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Classic Project

In this plan you'll find:

- Step-by-step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Construction drawings and related photos.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.

Tissue Box Cover

GIFT SHOP Easy-To-Make Gift Projects

Tissue Box Cover

Bill of Materials
(all dimensions actual)

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd.
A	End	3/4 x 5 1/4 x 5 1/2	2
B	Side	3/4 x 4 1/2 x 5 1/2	2
C	Top	3/4 x 5 1/4 x 5 1/4	1
D	Veneer	6 x 6"	4

* Veneer is oversize to allow for final trimming.

3/8 in. wide rabbet all around. Baltic birch plywood is measured in millimeters, and actually measures a little under 3/8 in. thick, so even with the addition of the veneer the 3/8 in. rabbet width was adequate. If you use some other plywood, you may need to cut the rabbet a little wider in order to accommodate both the plywood and veneer.

Refer to the full-size pattern for the tissue hole oval. The edges of the oval are rounded on the router table, using a 1/8 in. radius bearing-guided roundover bit. The edges of the top arc broken slightly, but take care not to sand the corners of the box, lest you break through the veneer.

To finish the veneer, first sand it very lightly with 120-grit paper. Again, stay

away from the corners. Vacuum up all dust. Next, mix up some wood dust with glue, and fill any seams in the marquetry. If you prefer, instead of the wood dust and glue mixture, you can substitute colored wax sticks. Sand the box lightly with 150-grit paper, and then finish with either oil or lacquer.

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WJC011

Dressed-up tissue boxes are hardly a novel idea, but our cover goes the standard color-printed cardboard box one better. In addition to providing an attractive sleeve for a standard 4½ in. square by 5¼ in. high tissue box, it lends the box a little added weight. No longer will you need two hands to extricate a stubborn tissue.

The box couldn't be any simpler to make. The ends (A) and sides (B) are ¾ in. thick hardwood plywood. Baltic birch plywood is ideal, if you have some. The two ends butt to the two sides. Just be sure that your cuts are accurate and square. Then apply a generous coat of glue, and clamp securely. When dry, sand the box as needed to remove any burrs or glue at the butt joints and corners.

The next step is to apply the marquetry veneer (D). The Special Techniques article on page 21 tells you how to create the floral pattern shown on our box. Feel free to create your own marquetry picture — or just use an attractive veneer alone if you don't feel up to the marquetry.

Whether you use our pattern, or a veneer alone, at this point you should have the four sides of veneer assembled face-down on contact paper. The overall size of each of the veneer sides should be about 6 in. by 6 in. The extra is trimmed after the veneer has been applied to the box.

The veneer is glued to the box two sides at a time. Use yellow glue, presser boards, and five clamps (Fig. 1). This may seem like a lot of clamps to use for such a small piece, but it's important that the veneer be glued firmly, especially at the edges. If it's not, there's the chance of chipping out. The presser board is simply ¾ in. thick particle-board cut to 6 in. square. It serves to distribute the clamp pressure to the entire veneer surface. When the glue is dry, remove the clamps and presser boards, and use the veneer saw to trim the excess (Fig. 2). Cut cross-grain first, then with the grain.

Using the same process, apply the two remaining sides of veneer. But when you do the final trimming, angle the veneer saw ever so slightly away from the box side to avoid scratching the marquetry. Our box top (C) is ¾ in. thick walnut, matching the walnut veneer used as a background for the marquetry. The top has a ⅜ in. deep by 38 © 2010 Woodworker's Journal

Tissue Box Cover



⅜ in. wide rabbet all around. Baltic birch plywood is measured in millimeters, and actually measures a little under ⅜ in. thick, so even with the addition of the veneer the ⅜ in. rabbet width was adequate. If you use some other plywood, you may need to cut the rabbet a little wider in order to accommodate both the plywood and veneer.


Refer to the full-size pattern for the tissue hole oval. The edges of the oval are rounded on the router table, using a ⅜ in. radius bearing-guided roundover bit. The edges of the top are broken slightly, but take care not to sand the corners of the box, lest you break through the veneer.

To finish the veneer, first sand it very lightly with 120-grit paper. Again, stay

Bill of Materials (all dimensions actual)

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd.
A	End	¾ x 5¼ x 5½	2
B	Side	¾ x 4½ x 5½	2
C	Top	¾ x 5¼ x 5¼	1
D	Veneer	6 x 6*	4

* Veneer is oversize to allow for final trimming.

away from the corners. Vacuum up all dust. Next, mix up some wood dust with glue, and fill any seams in the marquetry. If you prefer, instead of the wood dust and glue mixture, you can substitute colored wax sticks. Sand the box lightly with 150-grit paper, and then finish with either oil or lacquer. 

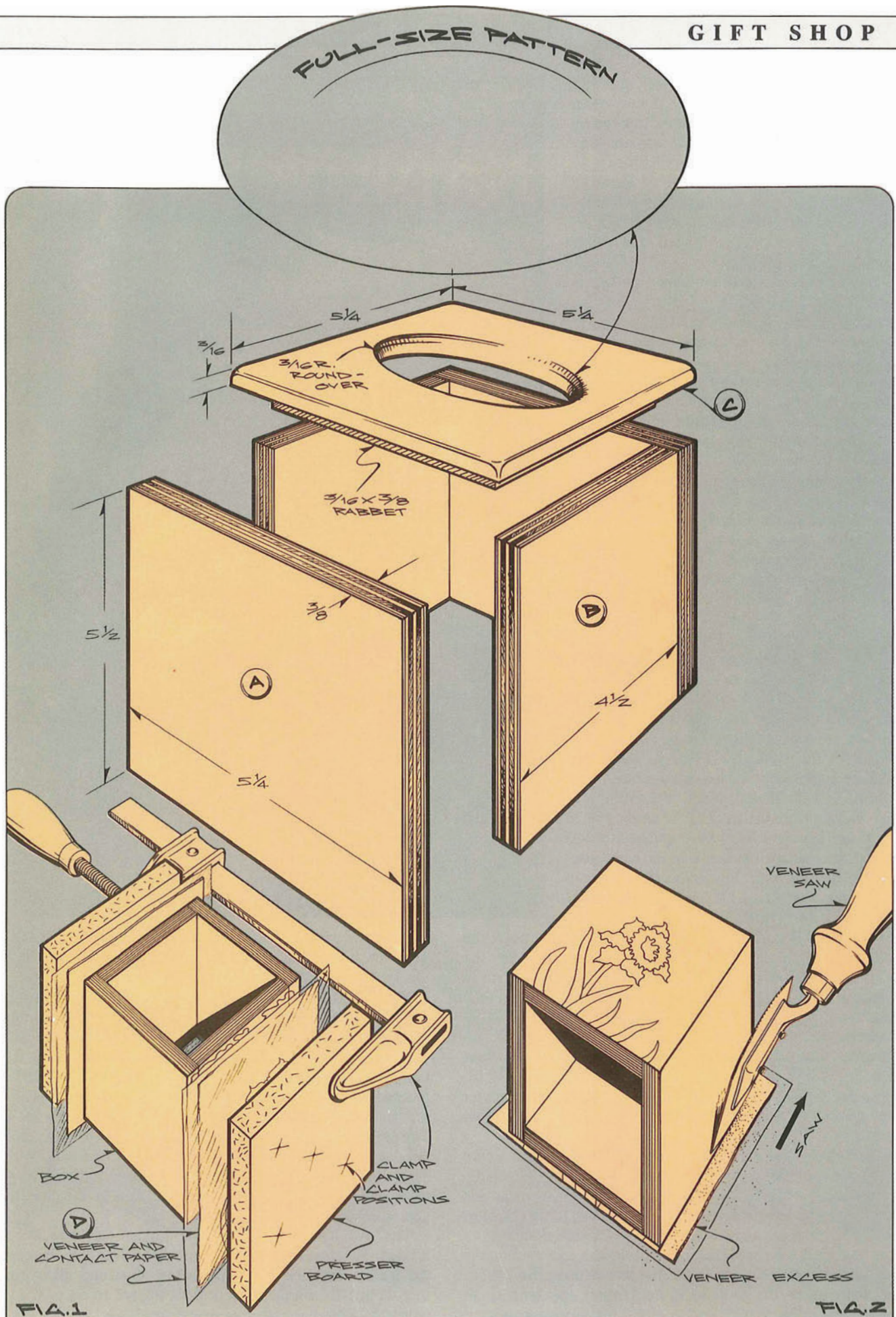
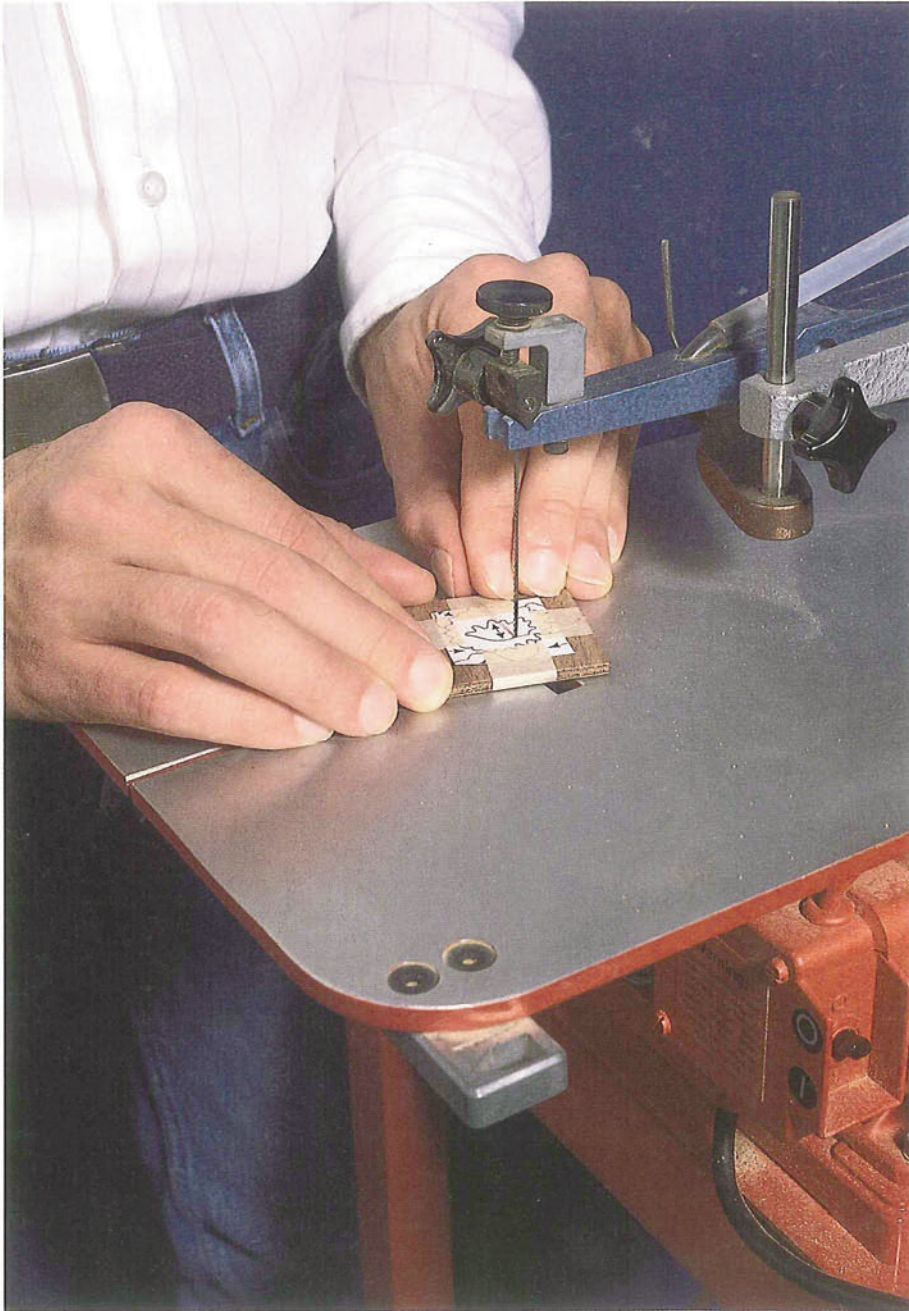


FIG. 1

FIG. 2



The direct method of creating a marquetry picture is used to produce identical copies of the same pattern. By identical we mean that the pictures will look exactly the same, right down to the color and grain direction of the veneer.

The direct method differs from the pad method in that a separate pad is made for each part. The parts are then assembled into the pictures. With the pad method, different species of veneer were all stacked in the same pad, and the parts then were shuffled to create different versions of the same pattern. The purpose of the direct method is to have maximum control over things like grain direction and color.

In the marquetry picture on our Tissue Box Cover project (page 38), the direct cutting method allowed us to repeat the same daffodil flower pattern on all four sides of the box. It also enabled us to

M A R Q U E T R Y: *The Direct Method*

by Nicholas Mariana

radiate the grain of the petals outward from the center of the flower. This helped lend the flower a more realistic appearance.

Pattern is especially important with the direct method. For the pieces to assemble easily without gaps, the pattern lines must be equal to the thickness of the saw blade used. Our full-size pattern is inked with a No. 0 technical pen. This pen draws a line that's .011 in. thick, which is equal to the thickness of a No. 1/0 jeweler's scroll or fretsaw blade.

If you are using our full-size pattern, all you need to do is make a number of photocopies of the pattern and cut out the parts individually. However, if you decide to make your own pattern, or copy some other pattern from a pattern book, then you'll want to pay close attention to line thickness.

One other thing you'll want to pay close attention to is the choice of veneer. For a marquetry picture to work you need to select veneers that not only contrast but also complement each other. The veneers we used for our daffodil work well with each other, and have the greatest contrast with the background veneer. One way to be sure of the veneers you select is to try them in a mock-up first. The mock-up also allows an opportunity to change things like grain direction to enhance an effect.

What You Need

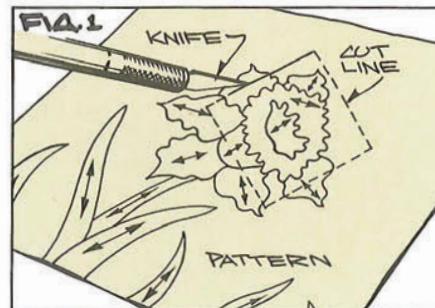
Before starting out, make sure you've got all your materials together. In addition to your saw, some extra blades, and the pattern photocopies, you'll need masking tape and, of course, the veneer. As shown on the key accompanying the full-size pattern, we used walnut for the background (A), light koa for the leaves (B) and stem (C), primavera for the petals (D), dark koa for the trumpet base (E) and center (F), and ash for the trumpet flare (G). The arrows on the pattern indicate grain direction.

You'll also need some contact paper on which to assemble the marquetry pictures once you've got the individual parts cut out. The best choice here is the

plastic stick-on window privacy sheeting that's sold in many hardware and building supply centers. You don't need much; a few square feet will suffice for the tissue box cover project.

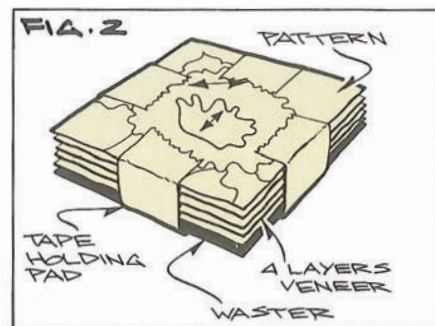
The Technique

Step 1: Cut out a separate pattern for each of the 17 shapes (16 flower parts plus the background) in the daffodil. Although you could make 17 separate photocopies and only cut out one piece from each photocopy, in practice you should be able to get more than one piece from a copy. Cut out a large enough area around each piece to allow for the masking tape that's used to hold each pad. Fig. 1 shows the approximate area that should be allowed, using the

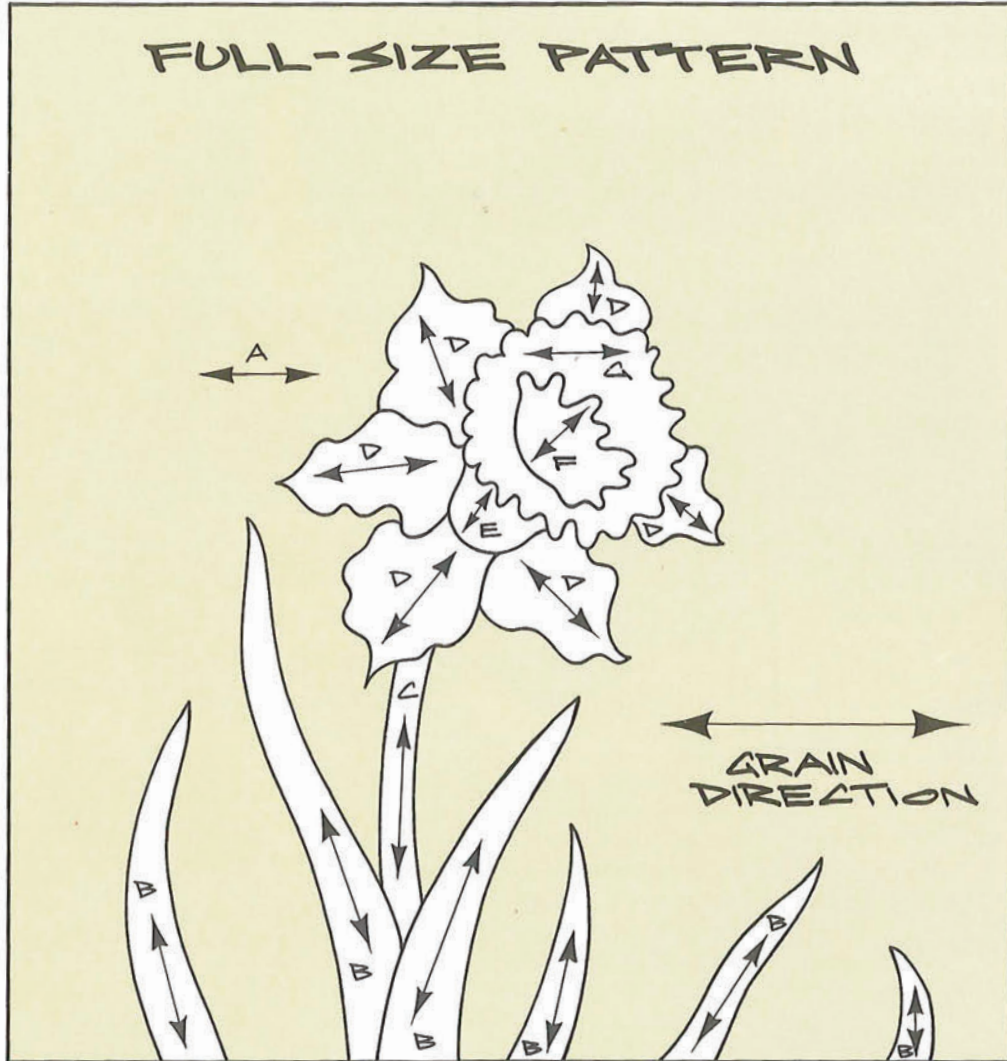


trumpet center as an example. We show a knife being used to cut the pattern paper, but scissors will do as well.

Step 2: Make a pad for each of the seventeen pieces. Each pad should be composed of four layers of the same veneer (matched carefully for color and



grain direction), sandwiched between the pattern above and a waster piece of veneer below. The waster piece is just a sturdy sheet of veneer that helps to prevent chip-out. Tape the pad securely on all four sides, as shown in Fig. 2.

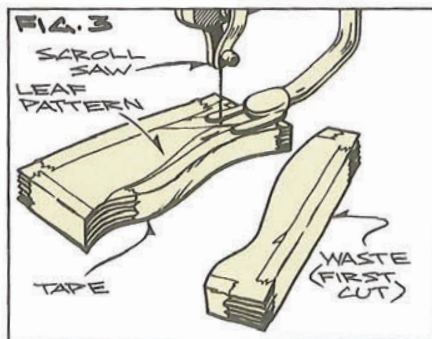


A = BACKGROUND (WALNUT)
 B = LEAVES (LIGHT KOA)
 C = STEM (LIGHT KOA)
 D = PETALS (PRIMAVERA)

E = TRUMPET BASE (DARK KOA)
 F = TRUMPET CENTER (DARK KOA)
 G = TRUMPET FLARE (ASH)

Note that although Fig. 2 shows a squarish pattern for the trumpet center, your pads for some other parts, such as the leaves and stem, will be more rectangular. Make the pads large enough so they can be easily controlled, but not so large as to unnecessarily waste the veneer.

Step 3: Cut out the various parts. As shown in Fig. 3, which illustrates a leaf pad being cut, you'll need to add more masking tape after each cut to hold the pad in register. Just be sure that the tape you add doesn't accidentally cover your



yet-to-be-cut pattern lines.

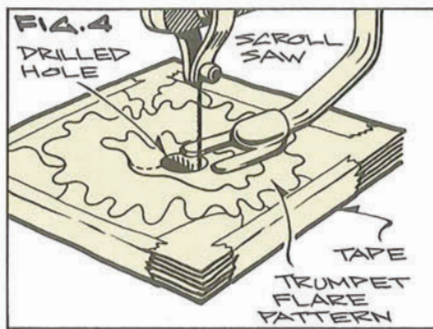
General cutting tips are to stay on the line, and run the saw slowly. If the saw is going too fast you'll not be able to follow the pattern lines faithfully. If you are cutting by hand with a fretsaw, be sure to keep the saw on a vertical plane. Any deviation from true vertical and the lower pieces in the pad won't be cut exactly on the pattern lines. If this happens, then the pieces won't fit together when you try to assemble them on the contact paper.

As shown, the leaves are cut in two

Special Techniques Continued

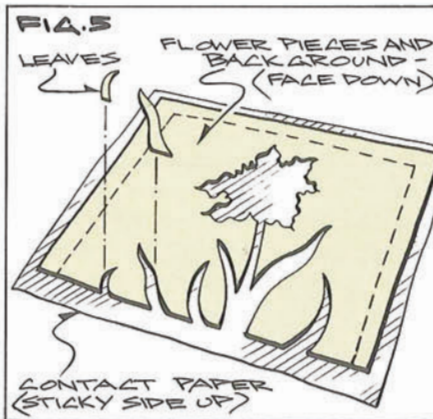
passes, working from the bottom to the point. The petals are cut using this same technique. Note that for the trumpet flare, however, you'll need to first drill a starter hole to insert the saw blade for the interior cut (Fig. 4). If any of the pattern parts that you intend to keep chip out during the cutting process, save the chips. They can be patched back in later.

In order to cut the background you



should make a pad exactly as you did for the other parts. It will just be larger, about 6 in. by 6 in. square. Be sure to add tape after each part of the background is cut away to keep the pad in register. Note that the grain direction of the background is horizontal.


Step 4: All that remains is to assemble the marquetry pictures on the contact paper, which is laid sticky-side-up on your work surface (Fig. 5). Start by laying down the background pieces.



Then add the various flower parts. Remember that all parts go face down, since that will be the outside face once

they're glued onto the tissue box cover and the contact paper is removed. Finally, fill in any chips that may have broken out. If a chip is missing, you can always make a patch from some of the scrap.

Don't worry if everything doesn't fit up perfectly. Small gaps between the parts will usually disappear at the glue-up stage. This is because glue tends to swell the veneer slightly, closing up those gaps. Larger gaps can also be filled after glue-up, using a mixture of wood dust and glue.

You should now have four completed marquetry daffodils in walnut backgrounds, ready to apply to your tissue box cover. 

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