

Gardening



Potting bench.

HOW TO BUILD A SIMPLE POTTING BENCH

By Michael J. McGroarty

The potting bench that you are about to read about is not fancy, but very functional. It is also very easy to build and use. Except it doesn't have any legs! Don't panic, having a legless potting bench is actually a benefit; I'll get to that a little later.

The potting bench described in this article is actually identical to the potting bench that we have been using for years in our backyard nursery, and it has served us well, potting up tens of thousands of plants. I like it because it is large enough to pot up around ten small plants at a time, and it holds a significant amount of soil.

However, since I originally wrote this article, I designed and built a potting bench for home gardeners that you may like better. There are lots of photos and step-by-step plans for building it on this page: <http://www.freeplants.com/free-potting-bench-plans.htm>

On the above page you will also find a photo of one of my other potting bench designs, an outhouse with a flip out potting bench! It's unique, that's for sure.

O.K., back to my legless potting bench.

Here's a short list of what you'll need to build Mike's rugged, but functional potting bench.

Tools: A screwdriver, a small box wrench or crescent wrench, or if you have a 1/4" drive socket set that's even better. A tape measure, a small square, a drill, and a power saw.

Materials: One full sheet (4' by 8') of 3/4" treated plywood. Make sure it is treated so it will last a long time. Untreated plywood does not hold up well at all outdoors.

15 doohickeys (you know, those little metal angle brackets, or corner brackets used to connect two boards together at a right angle. These metal brackets are bent in a 90-degree angle and have two holes drilled in them.

30 bolts with nuts 1-1/4" long, and the correct size to fit the angle brackets you buy.

60 flat washers that fit the bolts

When you see the photos (<http://www.freeplants.com>) Notice that one end of the bench is resting on the potting soil pile, and the other on concrete blocks. Not having legs is really an advantage because you can get the potting bench much closer to your potting soil pile.

Before you start, draw this out on paper so you know exactly what each piece of wood is supposed to look like before make any cuts. This way you won't make a mistake that will ruin your piece of plywood.

Lay the plywood on a flat surface, like your garage floor. From one end measure in 16" and draw a line across the sheet of plywood. With your saw, cut along this line. The piece that you are cutting off is 16" by 48".

Now draw a diagonal line across the smaller piece of plywood. (The one you just removed from the sheet.) Cut along this line. You should now have two triangular pieces that measure 48" on one side and 16" on one side.

These pieces should be in the shape of a right triangle. Now you are going to remove

a small piece from the pointed end of the triangular pieces. To do this, measure 24" from the right angle, along the 48" side and make a mark. Using a small square draw a line from this mark across the pointed end of the plywood. This line should be at a right angle to the 48" side of the board. This line should only be about 4" long. Cut along this line, removing the small piece from the pointed end. Discard the small piece you cut off. The piece you have left should be 16" on one end, 24" on one side, and about 4" where you made the cut to remove the pointed end.

The two smaller boards you have left should be identical. These are the sides for your potting bench.

Now back to the larger piece of wood. This piece should now measure 80" by 48". From the long side measure over 16" and draw a line from one end to the other. Cut along this line. The piece you are removing should be 16" by 80", leaving a piece 32" by 80".

These two pieces will serve as the bottom and the back of your potting bench. Take the back piece and stand it on edge, on top of the piece that will serve as the bottom of the bench to get an idea of how your potting bench is going to fit together. Make five marks where you will mount the angle brackets that will hold these two pieces together. Just space the five brackets along the two boards, making sure not to put any too close to the end so they don't interfere when you install the two end pieces. Just keep the brackets about 1-1/2" from each end.

Note: Once you have the brackets installed and the bolts all tight you might want to cut off the ends of the bolts and file them smooth if they are sticking out so far as to be a hazard when you are handling the potting bench.

Once you have all five brackets installed and the back of the potting bench mounted to the bottom, you can then install the two sidepieces. With the two sidepieces installed you are now the proud owner of a legless potting bench. You can install legs if you'd like to, but I like mine without legs because I can get it much closer to my pile of potting soil.

What I do is rest one end of the bench right on the pile of potting soil, and then support the other end with a saw horse, concrete blocks, or milk crates. By placing one end right on the soil pile, it is very easy to shovel the soil onto the bench. Not having legs also makes the bench easier to store and move around.

When I want to use it as a table for making cuttings, I just put a sawhorse under each end.

There you have it. Mike's famous legless potting bench. It ain't pretty, but it's very functional.

Michael J. McGroarty is the author of this article. Visit his most interesting website, <http://www.freeplants.com> and sign up for his excellent gardening newsletter, and grab a free copy of his E-book, "Easy Plant Propagation". For photos on this article see <http://www.freeplants.com>. •

Political

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attempting to put their collective fingers in the dike, trying like hell to hold back the flood waters, praying that the Federal bailout money gets here before the state ends up in bankruptcy court.

Not even sure if a state can end up in bankruptcy court, but you get the idea, right?

Instead of taking on the special interest groups that seem to own Sacramento like the trial lawyers, the teacher's unions, and Indian gaming interests, Sac Town bureaucrats, led by the seemingly castrated Terminator, are waiting and stalling, praying for manna from heaven. Or money from Mr. Obama. Which may be the same, according to some Obamaites.

Of course, we all share in this fine mess. We are the folks who send these people to Sacramento, again and again. We are the folks who don't take the time to vote. Can't find the time to read the voter's pamphlet, but sure have enough time to research that third plasma TV for the game room, right?

So there is more than enough blame to go around. But it is our elected officials' mandate to figure out a way to deal with this "challenge." And not just put a band-aid on the problem and hope that it will somehow go away. Or pass this financial fiasco down the road to the lucky guy or gal who takes Arnold's place next year. Somewhere, Gray Davis must be having a good laugh. Again!

Frankly

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understand that many kids, for whatever convoluted reason, attach role model status to pro athletes. That's their choice, their right. The media over-saturation and over-glorification of these guys rolls on unencumbered, and the horse is way out of the barn on that one.

The local sports radio stations went into red alert once the Ramirez story broke. Like someone had died. Seems to me that they gave it more coverage that the horrific car crash that killed Angel pitcher Nick Adenhardt and two of his friends.

Remember, no one died here. A guy allegedly cheated, got caught, sent to his room, and will be back on the field in the first week of July. And that guy will probably receive a standing ovation from most of Los Dodger fans, who will conveniently suffer a case of selective amnesia. Bet on it.

Like the fan who was photographed hoisting a sign that opined: "Manny wouldn't cheat!" Do you think that guy was as forgiving to good old helium head Barry Bonds when the despised Giant patrolled left field at the Ravine before he was blackballed from the Grand Old Game? By the way, Barry Bonds could still probably ante up 20 home runs for someone. I'm just saying. And I hate the guy--not cuz he cheated, but because he sure comes off as a first class A-hole.


So where does that leave the Dodgers, who have built a significant part of their marketing plan around the fun-loving (ask some of the Red Sox about that, by the way), dreadlocked outfielder? Well, the Blue Crew suffered two quick losses to the hated Giants right after Man-Ram was jettisoned by the suits in baseball hierarchy. Someone by the name of Xavier Paul was called up to take the open roster spot.

With Ramirez's middle-of-the-order power adios'd, a couple of the young Dodger vets are going to have to step up and provide power. First baseman James Loney needs to start driving the ball over the outfield fences; at this time he has raked a colossal zero home runs, I believe. And *Karaoke Jen's* new fave, catcher Russell Martin, also needs to provide some firepower.

The Dodgers will be fine. They play in a pathetic division. They should have enough in the tank to fend off the bottom-feeders in the West. A five to eight game lead by July 3 should be obtainable. And then Ramirez should return, and bygones will be bygones, at least for most folks.

Okay, hope that I didn't offend anyone out there. Actually, I do like to tweak it a little bit. But if you want to whine or opine, contact me at franklyplank@gmail.com.





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