

## **Willow Twig Furniture**

by **SlimJim** on September 9, 2006

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## intro: Willow Twig Furniture

How to make a little willow table. Process can be extended to create all kinds of furniture. I make part of my living from doing this (though not this particular item anymore, so feel free to copy it)



## step 1: Cut some wood

Willow is everywhere. It grows anywhere there is water and no one to hack it out. It's like the American Bamboo, I've learned to make all kinds of stuff out of it.

For this little table, cut

4 legs, 18" long, thumb thick or larger

4 bottom sides, 14" long, thumb thick or smaller

4 top sides, 12" long, finger-to-thumb thickness

a bunch of twigs size: pinky-to-pencil



## step 2: Tools and Fasteners

### Tools

Drill, Preferably cordless, with keyless chuck.

Tape measure

Hammer

Pruners

knife (I REALLY like the cheap Swedish carving knives like the one shown here. Get them from Woodcraft Supply for about \$8)

pruning saw

### Fasteners

3" screws

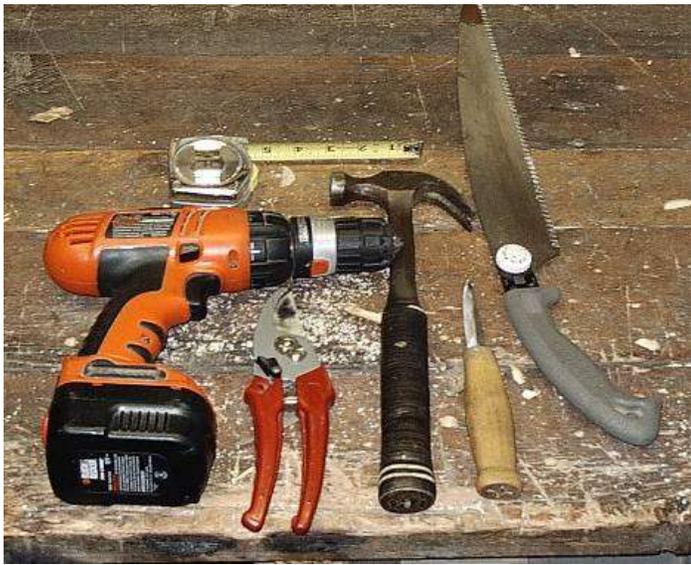
2" screws

1 1/2" ring-shank nails (you can use normal nails, but use these if you want your project to last a LONG time)

1 1/2" pannel brads (like a little nail, but coated with paint, and it has little rings around the shank)

1" pannel brads.

you can find all these at Home Despot



## step 3: Building Frames

Assemble the table by making two flat frames from your legs and side pieces.

The thing to remember about working with willow:

**YOU MUST PRE-DRILL EVERY HOLE** no matter how small. I use an 1/8" bit for the screws, and a 1/16" for the small nails. The reason you have to drill holes for everything is that willow is harvested green, then it dries after you assemble it. We all know that wood shrinks when it dries, so as it shrinks, it squeezes on your screw, and cracks. Engineers call that "Failure".

Start by drilling pilot holes in the ends of all the side pieces.

Drill holes in the legs, 2" from the top and 14" from the top.

The picture shows nails in the screw holes, that's just so you can see them.

Screw through the legs into the sides.

Remember: the top side piece is 12" long, and the bottom is 14", so it's not going to be square when you are done. Don't worry about angles, just flex it and rack the wood until it looks right.



#### step 4: Make it 3D

Once you are finished with the two frames, it's time to add the remaining four side pieces.

Drill holes through the legs at a right angle to the first holes. Locate this set of holes 2.5" from the top, and 13.5" from the top.

Screw through the legs into the side pieces. It should look about like this:



### step 5: Finished Frame

Do the same thing to the second frame, and screw it onto the assembly from step four. By the way, you should use a 3" screw any time you are screwing into the end-grain of a stick. End grain is soft, and it needs all the holding power it can get.

Now you have something that's starting to look like a table! Set it on a flat surface and rack it and twist it until it sits level. You may have to remove some screws, redrill, and reattach pieces to get it right. That's why you use mechanical fasteners.

Strangely, I rarely use a square to get this thing right. Frankly, if you eyeball it, you will be close enough. (Dovetail purists beware!)



### step 6: Braces:

Cut some pieces of willow about "thumb-to-finger" sized, about 6 to 8 inches long. Trim their ends to 45 deg angles so they become diagonal braces. This brings up the Second Rule of Willow Furniture:

#### ***EVERYTHING MUST BE BRACED WITH A DIAGONAL***

Willow is flexible, and the joints you put in it are flexible too. A strong structure has to have diagonal braces on every side to be stable.

Locate the braces reaching from the bottom side pieces, down into the legs. Predrill and nail with ring-shank nails. These baby's hold TIGHT! If you ever want to remove them, you will have to split the wood out around them, because they will NOT come out without breaking something.



### step 7: Twig Tops and Shelf

Take all those twigs that you cut and lay them out on the bench.

Starting in the middle, lay them out on the top to form a table-surface.

YES, you do need to predrill each one, even for those itty-bitty pannel nails. The only exception is if you are using an air-brad nailer, then you don't have to predrill.

Nail the twig down, snip it to length, and do the next one. I like to use about 7 twigs across the top and another 7 across the bottom shelf. The bottom shelf should run at 90 deg to the top. It makes the table stronger.



### step 8: Finished!

This little table is great as an end table, a night stand, lamp stand, or plant stand. It is strong enough to support my weight, and you could use it as a stool if you add larger diagonal braces.

You can use this technique to create all sorts of willow furniture. Everything pictured was created with these guidelines:

Predrill Everything

Diagonal Bracing on every surface

assemble two surfaces as frames, then connect them with sides. Add diagonals and twig surfaces.

Happy Cuttin!





## Related Instructables



**Rustic woodware at no cost, and easier than you thought !!** by lucianoabcd



**Adirondack Chair** by Popular Mechanics



**Plank Chair** by jesse.hensel



**Coffee table upgrade!** by lofgren



**How to Re-Cover Chairs** by canida



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**Cardboard Chairs 101** by wholman



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## Comments

[17 comments](#) [Add Comment](#)



**Bo.** says:

When I try to print the directions for the twig stool, this is what I get:

403 Forbidden

Request forbidden by administrative rules.

Sep 23, 2008. 8:25 AM [REPLY](#)



**aaronrose** says:

Jul 8, 2008. 1:40 PM [REPLY](#)

Id like to make a Head board for my bed similar to this. I think I may use birch or cedar though.



**cfishy** says:

Jun 5, 2008. 12:57 PM [REPLY](#)

Isn't that green wood? I think windsor chairs used some round tenons to screw together green wood pieces but that involves some specific skills. I think this method is cool for things that don't have to withstand a lot of weight and shearing. I don't expect you can screw green wood together to form a strong joint, especially from end grain?

if the wood is dry enough, using a dowel and glue may hold it much better.



**outdoorsman2014** says:

Nov 18, 2007. 11:37 AM [REPLY](#)

Have you ever tried weaving smaller trigs together. I provides better furniture and I made some without gooing to the house getting supplies. Just went out with a pocket knife and found a willow tree and made furniture.



**weezball** says:

May 18, 2008. 5:02 PM [REPLY](#)

I was wondering if using found twigs makes the furniture less sturdy or if you knew how to tell if it is good wood or not. I was planning to start building some stuff this summer so I don't know much about it. You seem to have some experience. Is it better to cut it off the tree?



**outdoorsman2014** says:

May 20, 2008. 4:42 AM [REPLY](#)

Yeah, I made them before but i'm only 12 now, use to be 11. I forgot though, you have to make the the structure with big branches. then, willow branches interweaved into each other. I put an instructables if wanted.



**SlimJim** says:

Sep 14, 2006. 8:03 PM [REPLY](#)

lost... YOU CAN! that's why I wrote the instructable!!



**shirleyinkuwait** says:

May 6, 2008. 11:46 AM [REPLY](#)

Not sure if you saw my post. I am having so much fun using your pattern and making tables of various sizes from old (and new) Yucca Plant Stalks. THANK YOU! Now, I can't get Yucca sticks out of my mind.



**shirleyinkuwait** says:

May 5, 2008. 9:43 AM [REPLY](#)

I used this to make tables, coffe size tables, and sofa tables, from YUCCA STICKS. I am having so much fun doing this and giving them to my frieds for planters or yard tables.



**lucianoabcd** says:

Apr 19, 2008. 7:23 PM [REPLY](#)

Hey man that's so cool!!! I'd like you to check the instructable I just added: Rustic woodware at no cost

I haven't done real furniture as you have, but I think you may find my post interesting.



**debby9012** says:

Dec 22, 2007. 8:18 AM [REPLY](#)

Is willow the only wood a person can use to make tables and such? I live in Oklahoma and after our recent ice storm, there are piles and piles of branches everywhere!



**shagwalla** says:

Feb 18, 2007. 11:26 AM [REPLY](#)

That's a great willow table. Do you have any plans that could work for the furniture found at [www.americanwillow.com](http://www.americanwillow.com) ?

Thanks-

Mark



**issfab** says:

Sep 13, 2006. 10:47 AM [REPLY](#)

dude spend a couple bucks at lee valley to get the green wood drill bits and tenon cutter designed spcifically for this, you won't regret it.



**The Grey Fox** says:

Sep 13, 2006. 7:27 AM [REPLY](#)

I saw some great pieces of rustic furnature at Peach Stone, a small gallery in Rockport, Ma this past weekend. Unfortunately the artist Jack DeMuth wasn't there, but his card had his web site <http://jackdemuth.com> - - Wow! If you like rustic furnature check his site out. I may go back this weekend when Mr. DeMuth is there.



**Caya** says:

Sep 13, 2006. 7:09 AM [REPLY](#)

Isn't that awesome!! Even I could do that. I don't use power tools, except for drills. I have an aversion to using anything that could kill me if I do it wrong (cars excepted). I think you could extend the concept to using grape vines, twine them together or something, and use some sturdy wood for the weight-bearing bits. They grow wild around here. Really neat, thank you!

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**lostinthesparks** says:

Sep 12, 2006. 8:18 PM [REPLY](#)

wish i could do that

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**Crash2108** says:

Sep 10, 2006. 5:02 AM [REPLY](#)

I approve.

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