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Dave Campbell  
Editorial Content Chief, *WOOD* magazine



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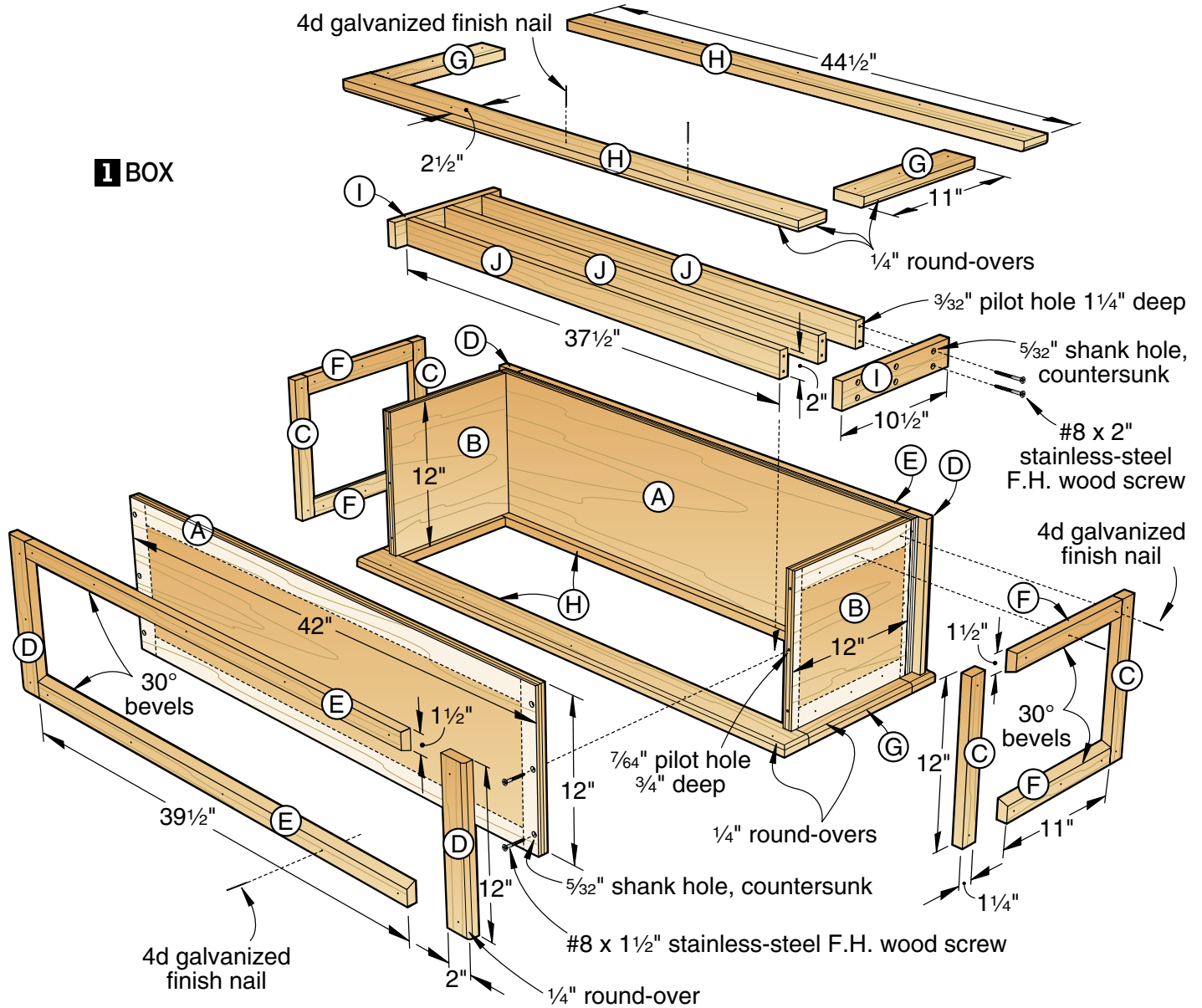


# freestanding planter box

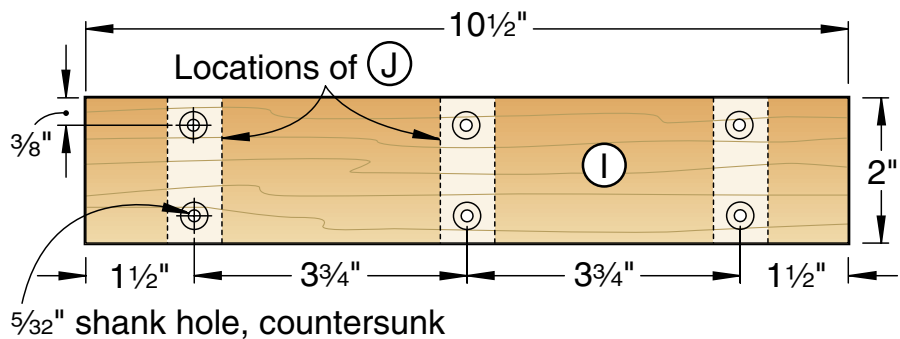


**Y**ou can locate this easy-to-build planter box anywhere in your yard. Use it to create a border—at the edge of a walkway or patio, for example. Place it in front of a window close to the sill or spaced farther away to make room for existing shrubbery. Because the 4x4 posts can be cut to any length, positioning the top of the box at just the right height is easy. Drive-in steel post bases (available at hardware stores and home centers) free you from the chore of digging postholes. And as the growing season wanes, replace summer flowers with colorful fall-, winter-, or holiday-themed arrangements, letting you enjoy your planter box year-round.

Locate the planter box under any first-story window in your home without drilling mounting holes into the side of the house.



**1a POT SUPPORT END**





## AT A GLANCE

■ Overall dimensions: The box is 16" wide × 44½" long × 13½" high, features adjustable mounting height, and holds three 10"-diameter flowerpots.

■ For the board feet of lumber and other items needed to build this project, see page 8.

### First make the box

**1** From ¾" exterior-grade plywood, cut the sides (A) and ends (B) to the sizes listed on the **Materials List**. (We used type BCX plywood.) Clamp the ends and sides in the configuration shown on **Drawing 1**, with the ends and edges flush and the good faces to the *outside*. Drill countersunk screw holes through the sides and into the ends and drive the screws. Finish-sand the outside of the box to 150 grit.

**2** From ¾"-thick cedar, cut the end vertical trim (C) and side vertical trim (D) to size. (Can't find ¾"-thick cedar boards? See the **Shop Tip**, below.) Then rout a ¼" round-over along the outside corner of each side vertical trim piece, where shown on **Drawing 1**, and finish-sand the parts. Now glue and nail the end vertical trim to the box assembly (A/B), aligning the trim ends with the top and bottom edges of the box and the trim outside edges with the box corners. (We secured the trim with Titebond III glue and 4d galvanized finish nails.) Next glue and nail the side vertical trim in place flush with the edge of the end vertical trim.

**Note:** Although we used cedar for our planter box, you also can use redwood or cypress.

**3** Measure the distance between the end vertical trim (C) and side vertical trim

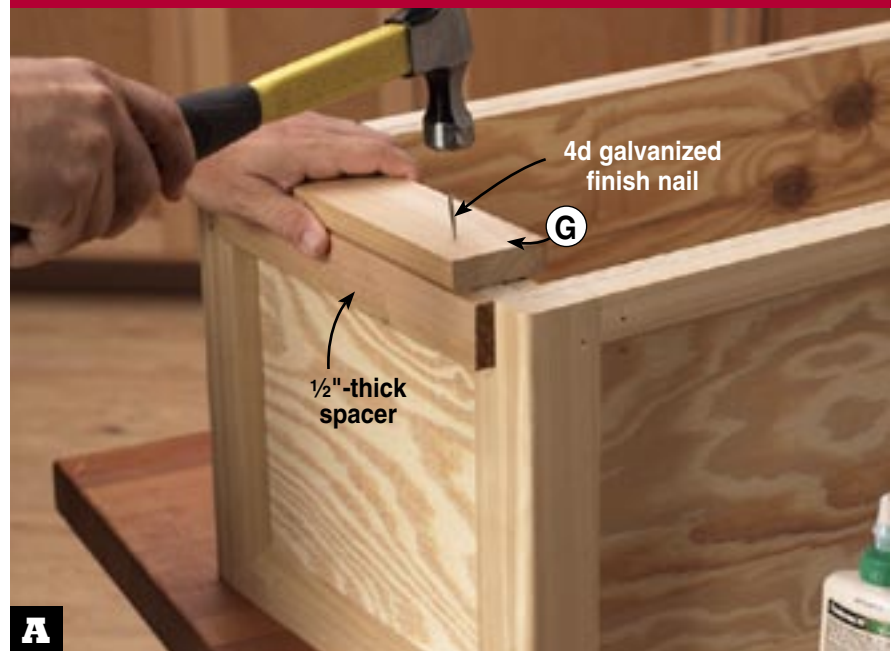
(D), and cut the side horizontal trim (E) and end horizontal trim (F) to fit. Then tilt your tablesaw blade 30° and bevel-rip one edge of parts E and F, where shown on **Drawing 1**. Finish-sand the parts. Now glue and nail the horizontal trim to the box assembly (A/B), flush at the top and bottom edges.

**4** Cut the end caps (G) to size. Rout ¼" round-overs along one edge of each part. Then referring to **Drawings 1** and **2a** for the orientation of the round-overs, nail and glue the end caps in place, as shown in **Photo A**.

**5** Measure the distance from the outside edge of one end cap (G) to the other end cap outside edge. Then cut the side caps (H) to this length. Rout ¼" round-overs along both ends and one edge of each cap. Now, aligning the round-overs on the side caps with the round-overs on the end caps, glue and nail the side caps in place. Finish-sand the cap frames (G/H).

**6** Make sure all the finish-nail heads are set below the surface, and then fill the holes with exterior wood filler. Let the filler dry, and sand it smooth.

### POSITION THE CAP WITH A SPACER



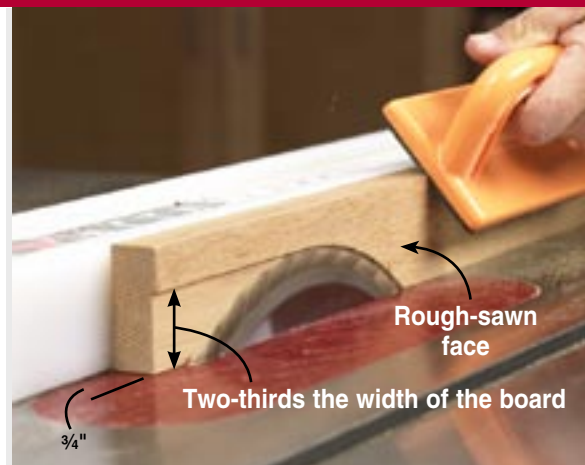
**A** Cut a ½"-thick spacer. Then apply glue, center the end cap (G) side-to-side, align the edge with the spacer, and nail it in place.

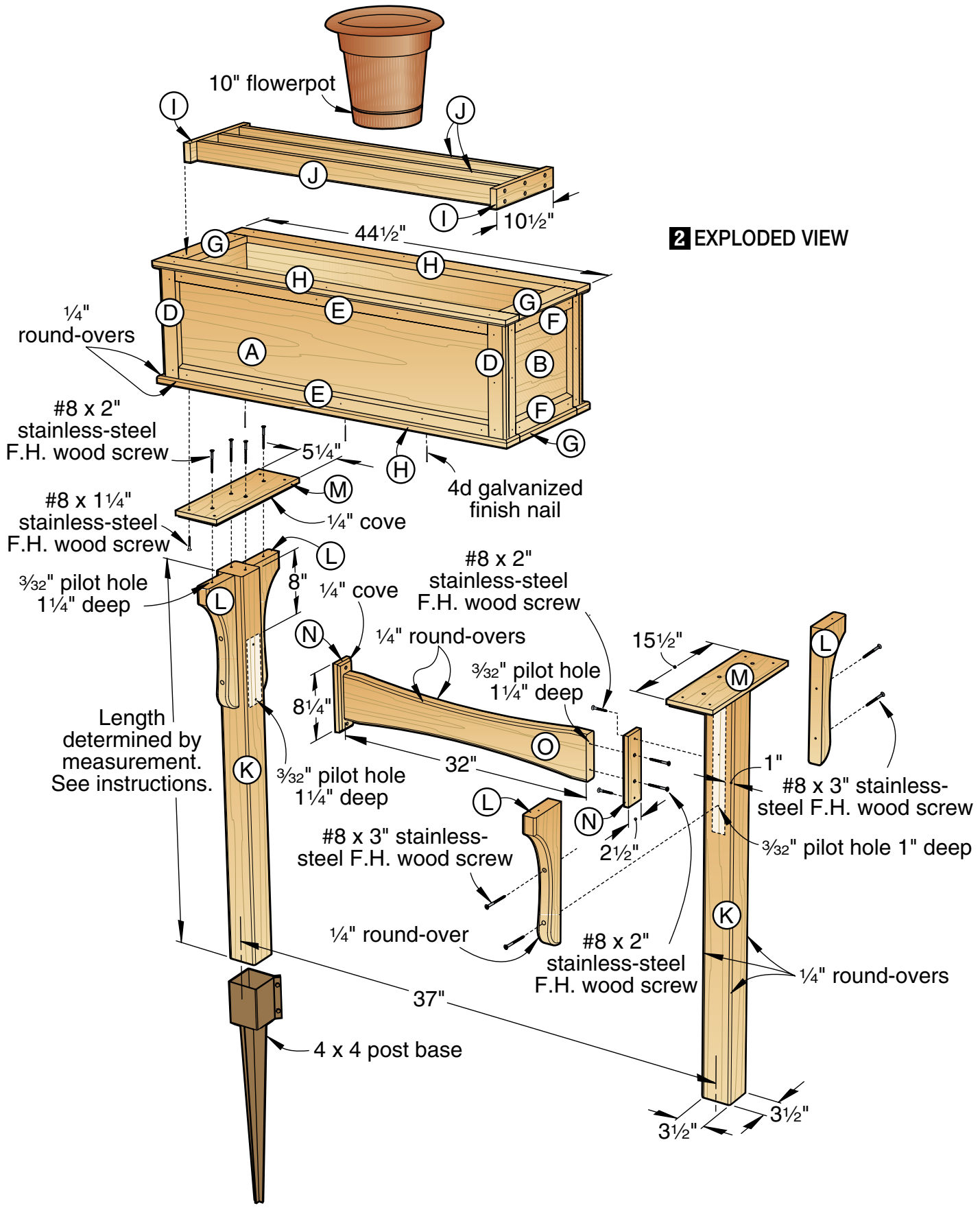
## SHOP TIP

### "Plane" rough cedar to thickness on your tablesaw

When purchasing material for this project, you may find that instead of ¾"-thick cedar, your supplier carries cedar boards almost 7/8" thick planed smooth on one side and rough-sawn on the other. If you don't have a planer, rather than going on a time-consuming search for ¾" material, try this.

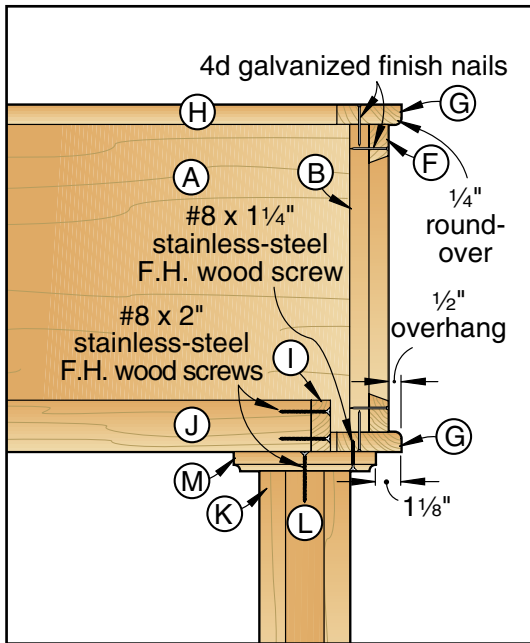
Cut the stock for parts over 12" long to width and length. For safety sake, combine shorter parts into a longer blank. Then position your tablesaw rip fence ¾" from the blade and raise it to about two-thirds the width of the stock. Now cut the parts to thickness by first making one pass, as shown at *right*. Flip the parts end for end and make a second pass. Use the cut face as the back of the part.



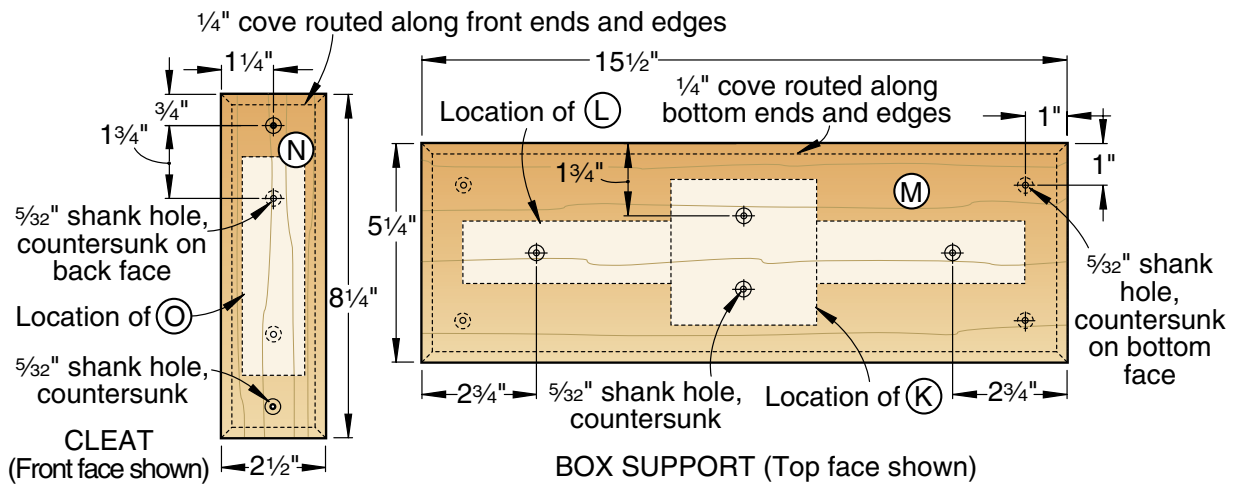


**2 EXPLODED VIEW**

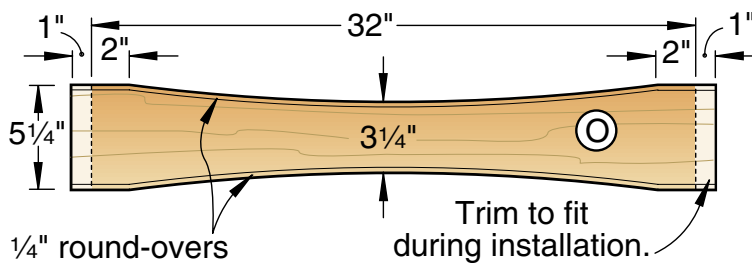
**2a SECTION VIEW**



**2b BOX SUPPORT AND CLEAT**



**2c STRETCHER**





**7** Cut the pot support ends (I) and slats (J) to size. Drill countersunk shank holes in the ends, where shown on **Drawing 1a**. Finish-sand the parts, and set them aside.

### Build the base

**1** To determine the length of the posts (K), use spray paint to mark centerpoints on the ground at the desired location, 37" apart and 10" away from the house. Then measure from the centerpoints to the bottom of the windowsill and subtract 12¼". (This leaves 2–3" extra length for trimming to final length during installation.) Now cut the posts to length, and finish-sand them. (Our posts came from the mill with rounded edges, but if yours have square edges, rout ¼" round-overs before finish-sanding.)

*Note: When positioning your planter box and before driving the post bases, call the North American One Call Referral System at 888/258-0808 to have the location of underground utilities marked.*

**2** From 1½"-thick cedar, cut four 5×16½" blanks for the brackets (L). Then make a photocopy of the bracket pattern on *pages 9 and 10*, and adhere it to one blank with spray adhesive. Jigsaw and sand the bracket to shape. Use this bracket to trace outlines on the remaining blanks, and jigsaw and sand them to shape. Rout ¼" round-overs along the bracket edges, where indicated on the pattern. Now drill centered countersunk shank holes, where shown on the pattern, and finish-sand the brackets.

**3** Center the brackets (L) on opposite faces of the posts (K) with the top ends flush, where shown on **Drawing 2**, and clamp them in place. Using the bracket shank holes as guides, drill pilot holes into the posts and drive the screws.

**4** Cut the box supports (M) and cleats (N) to size. Chuck a ¼" cove bit into your table-mounted router, and rout coves along the ends and edges of one face of all four parts, where shown on **Drawings 2 and 2b**. Then drill ⅝" countersunk shank holes, where shown on **Drawing 2b**. Finish-sand the parts. Now center the box supports on the post assemblies (K/L), and using the shank holes as guides, drill pilot holes into the posts and brackets, and drive the screws.

## SIX SIMPLE STEPS TO A PERFECT PLANTER INSTALLATION



**Step 1**

Place an 8"-long piece of 4×4 into the post base socket and, keeping the base plumb, drive it into the ground with a mallet.



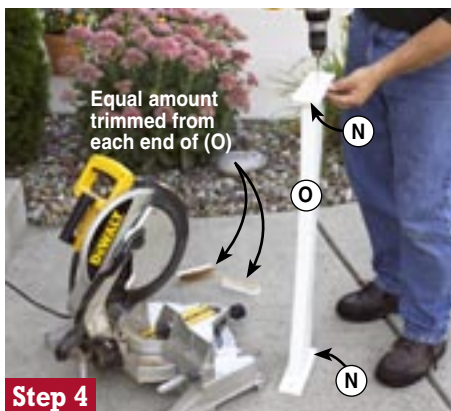
**Step 2**

To calculate the post lengths, measure the distance from the bottom of each post socket to the bottom of the windowsill.



**Step 3**

Place the posts (K) in the bases and snug them by tightening the socket bolts. Measure the distance between the posts.



**Step 4**

With the stretcher (O) cut to length, center the cleats (N) on the stretcher ends, drill pilot holes, and screw the cleats in place.



**Step 5**

Clamp the stretcher assembly (N/O) between the posts (K). Drill pilot holes into the posts, and screw the cleats (N) in place.



**Step 6**

Center the planter box on the box supports (M). Drill pilot holes into the side caps (H), and screw the supports to the caps.

**5** From 1½"-thick cedar, cut a 5¼×34" blank for the stretcher (O). (You'll trim it to finished length during installation.) Using a fairing stick, mark the curved edges, where shown on **Drawing 2c**. Jigsaw and sand the stretcher to shape. Then rout ¼" round-overs along the edges. Finish-sand the part.

### Apply the finish

**1** Finish-sand the parts and assemblies where needed. Apply paint in a color of your choice. (We used exterior oil-based primer followed by two coats of exterior acrylic latex satin enamel.) Take care to completely coat any exposed end grain.

**2** With the paint dry, clamp the pot support slats (J) between the pot support ends (I), where shown on **Drawing 1**. Using the shank holes in the ends as guides, drill pilot holes into the slats, and drive the screws.

### Now install the planter box

**1** Purchase two steel post bases for 4×4 posts. Following the instructions that come with the bases, drive them into the ground at the previously marked post centerpoints, as shown in **Step 1**, on *page 6*. Stop driving the post bases when the bottoms of the post sockets are 1" above the ground.

**2** To position the top of the planter box even with the bottom of the windowsill, measure the vertical distance at each post location, as shown in **Step 2**. Then subtract 14¼" from each measurement and cut the posts (K) to length. Paint the cut ends.

**3** To trim the stretcher (O) to length, measure the distance between the posts, as shown in **Step 3**. Then subtract 1½" from this measurement to allow for the cleats (N), and cut the stretcher to this length, trimming equal amounts from each end. Prime and paint the cut ends. Now fasten the cleats to the stretcher, as shown in **Step 4**.

**4** Adhere masking tape to each post (K) with the bottom edge of the tape 8" below the bottom surface of the box support (M). Then position the stretcher assembly (N/O) between the posts, aligning the top edge of each cleat (N) with the bottom edge of the tape. Center the cleats on the posts, and clamp the assembly in place. Now fasten the stretcher assembly to the

posts, as shown in **Step 5**. Remove the masking tape, and tighten the base socket bolts.

**5** Center the planter box on the box supports (M), and fasten the planter box to the box supports, as shown in **Step 6**. Then rest the pot support (I/J) on the box supports. [The pot support fits inside the frame formed by the lower end and side caps (G, H) with a ¼" space all around.] Now round up some potted annuals, and add a splash of color to your window view. 🌱

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# Materials List

Box	FINISHED SIZE			Matl.	Qty.
	T	W	L		
A sides	¾"	12"	42"	EP	2
B ends	¾"	12"	12"	EP	2
C end vertical trim	¾"	1¼"	12"	C	4
D side vertical trim	¾"	2"	12"	C	4
E side horizontal trim	¾"	1½"	39½"	C	4
F end horizontal trim	¾"	1½"	11"	C	4
G end caps	¾"	2½"	11"	C	4
H side caps	¾"	2½"	44½"	C	4
<b>Pot support</b>					
I ends	¾"	2"	10½"	C	2
J slats	¾"	2"	37½"	C	3
<b>Base</b>					
K* posts	3½"	3½"	†	C	2
L* brackets	1½"	5"	16"	C	4
M box supports	¾"	5¼"	15½"	C	2
N cleats	¾"	2½"	8¼"	C	2
O* stretcher	1½"	5¼"	32"	C	1

\*Parts initially cut oversize. See the instructions.

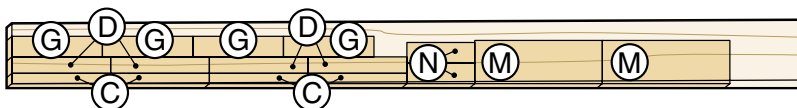
†Length determined by measurement. See the instructions.

**Materials key:** EP—exterior plywood, C—choice of cedar, redwood, or cypress.

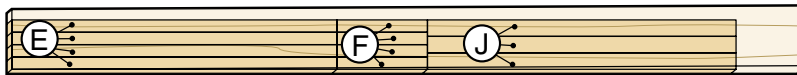
**Supplies:** 4d galvanized finish nails; exterior glue; steel post bases for 4x4 posts (2); #8x1¼", #8x1½", #8x2", #8x3" stainless-steel flathead wood screws; exterior wood filler.

**Bits:** ¼" round-over, ¼" cove router bits.

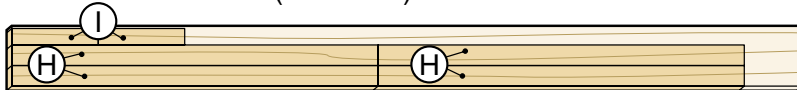
## Cutting Diagram



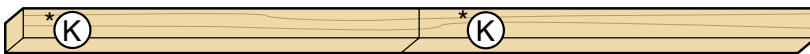
¾ x 7¼ x 96" Cedar (5.3 bd. ft.)



¾ x 7¼ x 96" Cedar (5.3 bd. ft.)



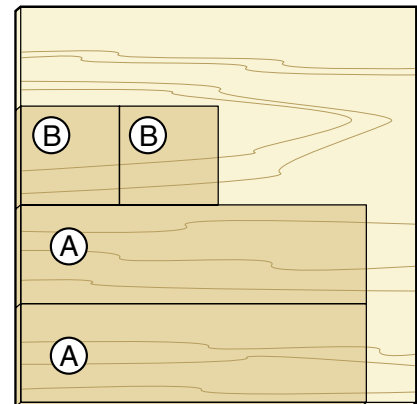
¾ x 7¼ x 96" Cedar (5.3 bd. ft.)



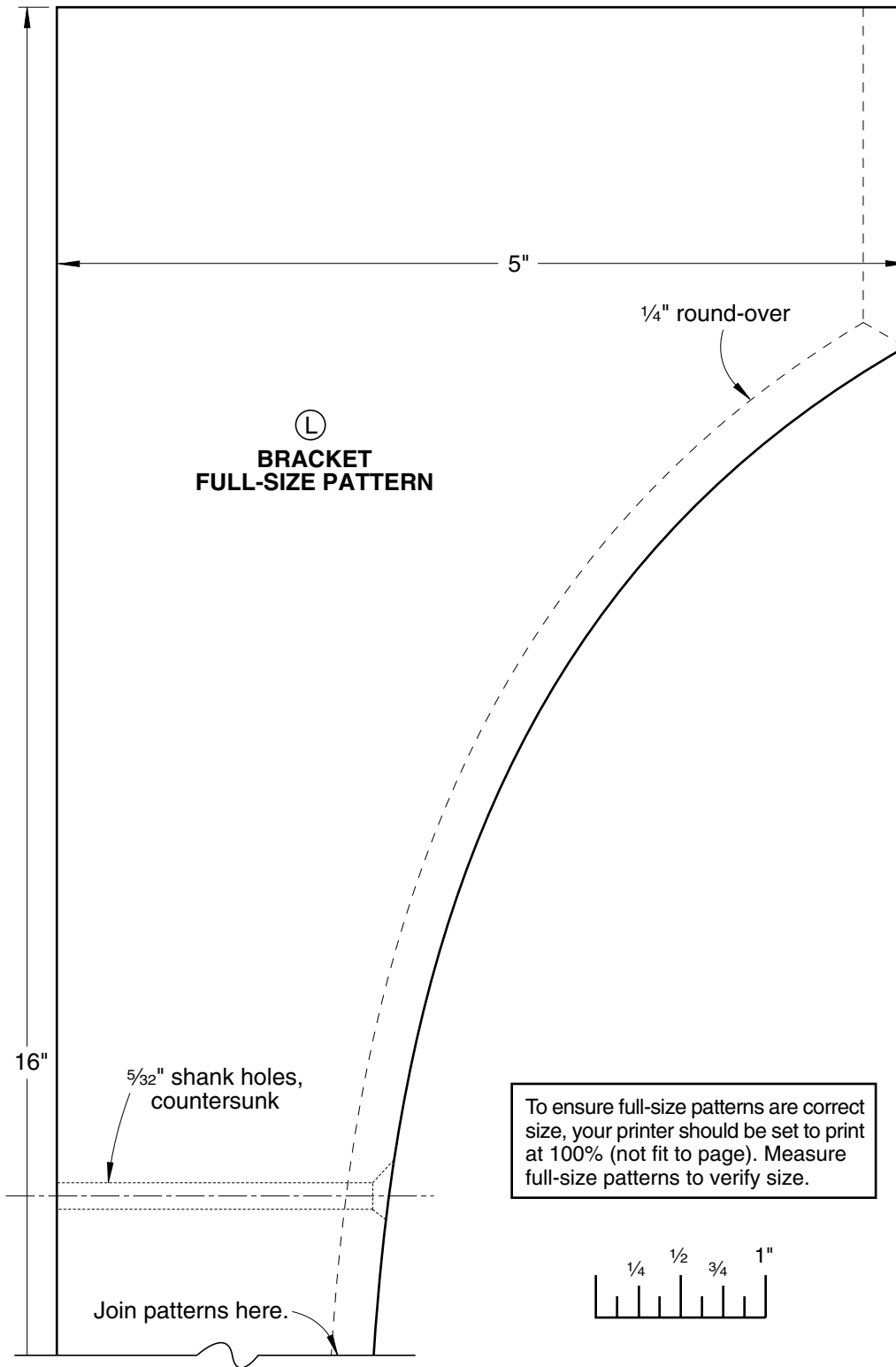
3½ x 3½ x 96" Cedar \*Actual length as needed. See instructions.

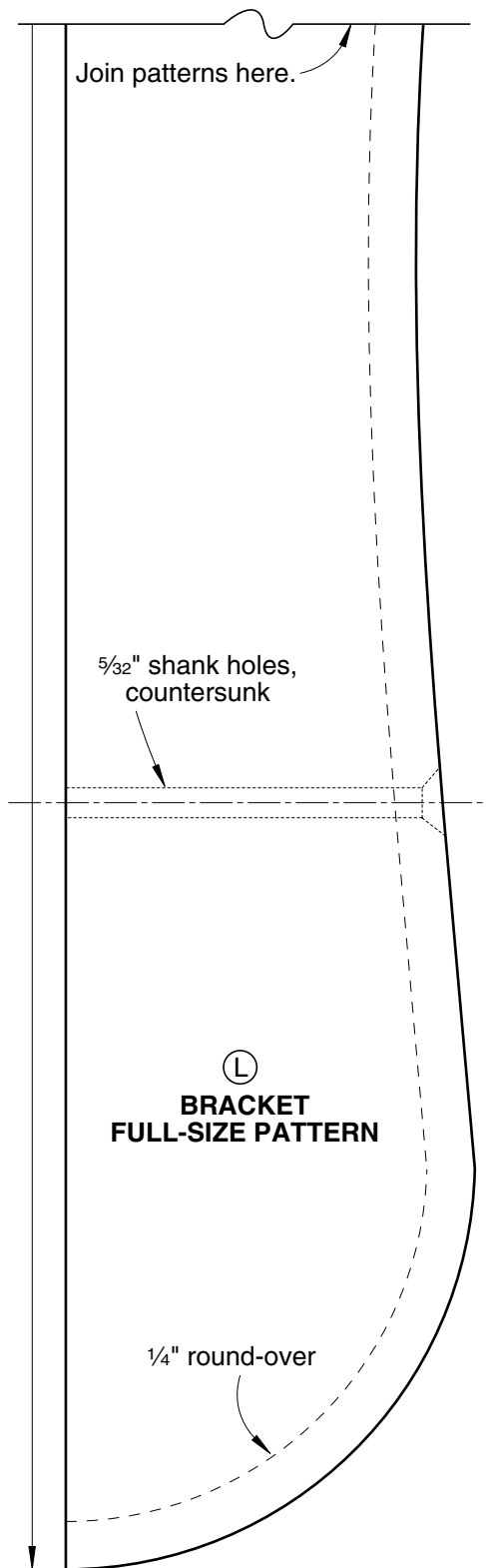


1½ x 5½ x 120" Cedar (10 bd. ft.)

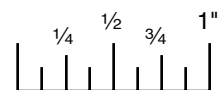


¾ x 48 x 48" Exterior plywood





To ensure full-size patterns are correct size, your printer should be set to print at 100% (not fit to page). Measure full-size patterns to verify size.





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