



by David Radtke

Rock-solid posts and overhead shading make this hammock the perfect retreat on warm summer days

Create a relaxing Hammock

Now here's a home improvement project you'll want to dive right into. After only a couple of days of building, you'll be swaying in the gentle summer breeze as it caresses you from all sides. Sure, you can hang a hammock from trees (if you're lucky enough to have them in the right spots), but one of the great features of this project is that it lets you choose the ideal location and bring your shade with you. Another plus is an optional awning cover that'll let you nap even during a gentle summer rain.

This project is built around two solid 6x6 treated posts that you set in concrete. The rest of the project is made from ordinary cedar dimensional lumber. You can get all the screws and other hardware at your local hardware store or home center. The project will cost you about \$600 plus the cost of your hammock (see Buyer's Guide, p. 72) and optional

synthetic tarp. You can have a local awning supplier make one for you for about \$475. Figure on spending about two to three days building plus a half day applying a clear deck sealer to the project. It's to your advantage to have some carpentry experience, but even a novice can complete this project with simple carpentry tools and our clear step-by-step photos and dimensioned drawing.

Dig big holes for a solid structure

Choose a site that slopes no more than a few inches. You can adjust the post depth on one side a bit to keep the structure fairly level.

With all the swinging back and forth, this hammock shelter requires a lot of concrete to anchor it to the earth. In fact, we used about eight bags of dry-mix concrete (60 lbs. each) for each of the footings. If you're transporting the bags from a home center

or hardware store in a passenger car, make two trips carrying no more than eight bags each time. If you have a delivery option, by all means, take advantage of it.

Digging the holes, I'll confess, is not the enjoyable part of this project. Each hole can take as little as a half hour or as much as two hours if you've got tough, rocky, clay-ridden soil. Besides a posthole digger and a shovel, have a heavy solid-steel bar on hand to free buried rocks, and a shrub loppers to clip stubborn roots.

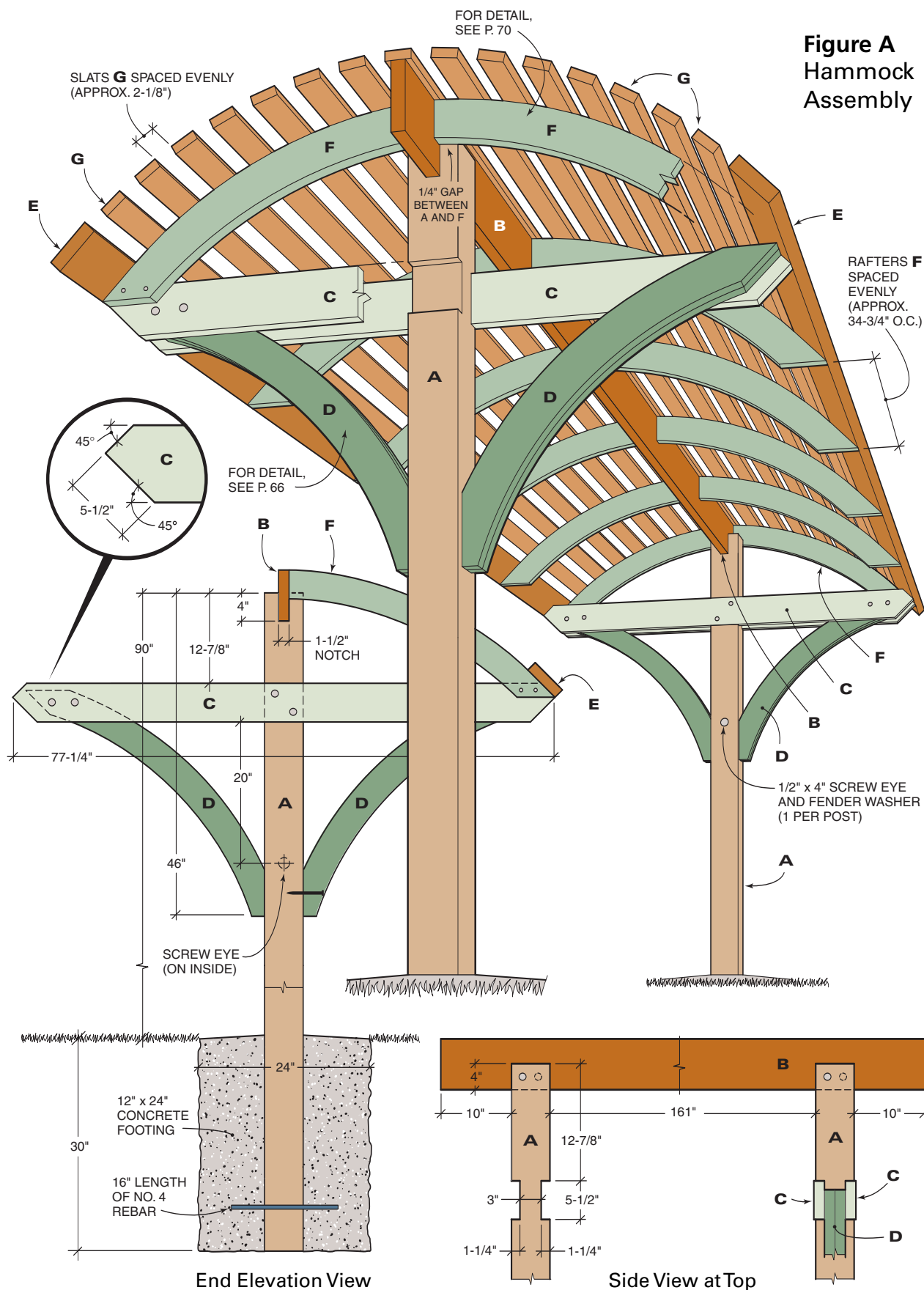
As you dig your holes, have a plastic tarp handy to slide the dirt away from the worksite for easy disposal.

CAUTION: Whenever you dig, make sure there are no buried cables or pipe in your yard. If you're not sure, don't guess. Call your utilities to get them marked for you. It can save you a big headache and possible injury.



Hideaway

Figure A
Hammock Assembly



Hammock Hideaway



1 Notch and drill your posts before you set them in concrete as shown in Fig. A. Make the top notch for the ridge board by drilling a 1-1/2 in. hole through the post and then hand-sawing from the top to the edges of the hole. Also drill the 1/2-in. diameter hole 12 in. from the bottom for the No. 4 rebar.

Notch your posts before you stick 'em in the ground

Follow the measurements on the drawing and cut the 1-1/4 in. deep notches for the crossties as shown in **Photos 1 and 2**. To cut the cradle for the ridge, measure down 3-1/4 in. from the top of the post and place a mark in the middle. Make an identical mark on the opposite side of the post and drill halfway through the post from each side. Then mark (see **Photo 1**) and cut from the top down to the hole edges to form your notched cradle for the ridge board (B).

NOTE: Check your individual hammock specs to make sure you get enough spread between your posts. We spaced ours 166-1/2 in. from center to center, which left 161 in. between. This distance worked for a wide variety of hammocks.

Cutting List

KEY	PCS.	SIZE & DESCRIPTION
A	2	5-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 120" treated pine posts
B	1	1-1/2" x 7-1/4" x 192" cedar ridge
C	4	1-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 77-1/4" cedar crossties
D	8	1-1/2" x 9-1/4" x 46-3/4" cedar brackets
E	2	1-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 192" cedar fascia boards
F	12	1-1/2" x 7-1/4" x 42" cedar arched rafters
G	15	1" x 2-11/16" x 192" cedar slats (cut from 5/4 cedar decking)



2 For the side notches, make multiple passes with your circular saw set at 1-1/4 in. deep and then clean out the debris left behind with a wood chisel. Flatten the bottom of the notch with a coarse file.



3 Dig a 12 x 24-in. hole at least 31 in. deep. Screw a cleat 30 in. from the bottom of the post to hold it to the correct depth. Drill a pilot hole, then drive a 16-in. long piece of rebar (expose equal amounts on each side) through the post as shown to help bond it to the concrete.

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4 Plumb the posts with a level. A skewed post will make it impossible to align your structure. Drive stakes into the ground and screw temporary supports to hold the posts as the concrete sets. Mix your concrete. Berm it slightly to drain water away from the post.



5 Set one end of the ridge into a notch and then walk the other end up the ladder and drop it into the opposite notch. You may need to tap the ridge to get it completely seated. Fasten it to the posts with 3-1/2 in. lag screws set off center and one on each side.



6 Cut your curved brackets from 2x10 cedar following the pattern in Figure B. Clamp the brackets to a work surface to keep them from rocking as you sand. Sand both edges and keep the belt sander moving to smooth the curves.

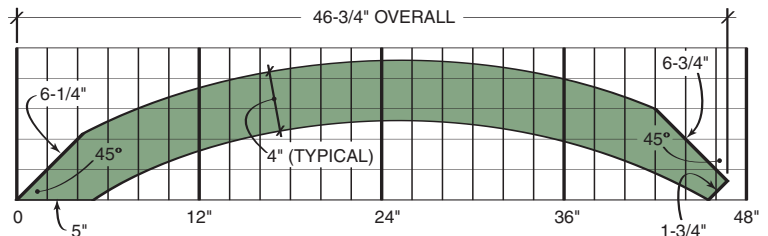


Figure B Bracket – D (cut 4 from doubled 2x10s)

Dig your holes for the posts and don't skimp on the size. Smaller holes with less concrete may cause the posts to loosen over time. If you have a slight slope from post to post, adjust the cleat up on the lower-elevation post so your structure will be close to level (an inch one way or the other won't matter). Nail a pair of 1x3 x 8-ft. temporary supports about 20 in. down from the top of the posts as shown in **Photo 4** to help you plumb and position the posts. Screw the supports to stakes driven into the ground. Once the posts are straight up and down, run a string line (**Photo 4**) across the bottom and tweak the posts so their faces are perfectly aligned.

With your posts aligned and level with each other, mix your concrete, two bags at a time, to a firm consistency (something like cottage cheese). Scoop the concrete into the hole and use a stick to pack it in around the post. Keep mixing bags until you get up to the surrounding soil. Check your alignment again and then berm the concrete slightly so rainwater will run off. Complete both holes, recheck alignment and wait two days before adding to the structure.

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7 Center the cross-ties on the post notches and then lag-screw each one to the post with 5/16-in. x 2-1/2 in. lag screws.



8 Clamp your brackets in place and center them onto the post. Drill a 1/4-in. deep recess with a 1-in. spade bit, then drill a 1/4-in. pilot hole for your 5/16-in. x 4-in. galvanized lag screws.



9 Center the 2x6 fascia on each side and align the lower edge with the point on the cross-ties. Drive 3-in. deck screws through the fascia boards into the cross-ties.

Cut the curved parts while you wait for the concrete to set

The curved parts (D and F) of this structure give it a soothing elegance. They're not difficult to cut but take time to lay out. You can make a full-size template by drawing a 2 x 2-in. grid on a piece of Masonite or thin plywood, plotting the points as shown in **Figures B and C**, drawing the curves and cutting out the shapes with a jigsaw. Then use this thin piece as your pattern to mark the actual pieces onto wider dimensional lumber.

You can also lay out the curves with a trammel (large homemade compass) by simply drawing the inner and outer radii of each piece on your lumber. The brackets (D) have a 44-in. inner radius and a 48-in. outer radius. The rafters (F) have a 51-1/4 in. inner radius and a 55-1/4 in. outer radius. **NOTE:** Use a large deep-throated jigsaw blade to help make a smooth, even curve. A regular jigsaw blade is thinner and shorter and could wander in thick material.

Glue and clamp pairs of bracket pieces to make up the thick supports for the cross-ties. Use a water-resistant carpenter's glue. Once the glue dries, sand the edges with a belt sander (**Photo 6**) to even the curves of the brackets and the rafters. Start with an aggressive 60-grit belt and move to a 100-grit for the final sand.

The ridge board is the spine that holds it all together

Cut your ridge board to length and then place a mark 10 in. in from each side. If your ridge has a slight crown from end



10 Brace the fascia temporarily to take out any bow. Clamp one end of the rafter to the fascia and screw the rafter to the ridge. Screw through the ridge into the rafter using a pair of 3-1/2 in. deck screws at each end. Start with the center rafter and then lay them out evenly (34-3/4 in. on center) toward each end.

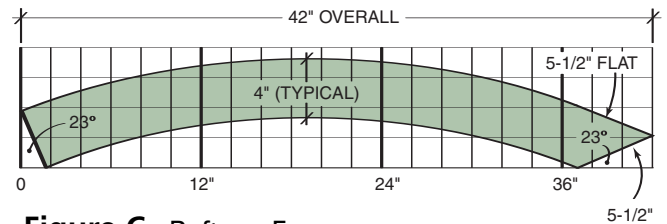


Figure C Rafter – F (cut 12 from 2x8s)



11 Rip the 5/4x6 cedar decking in half to 2-11/16 in. width using an edge guide mounted on your circular saw. Round over the cut edges to match the factory edges with a bearing-guided 1/4-in. round-over bit.

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to end, make sure the high spot is on the top. Set your ridge into the post notches, align your marks, tap it into place (**Photo 5**) and fasten it to the posts.

The next part of the skeleton is the crossties (C). Cut them to length and cut the angled ends. To take the hassle out of centering each pair of crossties onto the posts, just mark the center of each crosstie and the center of the post on both sides. Then simply line up the marks and fasten them to the posts.

Now you can install your brackets (D) to support the crossties. Clamp the assembly tightly as shown in **Photo 8**. Fasten the brackets to the crossties from each side. Be sure to align the crossties as you install lag screws on each side of the crosstie into the bracket. Next, fasten the lower end of the bracket to the post.

The long 2x6 fascia boards (E) support the bottoms of the curved rafters (**Photo 9**). Fasten the fascia boards to the crossties with 3-in. deck screws, leaving 9-3/4 in. projecting past the outer crossties. Next, lay out the rafters as shown in **Fig. A** and screw them to the ridge (starting from the center) and the fascia boards (see **Photo 10**). **NOTE:** The end rafters appear tight to the posts, but they're actually spaced 1/4 in. away.



12 Install the top center slat first. Space the slats evenly as shown in Figure A. Drive finish nails every 4-15/16 in. (from the top down) to help hold the slats in relative position as you fasten the far end. Screw in the slats, then pull the nails. Next, straighten the slats as you screw them to the middle group of rafters.

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2-11/16" x 1" x 16'
CEDAR SLATS

6

13 Check the spacing at each junction to avoid wavy slats. Screw the roof slats with two 2-in. deck screws into each rafter.



Buyer's Guide

You can choose from a wide variety of hammock styles by contacting these companies. Visit these sites on-line for great photos and specs or give them a call:

COASTAL HAMMOCKS: (877) 966-0616.

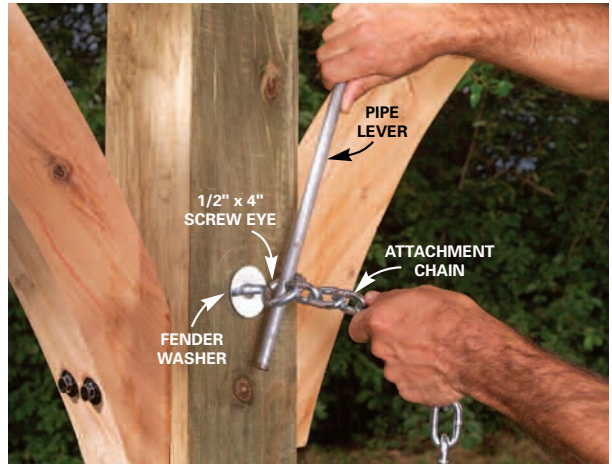
www.coastalhammock.com (dealer locator only; no direct sales)

HAMMOCKS.COM: (866) 577-3529.

www.hammocks.com/hammocks

HATTERAS HAMMOCKS: (800) 643-3522.

www.hatham.com (dealer locator only; no direct sales)



14 Drill a 3/8-in. pilot hole and then drive a screw eye into the post. Use a lever to help turn the screw eye. We added a 10-in. piece of chain but only needed two links to connect the hammock. You can let the extra chain dangle or cut it off if you'd like.

A deck sealer protects your framework

Once you've finished the building phase of the project, choose a sealer suitable for decks or siding. You'll need close to a gallon. If you'd like to darken the color a bit, choose a semitransparent stain/sealer exterior finish, or if you like the fresh-cut look, simply get clear.

Lay a tarp on the ground below and apply the finish with a 4-in. roller immediately followed by a 2-in. brush. Begin with the upper slats and work your way to the posts. Let the finish dry for a day before using the shelter. 🏠

Shopping List

ITEM	QTY.
6x6 x 10' pressure-treated pine	2
2x8 x 16' cedar (ridge)	1
2x6 x 14' cedar (crossties)	2
2x10 x 8' cedar (brackets)	4
2x6 x 16' cedar (fascia boards)	2
2x8 x 8' cedar (rafters)	6
5/4x6 x 16' cedar (roof slats, cut in half)	8
3" deck screws	1 lb.
3-1/2" deck screws	1 lb.
2" deck screws	3 lbs.
5/16" x 2-1/2" galv. lag screws (crosstie to post and bracket)	24
5/16" x 4" galv. lag screws (bracket to post)	8
5/16" x 3-1/2" galv. lag screws (post to ridge)	4
1/2" x 4" screw eyes	2
5/16" galv. washers	36
1/2" fender washers (around screw eyes)	2
60-lb. bags of dry mix concrete	16
Exterior deck finish	1 gal.
Chain	20"
Chain Quick Links	2



Attach the cover with special turn-and-lock fasteners provided by your awning company. You may have trouble getting help with this phase of the project once your partner has discovered the comfort of the hammock below!

Choosing a tarp for the top

We went to an awning company and had our tarp made to fit using a synthetic material that resists the harsh ultraviolet sunlight. The finished tarp ended up costing us about \$475, including the stays screwed in along the fascia.

If you'd like to save money by doing a little extra work, you can buy a tarp, trim two sides to fit, hem the edges and use a grommet tool to add grommets. You can then use a continuous length of rope for each side to loop through the grommets and wrap around the fascia boards.

NOTE: If you choose not to use a tarp, you'll still get ample shade from the roof slats above.

Art Direction • BECKY PFLUGER
 Photography • BILL ZUEHLKE
 Technical Art • EUGENE THOMPSON
 Project Design • DAVID RADTKE