Project 18202EZ:
Picnic Table

Admiration of our best work from friends and fellow woodworkers is always appreciated. But our finer woodworking skills must on occasion yield to more mundane requests. You won't need your chisels and dovetail saws for this picnic table, but it's sure to be a big hit with the family. And given prices we've seen for similar picnic tables, you may start a burgeoning business building these backyard classics for friends and neighbors.

Your power equipment needs for this project can be filled with only a circular saw and drill. Sure, you can also use the table saw, but since no ripping is required, and the pieces being worked are a little long for many small table saws, you might as well just get out the extension cord and build this project where it will be used- outside.

Our backyard classic is exactly that — a time tested classic piece. We haven't altered the basic design, since it's rather hard to improve on a project that so well combines utility with ease of construction. All the supplies that you'll need can be found at your local lumberyard or building supply center.

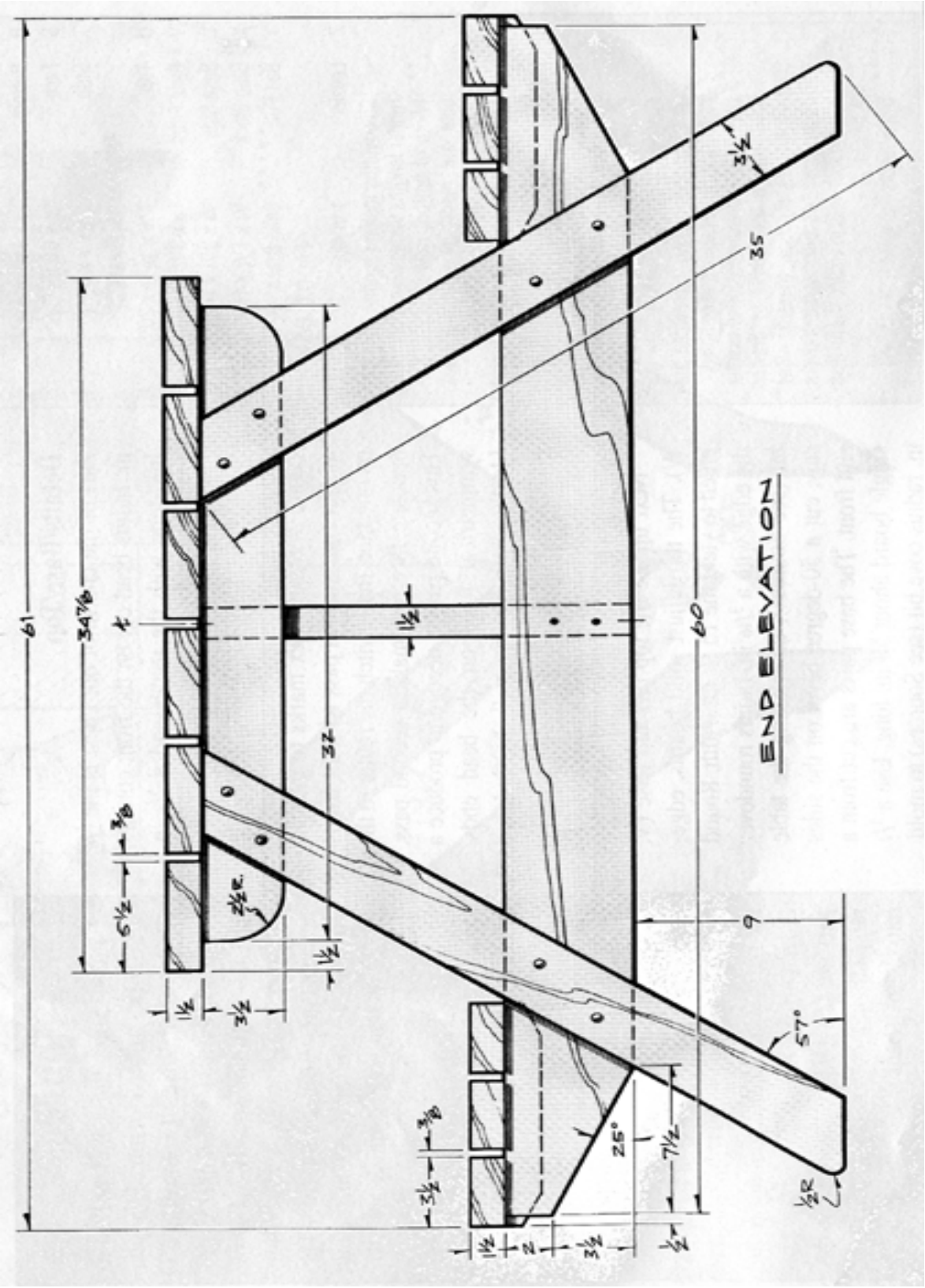
All parts can be cut from six 7' long 2 x 4s (1-1/2" x 3-1/2" actual), three 10' long 2 x 4s, one 10' long 2 x 6 (1-1/2" x 5-1/2" actual), and six 8' long 2 x 6s. While redwood works the best, regular fir will also work.

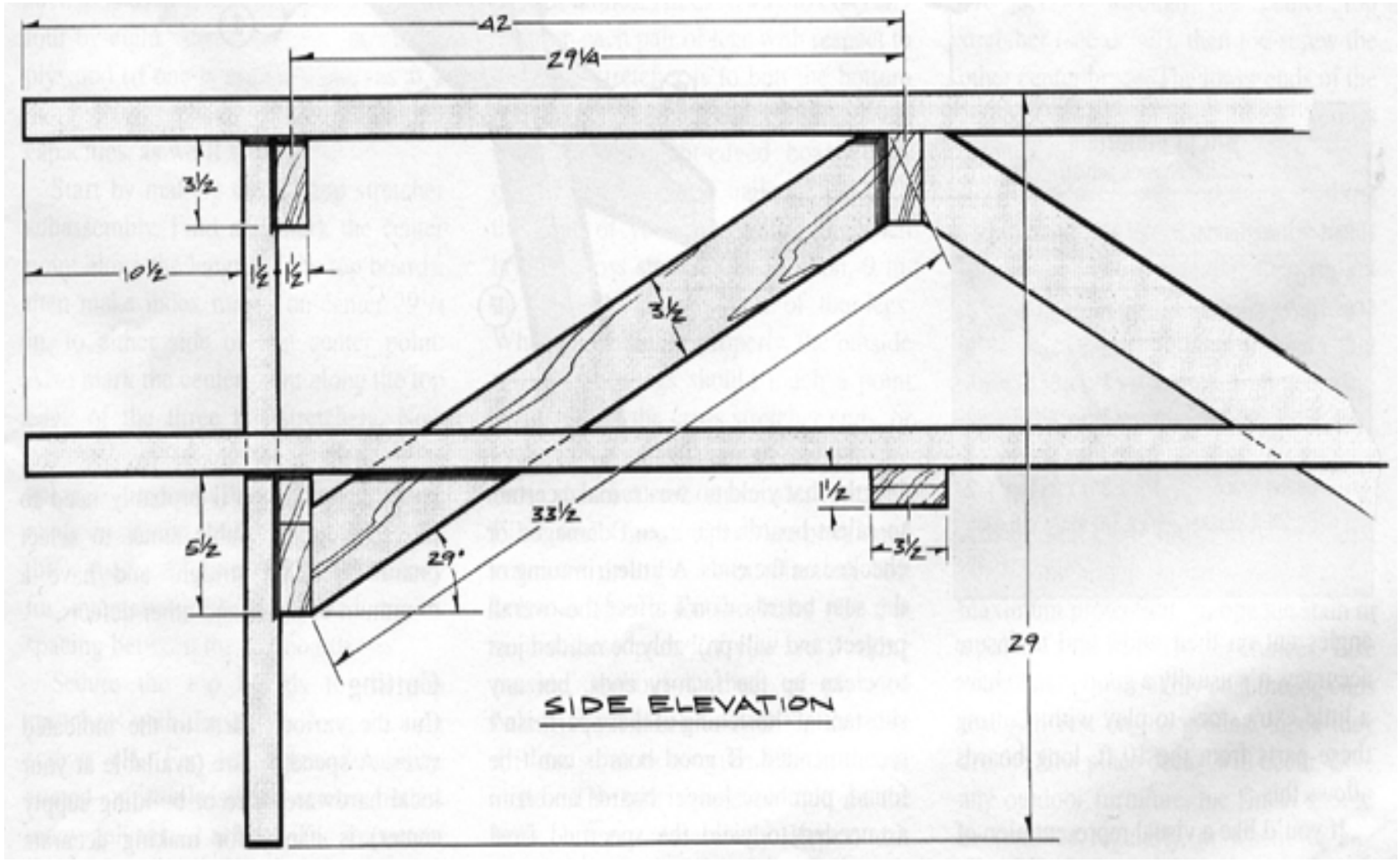
DO NOT purchase pressure-treated lumber, as the arsenic it is treated with makes for a potentially **DANGEROUS** eating surface.

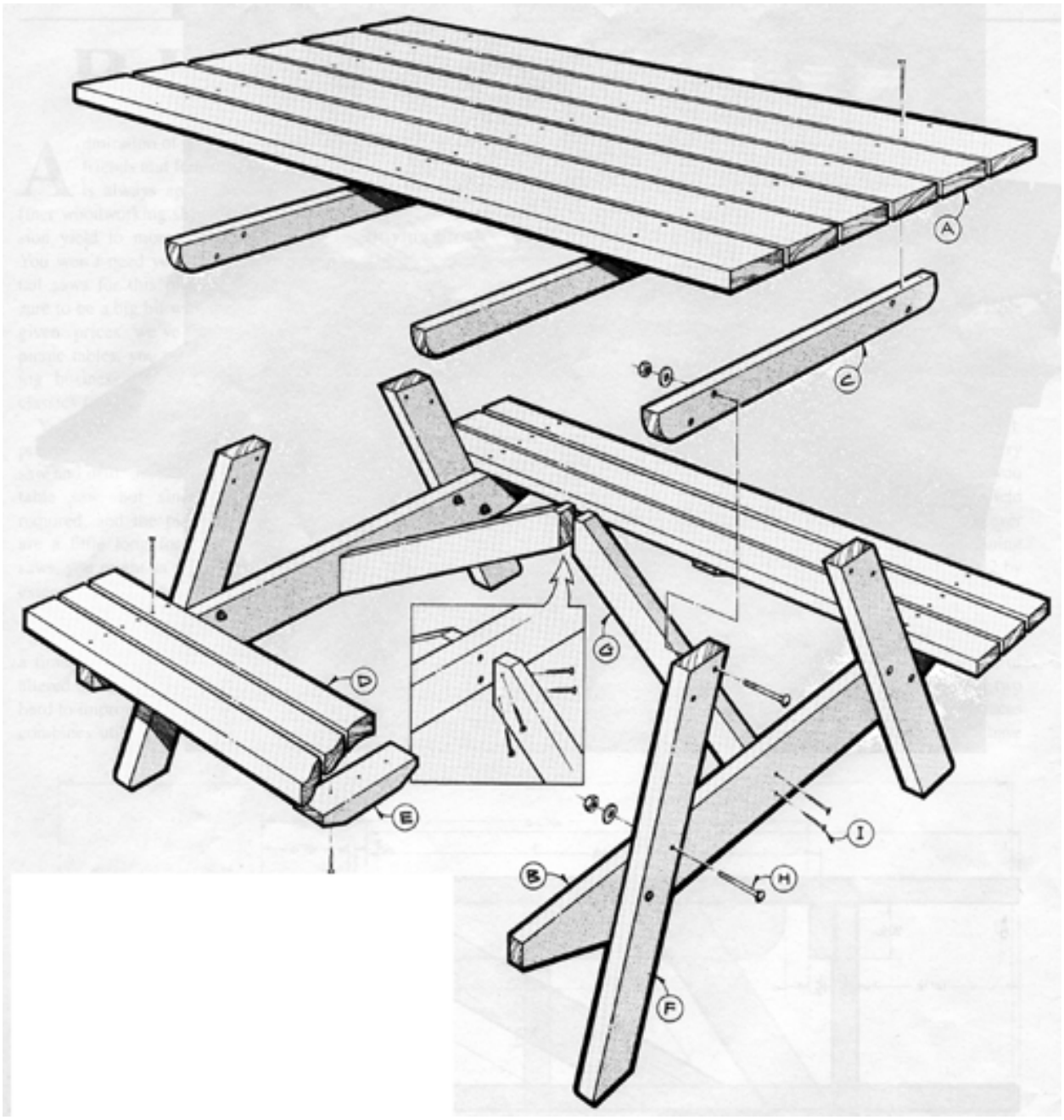
Picnic Table Materials List

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd
A	Top	1-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 84"	6
B	Cross Stretcher	1-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 84"	2
C	Top Stretcher	1-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 32"	3
D	Seat	1-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 11-1/4"	6
E	Seat Stretcher	1-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 11-1/4"	2
F	Leg	1-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 35"	4
G	Center Brace	1-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 33-1/2"	2
H	Bolt/Nut/Washer	3/8" x 3-1/2" long	16 of each
I	Screws	2-1/2"	76

Picnic Table Complete Schematic




42
29¼
3½
10½
1½
1½
3½
1½
3½
33½
29°
5½
29
SIDE ELEVATION


A
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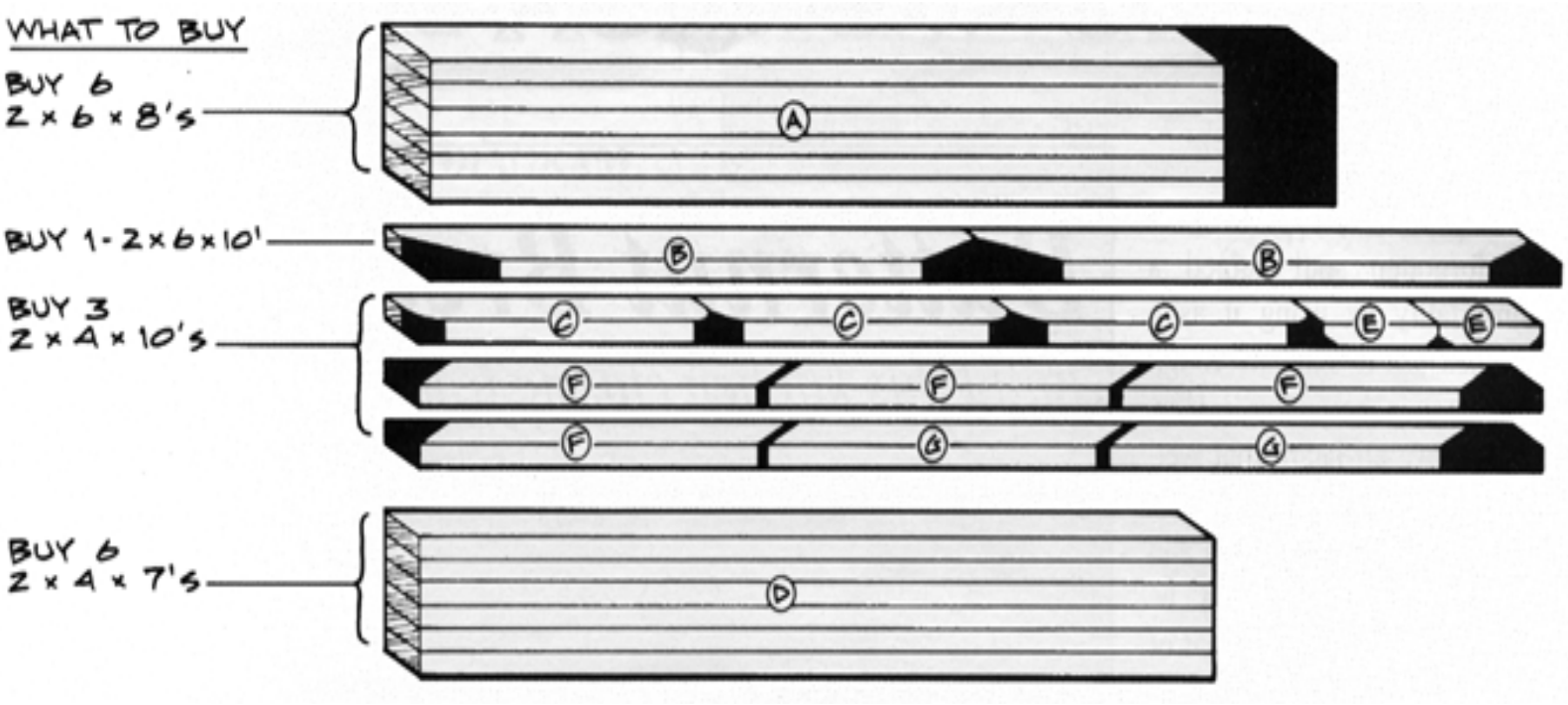
WHAT TO BUY
BUY 6
2 x 6 x 8's
A
BUY 1 - 2 x 6 x 10'
B
B
BUY 3
2 x 4 x 10's
C
C
C
E
E
F
F
F
F
G
G
BUY 6
2 x 4 x 7's
D

Picnic Table Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Use the circular saw in conjunction with a speed square located so the blade is in line with your cutoff mark to cut the various parts to the indicated sizes.
2. Use the circular saw and speed square again to lay out the angles on the ends of the legs.
3. Use a compass to lay out the 1/2" radius at the bottom end of the legs and the 2-1/2" radius on the top stretcher ends.
4. Use a hand-held jigsaw to cut the curves.
5. Sand the curves until they are smooth.
6. Find and mark the center point along the length of the top boards to being making the top/top stretcher subassembly.
7. Make index marks on-center 29-1/4" to either side of that center point.
8. Mark the center point along the top edge of the three top stretchers.
9. Position two of the top boards 3/8" apart on-center to the center marks you made on the top stretchers. **NOTE: Several 3/8" thick spacer sticks will come in handy for maintaining the suggested 3/8" spacing between the top boards.**
10. Use a framing square to check for squareness and make adjustments as necessary.
11. Secure the top boards to the top stretchers with the 2-1/2" long decking screws (I).
12. Position each pair of legs with respect to the cross stretcher by butting the bottom end of the legs against a flat surface.
13. Lay the cross stretcher in position, 9" up from the bottom end of the legs. **NOTE: When spread apart properly, the outside edges of the legs should touch a point 7-1/2" from the cross stretcher ends, or exactly where the 25-degree bevel on the cross stretcher ends terminates (see End Elevation)**.
14. Drill the 3/8" diameter bolt holes as shown for the bolts (H) that secure these parts. **NOTE: The nuts should be tight on the bolts, but not excessively.**
15. Repeat this assembly procedure with the remaining leg/cross stretcher subassembly.
16. Lay the top upside down on a flat surface to ready it for joining the leg/cross stretcher subassembly to the top/top stretcher subassembly.
17. Locate the leg/cross stretcher subassemblies in position.

18. Clamp the assemblies in place temporarily.
19. Drill the 3/8" diameter bolt holes
20. Remove the clamps and add the carriage bolts, washers, and nuts.
21. Use the circular saw and speed square to cut one end of each center brace.
22. Mark the correct final dimensions for the center braces.
23. Use a carpenter’s square to check that the leg/cross stretcher is square to the top while you get the proper center brace length.
24. Trim the other ends of the braces to fit.
25. Use two screws to secure the first center brace to the center top stretcher (see detail).
26. Toe-screw the other center brace.
27. Secure the lower ends of the center braces with screws through the cross stretchers.
28. Use the 3/8" spacer sticks that you cut earlier to maintain proper spacing of the seat boards.
29. Screw the seat stretchers to the seats (on-center from the ends).
30. Mount the seat/seat stretcher subassembly to the table.
31. Apply an opaque stain or a paint to finish, taking extra care to thoroughly coat the leg ends that will rest on the ground.
32. Renew the finish regularly, or whenever wearing occurs.

These plans were originally published in Volume 16, Issue 3 of *The Woodworker’s Journal* (May/June 1992, pages 40-43).