsaw will work as well but may not be as tidy; go slowly for maximum precision.



Apply glue to the surfaces of the slot joint



Completed slot-joint assembly



Add some screws for added strength

### Get a Glue

Glue the slot joints together with exterior grade carpenter's glue. For added strength, screw the joints together at the top. Pre-drill and counter-sink screws at a 45-degree angle, joining the legs to the undercarriage.

The feet that attach to the bottom of the legs add stability. Cut each foot four inches longer and two inches wider than the bottom end of the leg. Cut the corners of the feet in a modified 'S' shape to add detail.

Attach the feet to the legs with glue and screws driven through the bottom of the feet. Seal the screw heads with silicone sealer.



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## Stained for Life

Sand sharp edges on all pieces. The texture of the rough sawn legs and undercarriage is interesting so just sand them enough to remove sliver danger.

Shellac the undercarriage, legs and feet to stop pitch oozing, and then paint them with a thin coat of milk paint. Thin milk paint leaves the knots and some of the grain showing through. Seal all the painted surfaces with water based urethane.

Stain the seat with aniline stain (available at Lee Valley Tools), then coat it with clear shellac to prevent sap seepage. Follow with several coats of water-based urethane.



Locate and attach the feet to the legs



Attach the undercarriage assembly to the finished bench seat



Completed bench upside-down on the workbench

## Toe Much

Attach the undercarriage to the seat by toe-screwing (angling the screw) through the undercarriage and into the seat. Drive five or six screws into the bench seat along both sides of the undercarriage.

### Tip:

If the seat doesn't sit flat, use a hand plane to take down the high spots on the undercarriage and legs. The screws can pull out some of the wonkiness, but its best if the seat surface is flush with the undercarriage to begin with.



Completed bench



Completed bench from the side



It helps to make a small prototype to get a feel for the finished bench

