

Playground Apparatus

A Woodworking Project

Patricia Lague

This article comes from The Beating Drum, the newsletter of the Early Childhood Education Association of South Africa, Autumn/Winter 2000.

The metric measurements in the original article have been changed to inches and feet. SAFETY NOTE: If one is using linseed oil, be sure to clean rags immediately after use. Rags soaked in linseed oils are well known to spontaneously combust. A safe alternative, especially for indoor use, is beeswax polish.

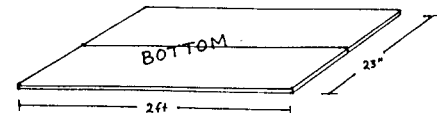
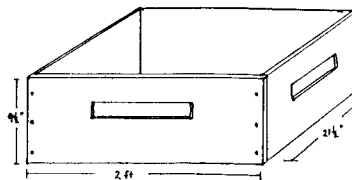
Do you need a tractor? A slide or trampoline or seesaw? A hideaway? A shop or a boat or a bridge? A balancing beam? It's a box and a plank away.

Boxes

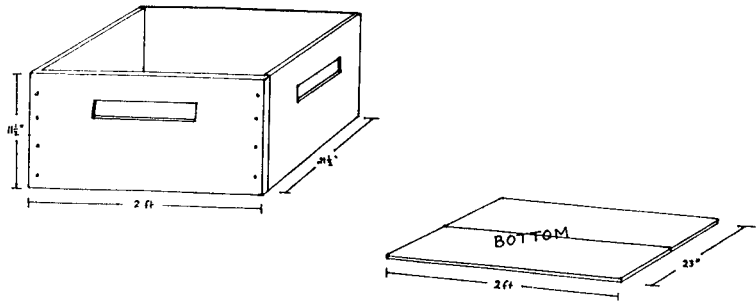
Make any number, any size. My suggestion for making 2 boxes.

Acquire three eight-foot-long planks, one 9-1/2 inches wide by 3/4 inches thick (called "1x10"—one by ten—at U.S. lumber mills), and two 11-1/2 inches wide by 3/4 inches thick (called "1x12" at U.S. lumber mills)

Cut the "1 x 10" into 2 pieces 2 feet long and 2 pieces 21-1/2 inches long



Cut the other two into 6 pieces 2 feet long and 2 pieces 21-1/2 inches long



Sand and assemble.

Tuck the shorter sides inside the 2 longer sides

Form the bottom of each with 2 of the 2 foot long "1x12" pieces

Use wood glue and screws. Countersink screws.

Optional: cut slots in the sides.

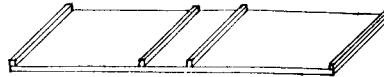
Sand when assembled.

Planks

Planks should be a minimum of 3/4 inches thick and 3 feet long. Planks longer than 5 feet need to be thicker for strength. Seven inches is a minimal reasonable width for children aged two and a half to balance on.

Round off the corners and sand.

Screw 4 small strips of wood to the underside.



The outer strips hook into the slots in the box, if you have made them, or onto the top of the box.

The middle two secure the plank over a log to become a see-saw. Oil wood with a couple coats of raw linseed oil to protect against weather. Re-oil annually before the rains. All aboard!

Boxes and planks, or crates and boards, are a marvelous addition for use by children aged two years through kindergarten and beyond. Another possibility is to leave the planks as is, without the small strips of wood affixed as Patricia describes. The planks are left open to even more possibility in that way. Building the boxes and sanding the planks is a wonderful activity to do with the children watching and/or helping! So is the occasional re-sanding that may be necessary.