

Bird table rebuild

Neil Lawton tweets his latest article from the back garden

After rebuilding the wheelbarrow planter that was featured in issue 43, I received another casualty of the outdoor kind that needed more than a little attention. It was a hanging birdhouse that had obviously come crashing to the floor on more than one occasion. I believe it was purchased from a slate mining museum in Germany, and it was very much all about the slate. The stained softwood construction really was no match for the weight of the roof. My brief was to copy the original design in something a little more robust, and convert to a freestanding bird table.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL LAWTON



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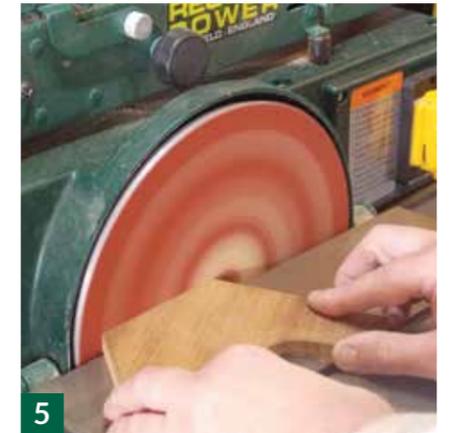
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1 The original was obviously a little the worse for wear and showed signs of previous repair.

2 After resawing and thickening, I had enough iroko to rebuild to the original design.

3 The best surviving pieces were used as templates by simply drawing around them and finding the best tooling to match.

4 The end pieces were drilled through then cut out to the waste side of the lines.

5 A disc sander was used to size up to the outline...

6 ... and a bobbin sander used to size the 'doorways'.

7 Original pieces were used to recreate the angles required. **Note:** the blade and guard were raised for clarity and lowered for the actual cut.

8 Driving pins in close to the edges could split the wood, so pilot holes were drilled to accommodate the brass pins. ▶



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9 Not wanting to dismantle the whole roof construction, blocks were added to be able to screw it on from the inside.

10 The two sides of the roof had originally been joined by a layer of roofing felt so the top layer of slate had to be removed to replace it.

11 The roof was screwed on and an appropriate piece of felt fitted before replacing the top layer of slates.

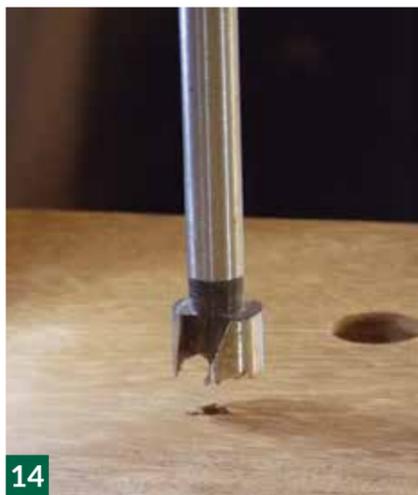
12 Iroko eaves were then pinned on to tidy up the ends.

13 An offcut of table top was used as the table. The construction was basically square, so marking corner to corner helped to centralise it.

14 After drilling the screw holes to attach the table it was flipped over and countersunk with a Forstner bit to allow shorter screws to be used.

15 Pieces were added to form the feed tray but with the corners kept clear to allow for drainage.

16 I decided to use reclaimed oak for the stand. I had a piece suitable for the main pole that had a few shakes in the grain but would be fine for this.



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17 Oak stool legs would form the legs after the original joints were cut away.

18 The original piece I expected to use for the stop of the stand was too small, but luckily I found another.

19 A single screw was driven through the top into the main pole on centre then flipped and the supporting struts added. The holes were countersunk to allow wood plugs to be glued in over the screws.

20 I didn't have enough length of timber to stagger the legs and it had to be stable, so I decided on one dowel and one screw per leg. A couple of scraps of wood and a board in a vice helped with positioning.

21 A panel pin was driven into the leg then, with its head removed, pressed into place to mark the drilling points for the dowels.

22 Dowels were then fitted and glued into place.

23 The legs were screwed on and plugs glued in ready to pare down to the finished surface.

24 After applying a few coats of Danish oil we have the finished project. The slate does still make this a little top heavy but the very happy owners intend to bolt the legs to a paving slab or similar when it is sited.



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