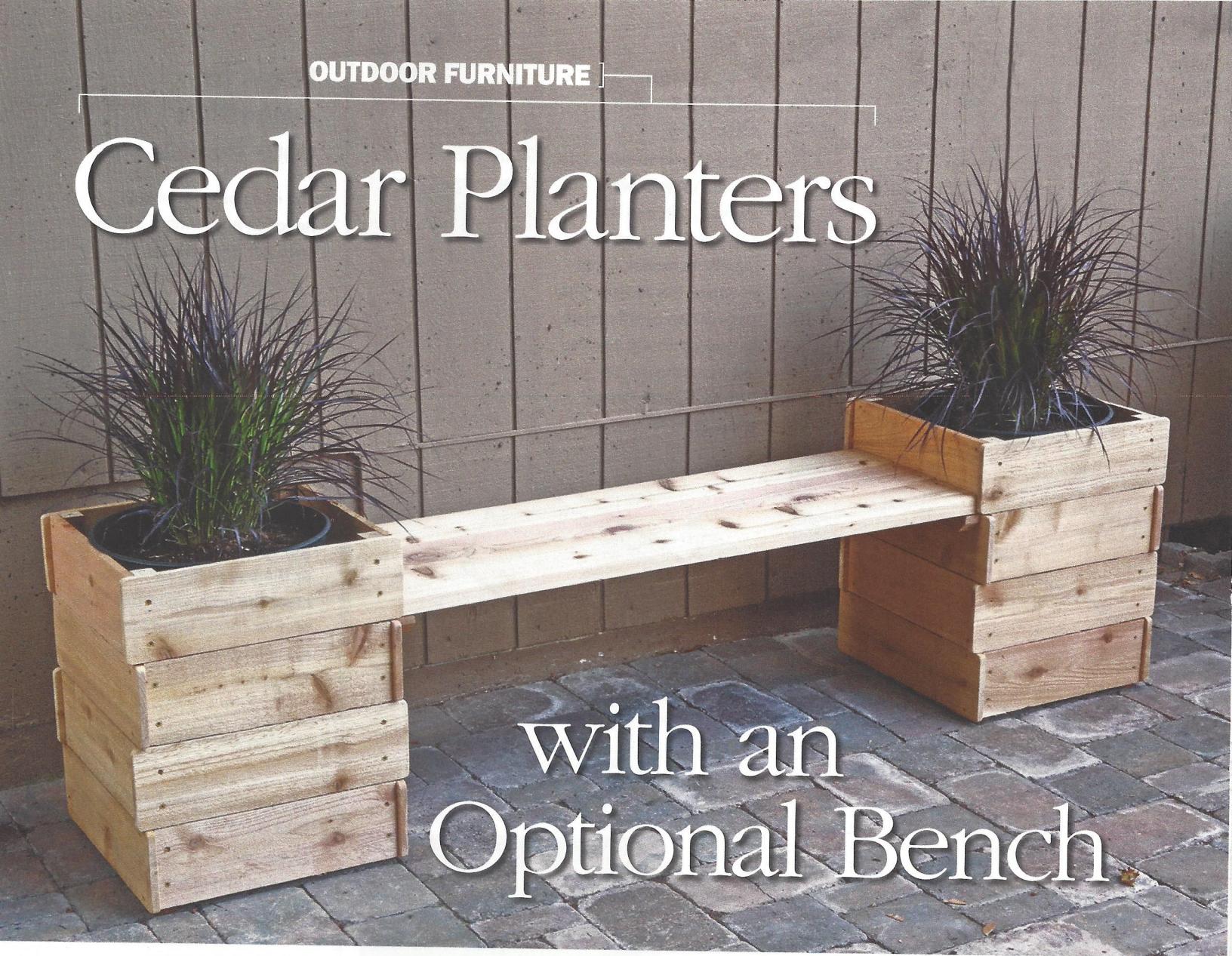


Cedar Planters



with an
Optional Bench

Tall or short, with or without a seat,
these boxes fit in almost any space

BY ASA CHRISTIANA

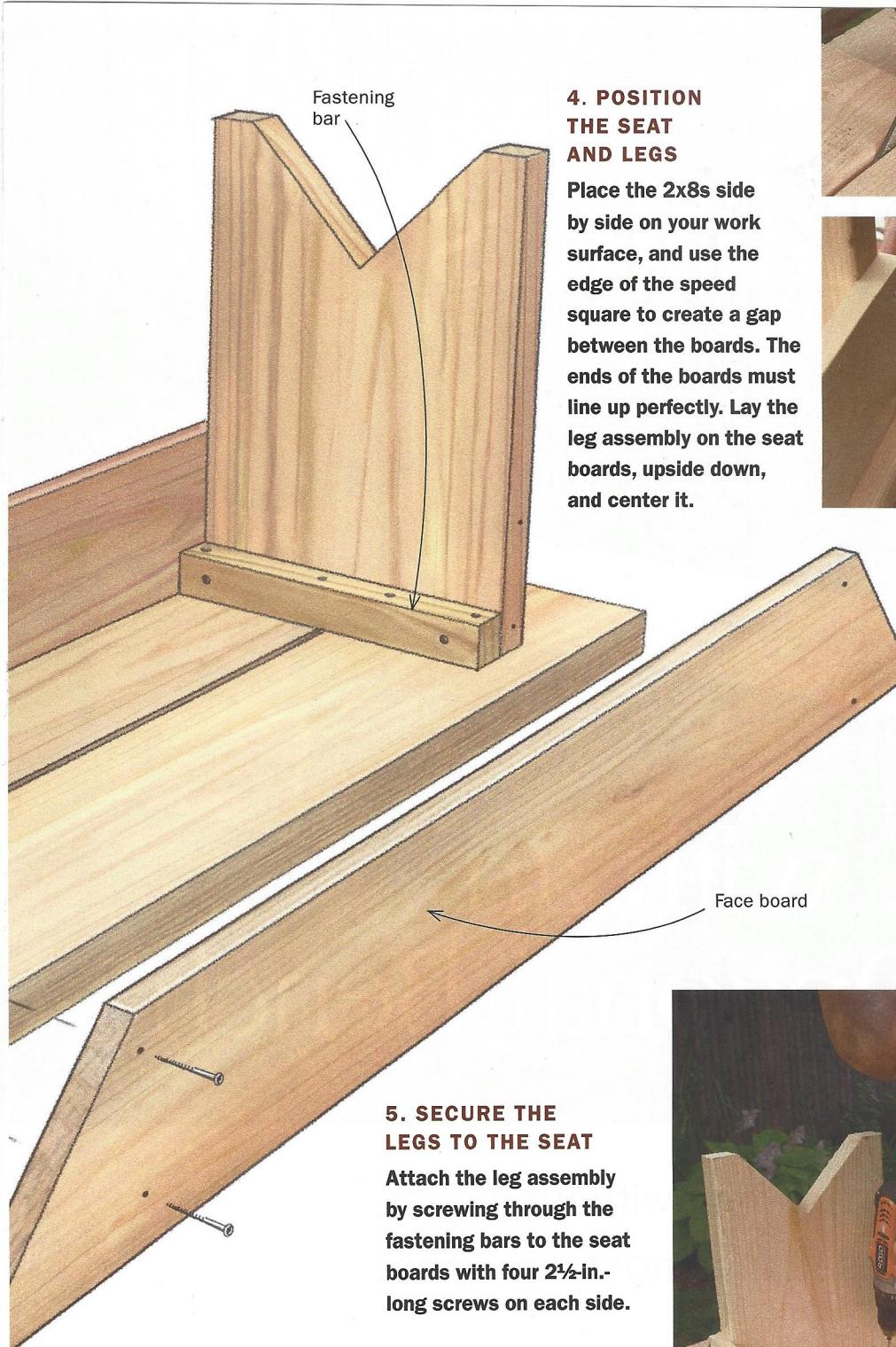
The key move when building wooden planters is to not ask them to hold dirt, which is full of water and bacteria and will ultimately win its battle with the wood. Instead, start with plastic planter containers, whether long boxes or big pots, make sure they have holes for drainage, and build wood boxes to hide them.

I started with big 16-in.-dia. pots from my local home center. The planter boxes are beyond simple: just roughsawn cedar fence boards screwed onto square

posts hidden on the inside. I used pressure-treated wood for the posts. It's a bit cheaper than cedar, but it's also harder and holds screws more tightly.

The roughsawn boards are nice, but most of the charm comes from an overlapping corner detail. To give the appearance of traditional joinery, I simply cut half of the boards a little long, rounded their corners, and overlapped them at the corners of the box.

Joinery is an old-timey word for the various ways wood can be cut so it interlocks and forms strong



Fastening bar

4. POSITION THE SEAT AND LEGS

Place the 2x8s side by side on your work surface, and use the edge of the speed square to create a gap between the boards. The ends of the boards must line up perfectly. Lay the leg assembly on the seat boards, upside down, and center it.



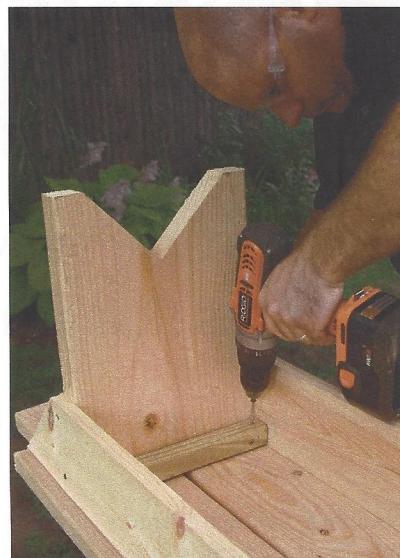
5. SECURE THE LEGS TO THE SEAT

Attach the leg assembly by screwing through the fastening bars to the seat boards with four 2½-in.-long screws on each side.



6. DRESS IT UP

I chose a semitransparent, weatherproofing, Bordeaux-colored stain to create a pop of color in my garden. Use any color you like, or let the bench weather naturally.

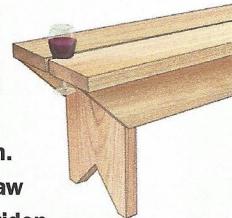


Ways to embellish your bench

You can personalize this bench in any number of ways. Here are some ideas:

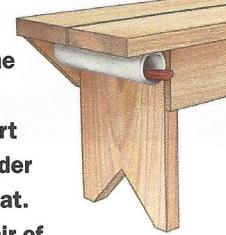
PROVIDE A PLACE TO REST YOUR BEVERAGE

Using a hole saw, drill a large hole about 2 in. from each end of the bench. Use a circular saw or handsaw to widen the space between the boards at the end of the bench to meet the hole. I find this little feature handy when I relinquish my wine glass for my turn at bocce.



ATTACH A HIDDEN NOOK FOR TOOLS

Forge one tapered end of the rear face board, and attach a short length of pipe under the end of the seat. Stow an extra pair of gardening gloves and an inexpensive set of pruners here for an occasional bit of spontaneous pruning.



ADD A BIT OF WHIMSY

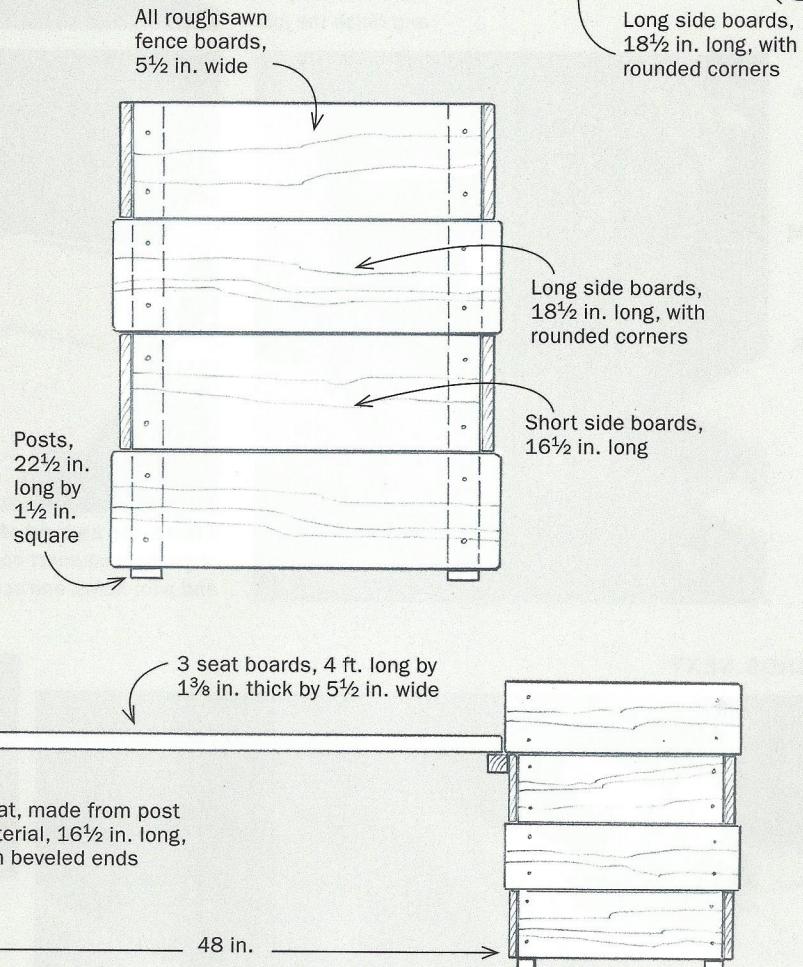
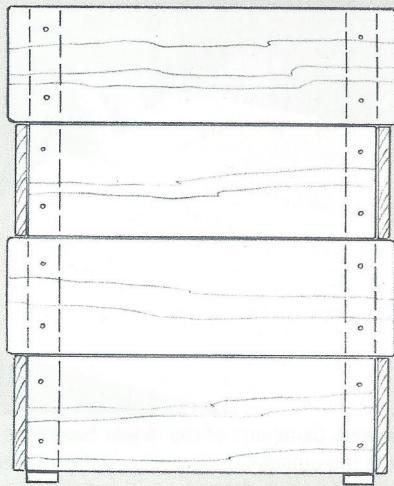
Use a variety of hole saws to create a pattern of circles in the center of the face boards. This detail will give your bench a quick jolt of style.



SIMPLE, STRONG CONSTRUCTION

The rough cedar fence boards screw onto the posts. Alternate the long and short pieces to create the overlapping effect. Add the cleats and seat boards to put a sturdy bench between the boxes. These boxes fit around 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.-dia. planting containers, so alter the dimensions if your containers are a slightly different size.

TALL PLANTER BOXES (WITH BENCH)



joints. When you see dovetails on the outside of a box or drawer, or tenons emerging from their mortises (as they do on the outdoor bench), that's called exposed joinery, and it always turns heads. There's something about seeing the construction and craftsmanship that is pleasing to people. This overlapping detail is a nod to exposed joinery, but it's dead-easy to execute. Pretty and easy, my favorite combo.

If you want the full planter-and-bench array, make the planters full size, four boards tall, and screw on

cleats to support the seat. That's the way I'll build the project in the photos that follow. To make the planters stand alone, I would make them shorter, three boards tall instead of four. They just look better that way on their own. But other than using shorter posts and fewer boards, the how-to is the same.

*Asa Christiana is a freelance writer and editor in Portland, Ore. This is an excerpt from his book *Build Stuff with Wood* (The Taunton Press, 2017).*

Assemble the sides

To assemble the planter box, start by making two opposite, identical sides. The short boards should end at the outside edges of the posts to set the overall width of the planter box, so attach those first as shown. Be sure to drill clearance and pilot holes to give the screws their best grip and avoid splitting the wood.

ATTACH THE SHORT BOARDS FIRST

Drill clearance and pilot holes.

If your drill bit isn't long enough for a full-depth hole, dimple the post, take the board away, and finish the job.



Screw it down solidly.
Making sure the edges of the board are still aligned, drive 2-in.-long deck screws through the boards and into the posts.



Attach the second short board. Using one of the longer boards as a spacer, align the next short board with the outside of the posts, drill your clearance and pilot holes, and screw it down to lock the posts in the right position.

LONG BOARDS NEXT



Even out the overhang. The long boards go on the same way, but you must even out the overhang at each end. Use a combination square to make sure each end sticks out the same amount, roughly $\frac{3}{8}$ in., and then drill the pilot holes and drive screws.

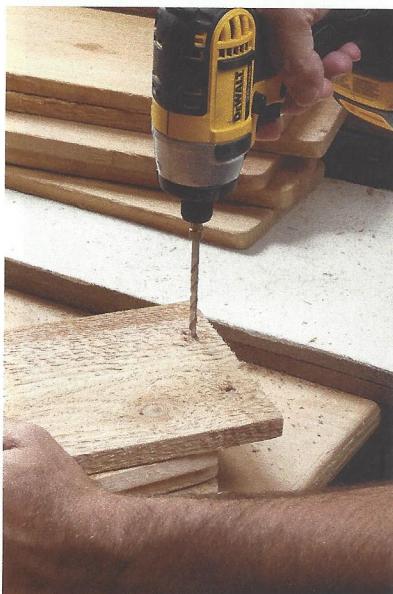


Build the boxes

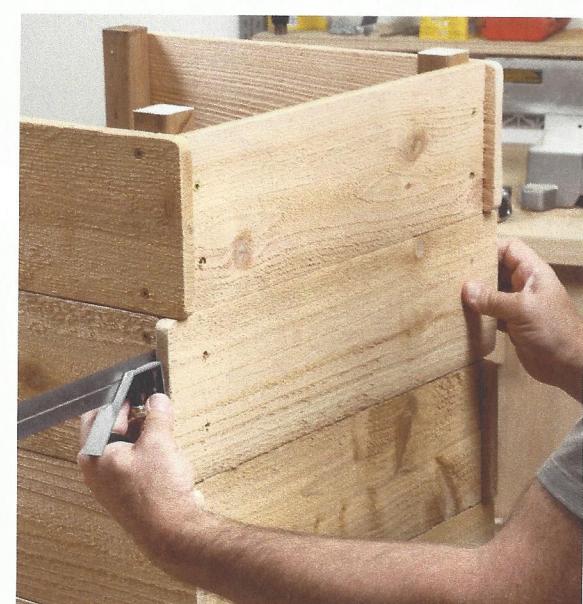
With two sides done, you can attach the rest of the boards and complete the box. Be sure to even out the overhang of the extralong boards and butt the ends of the short boards tightly against their neighbors when attaching them.



Weave in the other boards. Flip over the two sides you already assembled so they are standing on their top ends. Notice how the feet stick out a bit. Then weave in the remaining boards to hold everything in place temporarily. Screw on the bottom board to hold the box together. Mark the hole locations, making sure they will clear the screws in the board on the adjacent side.



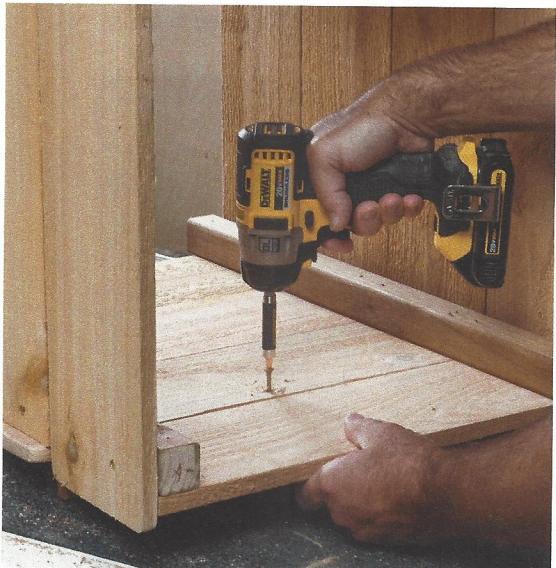
Screw in the bottom board. Predrill the pilot holes before putting the board back in place. With its ends tight, drive the screws.



Work your way down. Now you can attach the rest of the boards, one by one. On the long boards, mark clearance holes, drill them, and even out the overhang before drilling pilot holes.

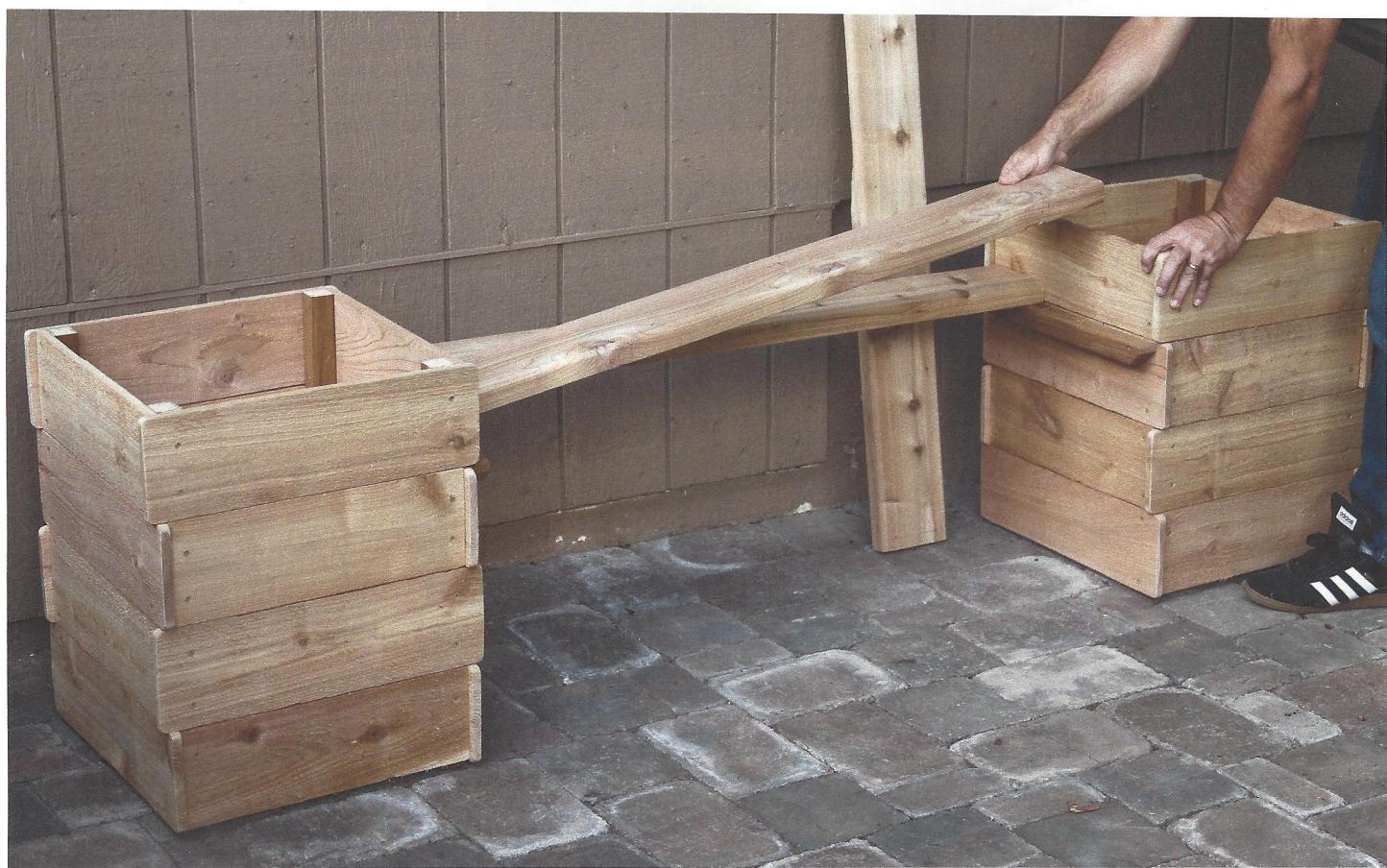
Complete the bench

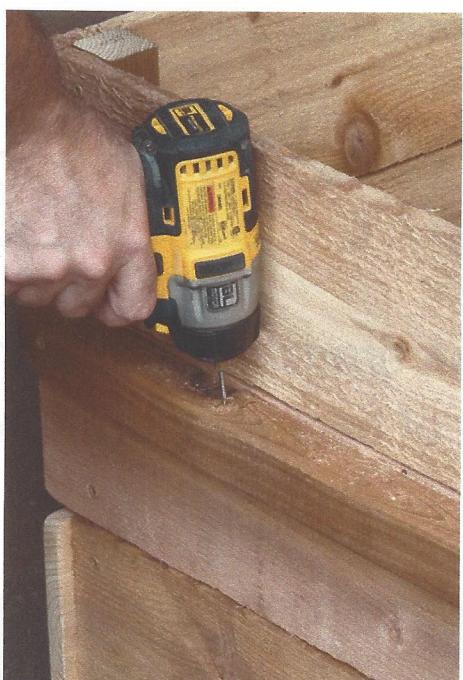
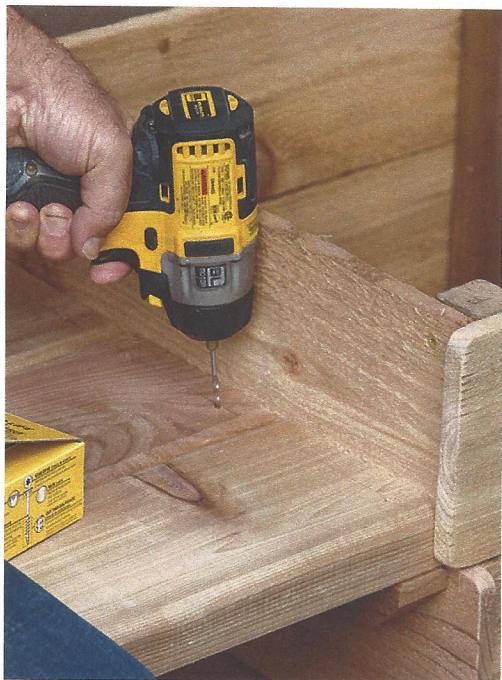
Drill a few more holes, add the seat boards, and your planter/bench is ready for the patio.



One last hole. This one is a clearance hole so you can drive a screw into the cleat from inside the box. Use 3-in.-long screws to attach the cleats, then drive shorter screws ($1\frac{1}{8}$ in. if you have them) from the inside to add strength. Be sure to drill pilot holes first.

Cut and drill the seat boards. After cutting the three boards to length (48 in. each), drill clearance holes for the screws that will attach them. Note the lines that show where to drill so the screws are centered on the cleats below. Space the planter boxes the right distance apart and drop in the seat boards.





A few screws make them permanent. Drill pilot holes down into the cleats. The small bit won't reach far enough, so remove the seat boards to finish the job. Then screw them down permanently with 3-in.-long screws.



Plants need a boost. The plastic pots were too short for these tall planter boxes, so Christiana gave them a boost with a few old paint cans. Then the plants dropped in at the right level. You don't need to do this with the shorter version of the planter boxes.