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Bill Krier  
Editor in Chief, WOOD magazine

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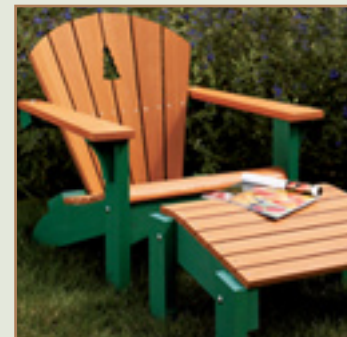
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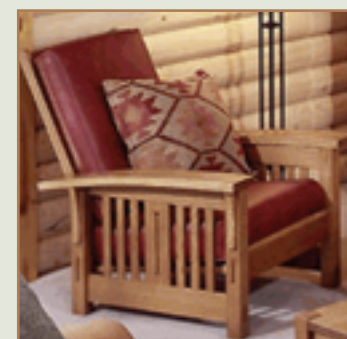
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# Carve A Classic Shell

It's easy to sculpt this time-honored furniture ornament



The seashell has long been a popular design for carved furniture ornamentation. Now you can fashion shell-shaped ornaments or drawer pulls, thanks to this simple approach from woodcarver Keith Randich of Rochester, New York.

## Cut out the shell blank, and mount it for carving

**1** Photocopy the Full-Size Shell Pattern, and trace it onto a  $\frac{3}{4} \times 4 \times 4$ " blank. If you're carving a shell to match furniture wood, orient the grain to match that of the piece the shell will be fastened to. If the shell will be mounted on a table skirt or drawer front with horizontal grain, for instance, make the shell's grain run horizontally as well. You also can enlarge or reduce the pattern to size the shell to your furniture, if necessary. Changing the size may call for different tools than those listed.

**2** Bandsaw the shell outline. If you're making the shell as a drawer pull, rabbet the backside  $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep, extending about  $1\frac{3}{8}$ " from the lobe end. Keith likes to carve this rabbet, but you could rout or saw it.

**3** Glue the blank to a piece of scrapwood so you can clamp it to your workbench, as shown in *Photo 1*, opposite page. To allow easy removal of the carving later, first glue a piece of glossy magazine paper slightly larger than the blank to the scrapwood. Then glue the blank to the paper.

Leave plenty of room around the blank so your clamps won't be in the way when you're carving. (We cut the scrapwood close to the blanks shown to make tighter photos.)

## Now, shape the shell

**1** Draw a pencil line across the shell at the high point, shown about 1" from the wing end of the shell on the pattern. Working outward from that line, round over the ends of the shell. You can carve smooth curvatures with the inside (concave side) of the gouge, as shown in *Photo 2*.

A 20mm (or larger) no. 3 gouge works well on the lobed end; a 20mm (or larger) no. 5 on the winged end. You'll almost always be carving across the grain, so keep your tools sharp.

If you're carving a drawer pull with the rabbeted back, be careful at the unsupported edge on the lobe end. It's easy to chip out the wood when carving downward. To avoid that, stop a little short of the edge, then come back on it from the side, as shown in *Photo 3*.

### Tools and materials

Keith used the tools listed below to carve the shell shown. Tools of similar size and sweep would work.

Nos. 3, 4, and 5 gouges, 20 mm ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ").

No. 6 gouge, 13mm ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ").

No. 8 gouge, 10mm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ ").

V-tool, 10mm.

Carve the shell from stock that matches the grain and color of the furniture it will be mounted on. Or, you can select an easy-carving wood, such as basswood or jelutong, and paint or gold-leaf the carving.

**2** Round over the sides with a 20mm (or larger) no. 4 gouge. Don't let the edges of the tool dig in. If they do, switch to a flatter gouge—swap the no. 4 for a no. 3, for example.

**3** Work around the outside edges of the lobes. Clean them up and refine the contours. You can shape the spaces between the lobes uniformly with a 10mm no. 8 gouge. A 13mm no. 6 gouge will shape the tips nicely.

**4** Cut the wings with a no. 5 gouge about 20 mm wide. You can draw a pencil line to guide your cuts, but let the tool's shape define the line's curve. Repeat chopping the stop cuts and cleaning out the wing areas (20mm no. 3), leaving a depth of  $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

**5** Draw a vertical centerline on the shell. Next, draw in the lobe lines shown on the pattern.

**6** Using a V-tool, cut the lobe lines, as shown in *Photo 4*. Start the cuts going in both directions from the high spot so you're cutting downhill. Round the sides of the lobes down into the V-cuts, using a 13mm no. 6 gouge. Finish shaping the lobes in stages, alternately V-cutting and rounding.

**7** When you're satisfied with the form of the shell, hone your tools and clean up all the cuts. Smooth and refine the curves, and cut several V-grooves into the wings where shown.

**8** Push a large, flat chisel under the shell to break it free from the waste board. Clean off the paper and glue. Mount the shell either by gluing or by driving screws into the back. ♣

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Project Design: Keith Randich

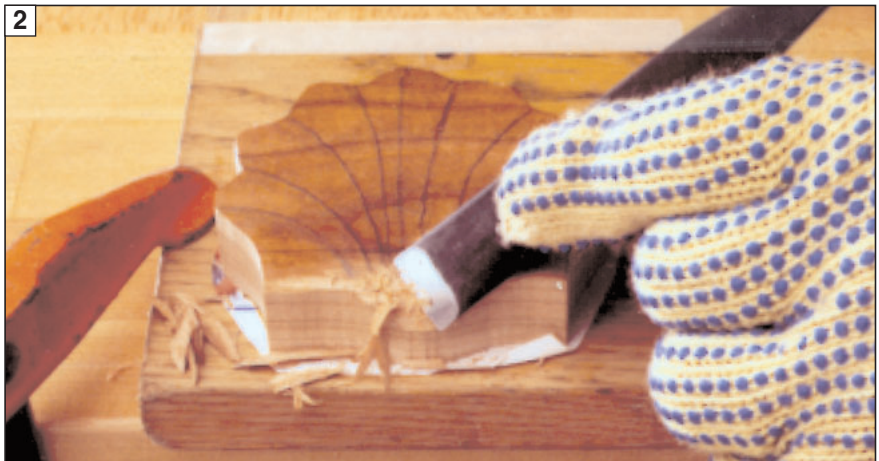
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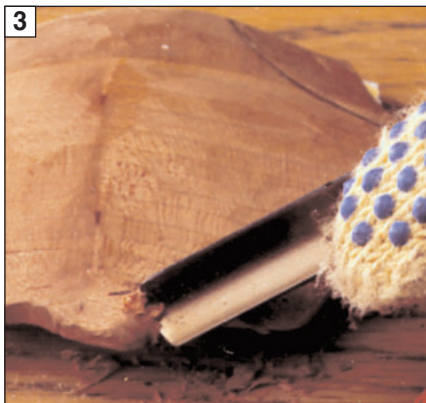
Illustrations: Roxanne LeMoine; Lorna Johnson



**1** Glue the blank to a piece of scrapwood with a paper joint so you can hold it easily for carving. Tools shown are, from left, nos. 3, 4, and 5 gouges (all 20 mm wide), 13 mm no. 6 gouge, 10mm no. 8 gouge, and 10 mm V-tool. The gloves incorporate Kevlar fiber to minimize the chance of cuts.



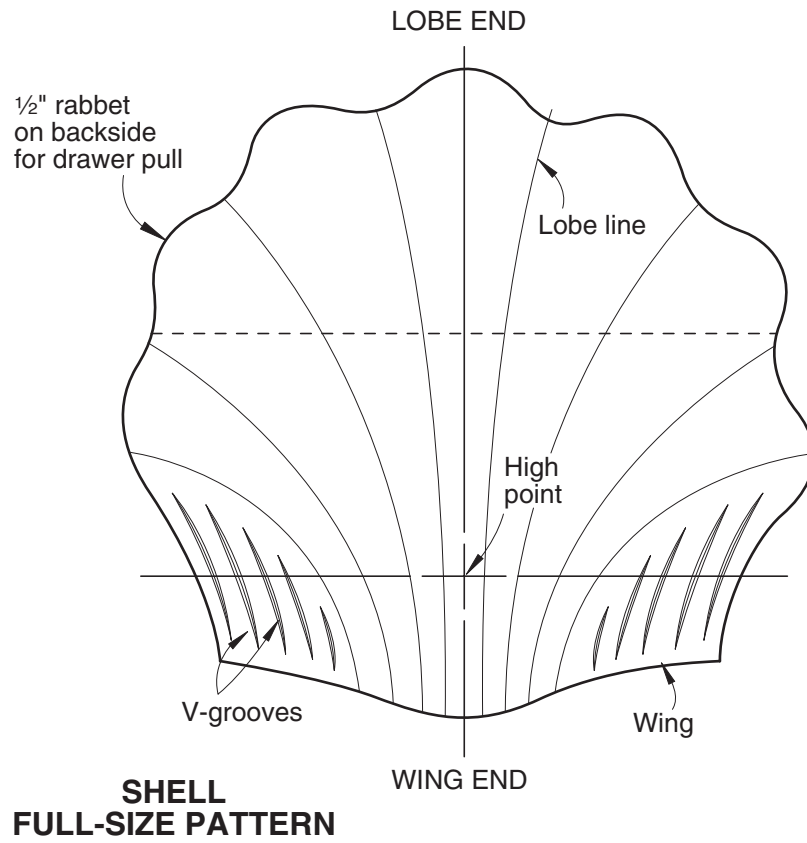
**2** After roughing out the curvature with a gouge, you can smooth the contour by carving with the inside of a gouge, such as the 20 mm no. 3 shown. (The wing end of the shell is shown here.)



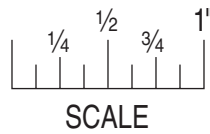
**3** To avoid breaking out wood at the unsupported lobe ends, cut across the edge or upward on it as much as possible. This is a 10mm no. 8 gouge.



**4** Carve the lobe lines with a V-tool, then round over the sides of the lobes to separate them. The wings have been cut to about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick.



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

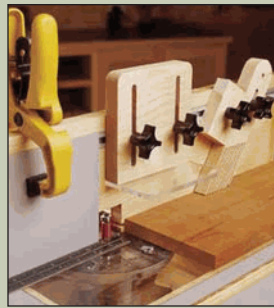


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