



# Garden planter revival

Beyond repair? **Neil Lawton** revives a garden planter

**H**ow do you decide when something is beyond repair? Usually it's pretty easy to ask if the cost in time and materials outweighs the cost of replacement then why bother? Things get a little more complicated, though, when we enter the realm of sentimental value, as in this case.

The planter was bought for a lady by her husband, who sadly died shortly after. The brief was to try to patch up the planter and get a few more years out of it, using as many original parts as possible. The original seemed to be

constructed in teak, but with no access to this in quantity I decided to use reclaimed iroko as it should weather to a similar silver grey as the original.

**1** After being emptied of soil and the last few intact screws removed, this is what was left. The barrow sides were too far gone but retained in the short term as templates for replacements.

**2** The side rails/handles are the backbone of the construction so a start was made on these. With a straight-edged piece of wood as a guide, a top-

bearing trimmer bit was used to rout away the rotten section on one side.

**3** A piece of new wood was cut to suit the cut-away. The other rail, as can be seen, was too far gone.

**4** Only the ends of this piece had enough sound wood left to use, so the middle section was cut away completely.

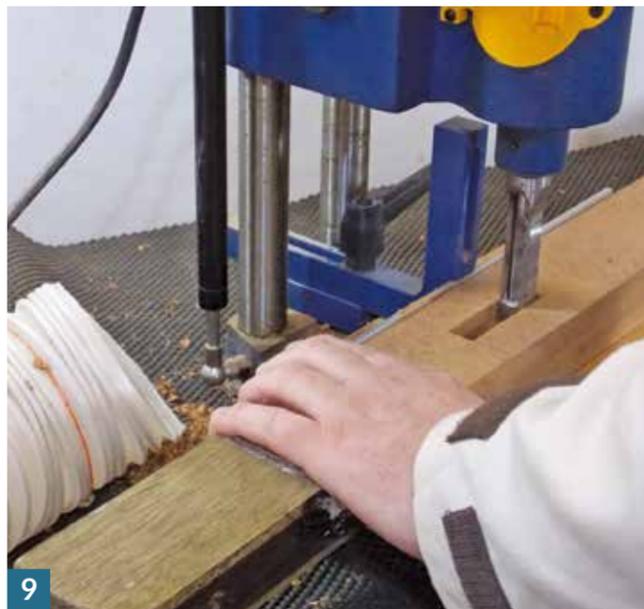
**5** What looked OK from the outside wasn't, but there was just enough to get by.

**6** A new piece was cut for the middle section, with the halving joint oriented to leave the most sound wood on the original pieces.

**7** Though the teak was dry the iroko was still oily when cut. A quick wipe with white spirit, then a dampening with water, helps the foaming polyurethane glue form a better bond.

**8** With the two rails laid side by side, the position of the mortises and other fixing points were marked on to the new piece. ▶





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9 The new rail was then mortised to match the original.

10 Some of the smaller components, such as the wheel mounts, were in good condition, and just needed a clean up. These brackets, which supported the front of the barrow itself, needed replacing completely.

11 After using the originals to set the cut angles, they were again used as a template on the reclaimed table-top offcuts that were to replace them.

12 The wheel was in quite good condition, but where one section had worked loose it wouldn't clamp back tight, so the dowels were cut through to separate the individual parts.

13 New dowels were made by knocking a section of beech through an old imperial dowel plate I rescued from a skip. These would be used to reassemble the wheel after sanding clean.

14 The last bit of patching up. Some areas of rotten wood were replaced at the top of one of the legs where it supported the barrow side.

15 The bottom required remaking from scratch. Luckily, enough of the original survived to recreate the right measurements and angles.

16 The two main cross members had tenons cut to fit the sides.



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17 These were then drilled and pegged underneath, as the originals.

18 An adjustable fence was used on the tablesaw to replicate the taper of two of the bottom boards.

19 With the wheel and legs refitted, the bottom boards were screwed into place with brass screws. A piece of wood was cut and marked to make sure the battens lined up and had the correct spacing.

20 Some pieces of already-jointed table top were cut and cleaned up through the thicknesser to make the new sides.

21 The tops were shaped and the rebates routed using the originals as templates.

22 The carcass was screwed together then the new front support brackets screwed in place.

23 The completed planter. Once weathered the woods should blend into a more uniform silver/grey.

24 The restoration of the planter was for sentimental reasons and I used the original wood wherever I could. Some sound wood had to be cut into for jointing etc, so I used a piece to make the lady a pen as a memento as well. ■



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