



WATERBORNE FINISHES



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Saving Scraps For Special Projects

Rather than consigning them to the garbage, or using them as kindling for the summer campfire at the lake, save your scraps so you can make a unique piece of furniture or woodwork down the road.

BY JERRY HAIGH

Okay, hands up...who can honestly say you never have any scraps left over after a project? Clear a small shelf in your shop so you can store all of your scraps there, out of the way of all the action. They do not have to be all the same length.

When there are enough accumulated scraps run them through a thickness planer. Or if you prefer, use a hand plane. Either way the strips will be easier to glue if they are all the same thickness when the time comes.

Sort by colour

Lay them out side by side, making sure each one is straight-edged by running them through the jointer and then the table saw, so that they can be properly glued. Now for the first fun part. The colours and kinds of wood can be re-arranged. It may be wise to leave the layout overnight to see how it looks, or have a second try at arranging them until you like the pattern.

Glue the arranged pieces together. Some shorter pieces can be butt joined as long as the two are the same width. This is easy to do with the table saw. Butt joining pieces will weaken the panel, but sometimes that's not of much concern. It all depends on how the finished panel will be used.

Next, it's off to the workbench where the strips are glued and clamped side by side. Cauls are applied and clamped at each end to keep the pieces from buckling. Narrow strips of newspaper laid on top of the work prevent wooden cauls from sticking to the piece.



Cauls are Necessary – Cauls help keep these thin strips aligned during glue-up. Without them the panels will be warped, or even impossible to laminate in the first place.



Scrape Before it Hardens – After the glue has cured, but before the glue has hardened, scrape the excess off. This will make your life easier down the road, and be easier on your machinery.



Accurate Crosscuts – If one end of your panel is uneven it can be trimmed at 90° with a table saw crosscut sled. You will also notice where Haigh marked lines at the butt joints, so the panel could be crosscut at those lines, removing the butt joints.

After an hour the glue is set. Take the board out of the clamps and remove the surplus glue and any newspaper with a paint scraper. It's easy to see that the long strips are not all of the same width. This will add to the charm of the finished work.

At this point the glued board will not be exactly even, so it needs to be sanded on both sides. You can start with a hand plane to remove the high spots, then move to a random orbit sander on one side. It need not be the finished sanding job at this point. Depending on how much butt joining there has been in the piece, it might be safe to run the panel through a thickness planer. As long as there's a decent amount of strip overlap beside the butt joints it will likely be fine.



Another Caul – When gluing the crosscut sections together, and for adding any edge strips, a caul or two will come in handy.

Short strips?

After one of the edges has been run through the jointer to make sure one side is indeed straight, the piece can be squared off at one end. This can be done in one of many ways. Then a set square is used to draw lines across every one of the butt-end joints, perpendicular to the grain of each strip. Those lines can be cut through, and both ends cut right across. There's nothing wrong with not cutting the panel into short lengths. If you do leave the panel as longer lengths it will be stronger, but it won't have as interesting of a look.

Shift everything

Once the cross cuts are made and the strips are in line they can be shifted sideways so that a random pattern appears. This gives another opportunity for artistic license. Now it's back to the



Serving Trays – A great way to decorate an otherwise simple piece, a small section of short scraps are now the focal point of these trays.

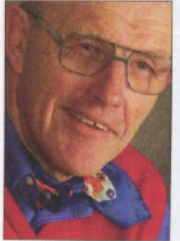
clamps, the glue and the caul. Next comes a second trimming so there are right angles to the shape (using a square pattern is an option now).

Depending on how I'm using the panels, I sometimes like to add thin pieces for an edge. Having said that, if the panel is too

large there can be some cross grain gluing problems, and the joint may fail over time. Any strips that run parallel to the grain are going to be fine, but the pieces running perpendicular to the grain may be problematic.

More elaborate pieces are possible. Trays, side tables and so on. Skirts, edges, and table legs may be anything one fancies, though surrounding the panel with a strong frame, similar to a frame and panel door, is a sound approach. The frame will provide strength, while the panel can move with seasonal changes in humidity.

The time taken on the simplest jobs is mostly waiting for the glue to set. Three or four coasters or hot plates from one collection of scraps can be designed, cut, sanded and finished in under two hours. Tables, trays and other projects will inevitably take longer. I'm sure there are countless design options to show off this sort of gluing approach.



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