

WOODWORKER'S JOURNAL

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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.

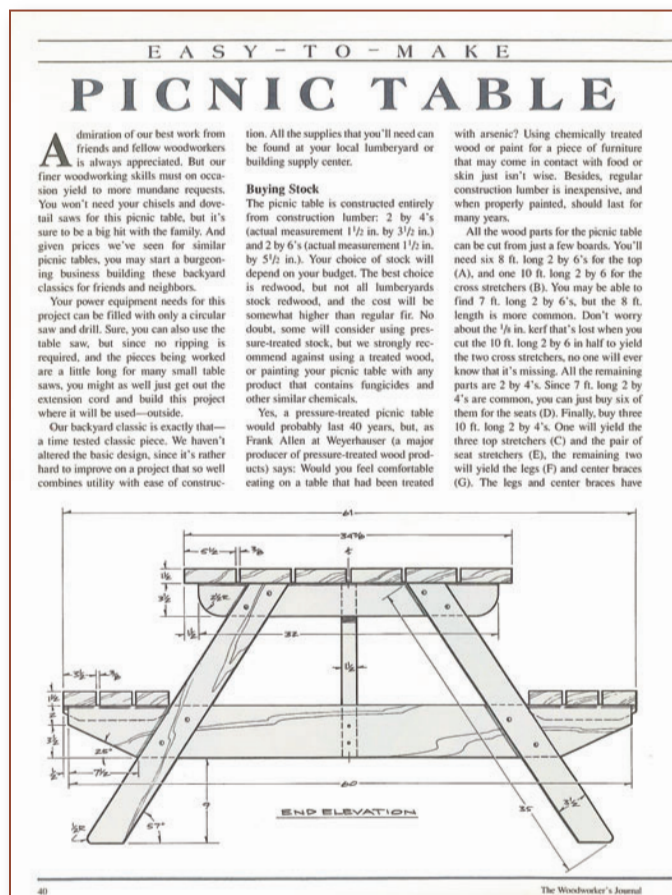


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Easy-To-Make Picnic Table



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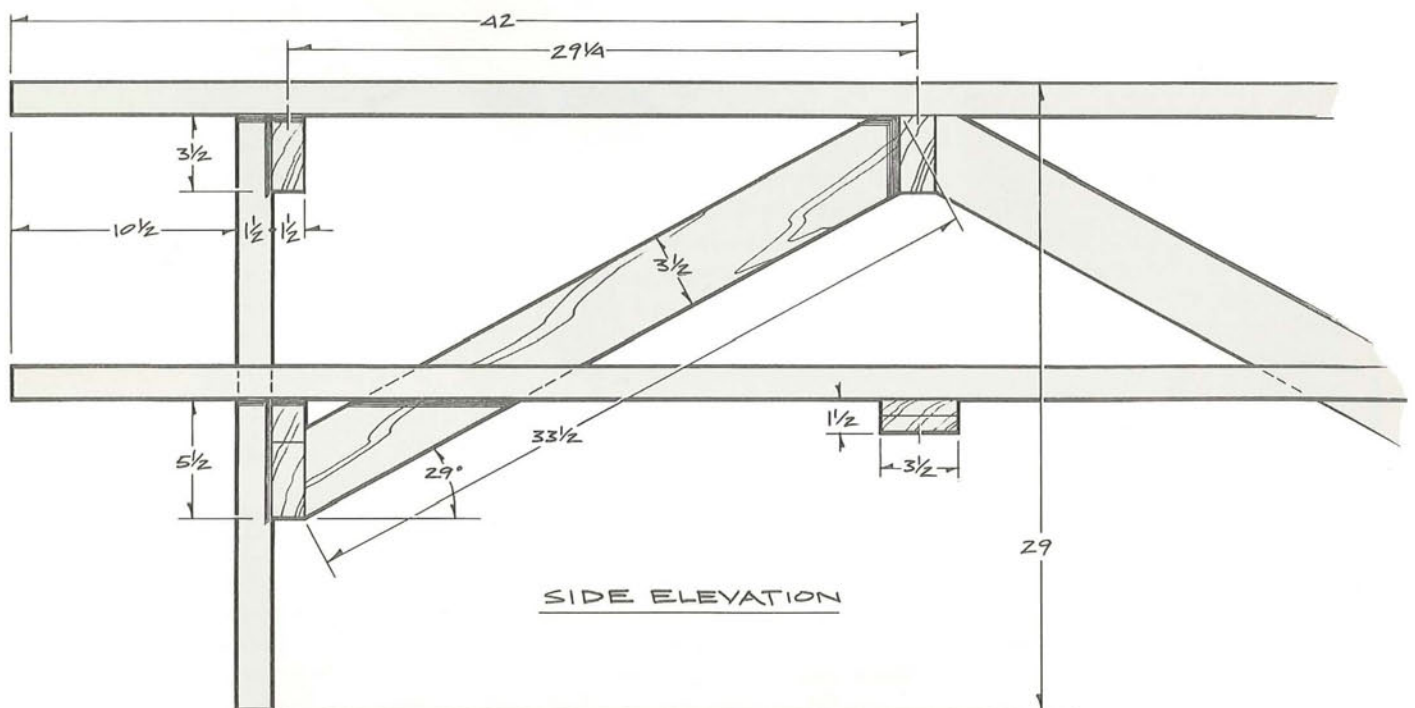
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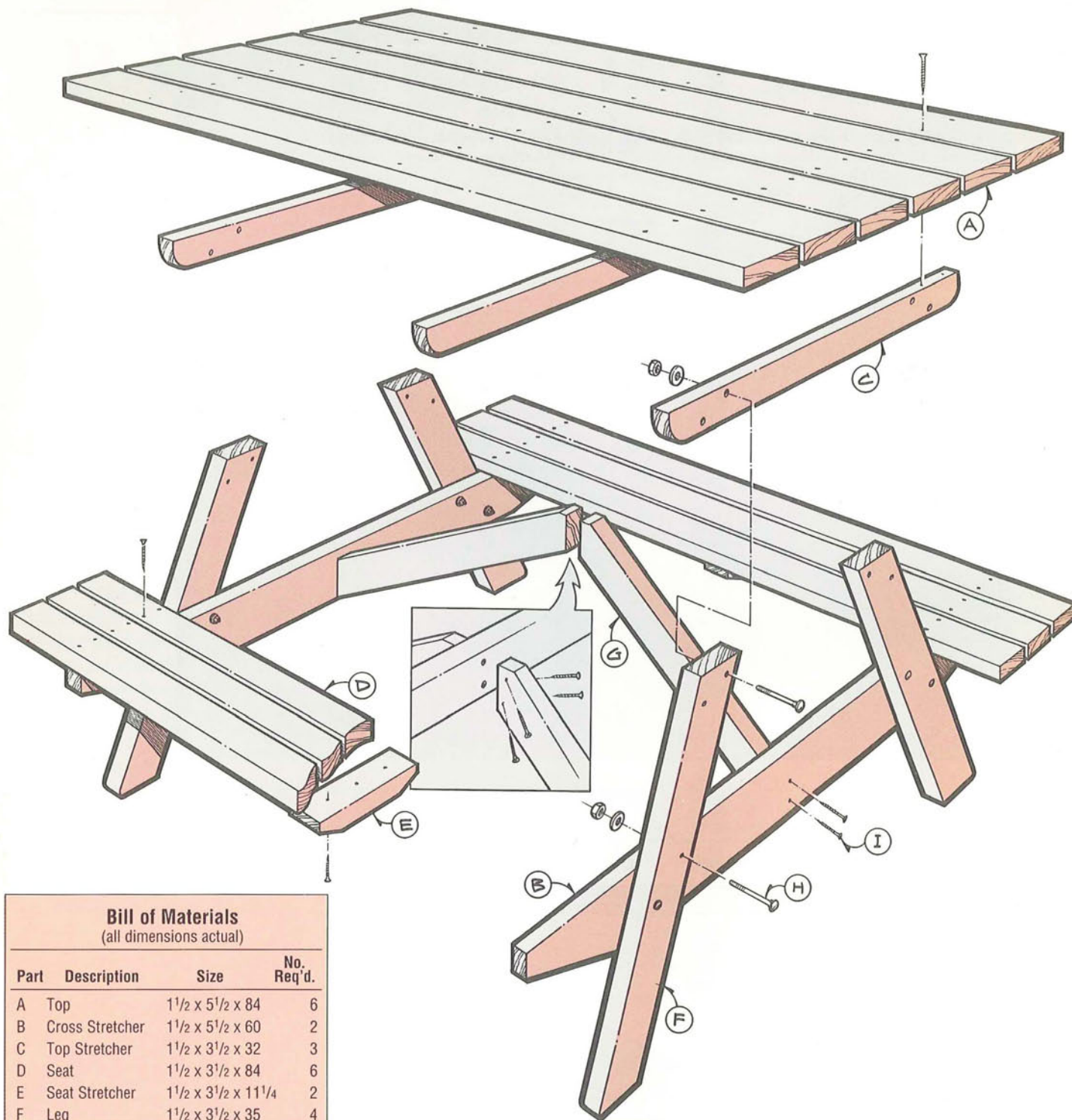
Our backyard classic is exactly that—a time tested classic piece. We haven't altered the basic design, since it's rather hard to improve on a project that so well combines utility with ease of construc-

Yes, a pressure-treated picnic table would probably last 40 years, but, as Frank Allen at Weyerhaeuser (a major producer of pressure-treated wood products) says: Would you feel comfortable eating on a table that had been treated

All the wood parts for the picnic table can be cut from just a few boards. You'll need six 8 ft. long 2 by 6's for the top (A), and one 10 ft. long 2 by 6 for the cross stretchers (B). You may be able to find 7 ft. long 2 by 6's, but the 8 ft. length is more common. Don't worry about the $\frac{1}{8}$ in. kerf that's lost when you cut the 10 ft. long 2 by 6 in half to yield the two cross stretchers, no one will ever know that it's missing. All the remaining parts are 2 by 4's. Since 7 ft. long 2 by 4's are common, you can just buy six of them for the seats (D). Finally, buy three 10 ft. long 2 by 4's. One will yield the three top stretchers (C) and the pair of seat stretchers (E), the remaining two will yield the legs (F) and center braces (G). The legs and center braces have







Bill of Materials
(all dimensions actual)

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd.
A	Top	1½ x 5½ x 84	6
B	Cross Stretcher	1½ x 5½ x 60	2
C	Top Stretcher	1½ x 3½ x 32	3
D	Seat	1½ x 3½ x 84	6
E	Seat Stretcher	1½ x 3½ x 11¼	2
F	Leg	1½ x 3½ x 35	4
G	Center Brace	1½ x 3½ x 33½	2
H	Bolt/Nut/Washer	¾ x 3½ long	16 each
I	Screw	2½	76

angles cut on their ends, and to insure accuracy, it's usually a good idea to have a little extra stock to play with. Cutting these parts from the 10 ft. long boards allows this.

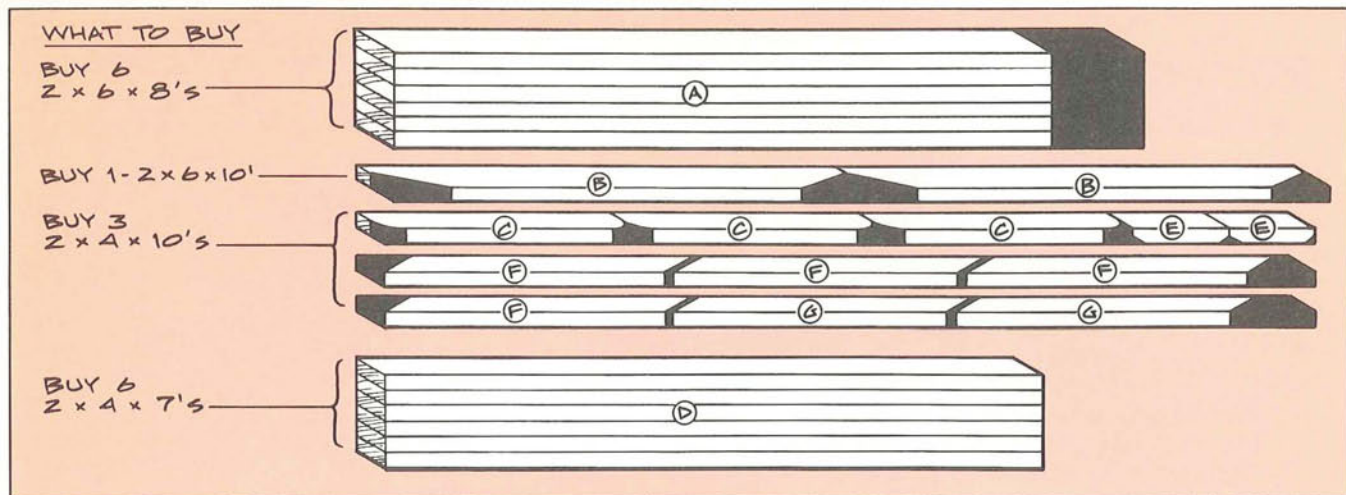
If you'd like a visual representation of our suggested stock layout, see What To Buy. Where we suggest buying exact

lengths that yield no waste, make certain to select boards that aren't damaged or checked on the ends. A little trimming of the seat boards won't affect the overall project, and will probably be needed just to clean up the factory ends, but any substantial shortening of these parts isn't recommended. If good boards can't be found, purchase longer boards and trim as needed to yield the specified final size. As always, when buying construction grade lumber for use in furniture,

remember that you'll probably need to pick through available stock to select boards that are straight and have a minimum of knots and other defects.

Cutting

Cut the various parts to the indicated sizes. A speed square (available at your local hardware store or building supply center) is handy for making accurate crosscuts with a circular saw. Just locate the speed square so the blade is in line



with your cutoff mark. Gauging the base of the circular saw against the speed square insures a straight and accurate cut. The speed square (sometimes called rafter square) can also be used to lay out the angles on the ends of the legs and center brace, if you don't have a protractor. However, don't cut the center braces yet. These won't be cut to final length until later. The $\frac{1}{2}$ in. radius at the bottom end of the legs and the $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. radius on the top stretcher ends can be laid out with a compass, then cut with a hand-held jigsaw and sanded smooth.

Assembly

When working outdoors, it's often difficult to do things on an uneven surface, such as is usually the case with a lawn. A four-by-eight sheet of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick plywood (if one is available) serves as a handy work surface, and in several other capacities, as we'll see.

Start by making the top/top stretcher subassembly. Find and mark the center point along the length of the top boards, then make index marks on-center $29\frac{1}{4}$ in. to either side of that center point. Also mark the center point along the top edge of the three top stretchers. Now position two of the top boards $\frac{3}{8}$ in. apart on-center to the center marks you made on the top stretchers. Several $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick spacer sticks will come in handy for maintaining the suggested $\frac{3}{8}$ in. spacing between the top boards.

Secure the top boards to the top stretchers with the $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long decking screws (I). For long-term durability, coated or stainless-steel screws outlast many galvanized screws. The important thing when assembling the top boards to the three top stretchers is to make certain

the parts are square. Use a framing square to check squareness before firing in the screws. If you start with 8 ft. long boards for the top, you may want to assemble first, and then mark and trim the assembled top to the final 7 ft. length. If you use 7 ft. long boards or cut to final length first, the plywood edge comes in handy as a visual aid for keeping all six top boards aligned evenly. Using a power drill or drill/driver to drive the screws should result in the screws being pulled in just a little below the wood's surface. Decking screws have exceptionally deep threads and should pull in easily without pre-drilling pilot holes or countersinking.

Next, make the leg/cross stretcher subassemblies. An easy way to correctly position each pair of legs with respect to the cross stretcher is to butt the bottom end of the legs against a flat surface, such as a straight-edged board or a one-by-two lath strip nailed flush with the edge of your plywood sheet. Then lay the cross stretcher in position, 9 in. up from the bottom end of the legs. When spread apart properly, the outside edges of the legs should touch a point $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the cross stretcher ends, or exactly where the 25-degree bevel on the cross stretcher ends terminates (see End Elevation). Once the parts are positioned correctly, drill the $\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter bolt holes as shown for the bolts (H) that secure these parts (if you are working outside, without a sheet of plywood below, use a block to back up the hole drilling so as to not ruin a bit in dirt or stone). The nuts should be tight on the bolts, but not excessively. Repeat this assembly procedure with the remaining leg/cross stretcher subassembly.

Next up is joining the leg/cross stretcher subassemblies to the top/top stretcher subassembly. Lay the top upside down on a flat surface (once again, that sheet of plywood will serve well here), then locate the leg/cross stretcher subassemblies in position. Temporarily clamp them in place, while you drill the bolt holes (same $\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter as before), then add the carriage bolts, washers, and nuts.

Now cut the center braces. The best system here is to cut one end first, then trim back the other end to fit. Use a carpenter's square to check that the leg/cross stretcher is square to the top while you get the proper center brace length. Secure the first center brace with two screws through the center top stretcher (see detail), then toe-screw the other center brace. The lower ends of the center braces are secured with screws through the cross stretchers.

All that's left is to add the seats. First screw the seat stretchers to the seats (on-center from the ends), then mount the seat/seat stretcher subassembly to the table. Use the $\frac{3}{8}$ in. spacer sticks that you cut earlier to maintain proper spacing of the seat boards.

A Finish

A stain and clear finish may look best when your picnic table is new, but for maximum protection, an opaque stain or a paint would be the better choices. Take extra care to thoroughly coat the leg ends that will rest on the ground, since they are the first place decay will occur. Like any outdoor furniture, the finish should be renewed regularly, or whenever any wear occurs.



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Internet Production Coordinator