Reclining lounge chair

Get comfortable on the patio or deck with this sturdy reclining lounge chair

By Cathy Dalrymple

Photo by Brenda Falvey

As early as the eighth century B.C., the Greeks used a piece of furniture called the “kline,” for lounging during meals instead of sitting on a chair. The kline was also used at social gatherings involving wine, music and conversation, the same things we enjoy when relaxing outdoors in Canadian summers.

The 19th century produced a European version of the kline, the chaise lounge, which is, in turn, the predecessor of this lounger. Today you'll find the lounge chair in prominent use around pools, on decks, at the cottage or on the topsides of luxury ocean liners.

This project aims to enhance the lazy summer day's experience of a cool drink and a good book. And better yet, although this simple, elegant design is long on history, it's short on construction time.

Instructions

Assembly Process

Begin by preparing the parts you'll need, beginning with a template for the stringers. A piece of scrap 1/4" plywood or even heavy cardboard measuring 4" x 78" will do the trick. Draw the profile for the stringers on this material, including an optional freehand undulation behind the seat back and where your hips will rest on the lounge. Once you are satisfied with the profile of your template, trace it onto two pieces of wood, then cut them out with a bandsaw or jigsaw. With both stringers cut, clamp or screw them together so you can sand both at the same time to identical profiles. I used a belt sander with an 80-grit abrasive for this job. Tip the machine forward a bit so the front roller gets into any curved areas of your stringers. If you screw the stringers together where the leg bolt holes will go later, you'll avoid making unnecessary marks on the wood. When you're done, separate the stringers and lay them out so they're at the ready on your workbench.

Using the top end of your plywood stringer template, transfer the shape to the wood you roughed-out for the backrest stringers. Saw these, then sand the edges as you did with the main stringers. At this point you can cut, sand and finish all pieces on the materials list. This not only saves time, but glue squeeze-out won't stain your project as it would bare wood.

Next, lay out the slats for the lounge surface. I used a piece of 1/2" ply as a spacer between slats to make sure the spacing was consistent. Once you're satisfied with this positioning, mark where the centre of each slat will join with the main stringers. These marks indicate where you'll plunge slots for the #10 biscuits that secure the slats. These biscuits work together with 5/8" x 5/8" support strips fastened to the inside of the stringers with screws to support the weight of people using the lounge. Add these later.

Next, drill all holes for the leg bolts and dowels. The plans show where the parts go. I used a Forstner bit for this job because it cuts such clean edges, although you could use a sharp brad-point bit instead. You can now cut the dowel that fits between the main stringers to length. Set the slats between the stringers so you can measure the required dowel

length exactly.

Fasten the legs to the stringers with 5/16"-dia. x 3" connecting bolts that thread into metal inserts set into the wood. Install the threaded inserts, test-fit the legs, then set them aside.

Now it's time for glue. I used a weatherproof glue for securing the slats, beginning with those on one stringer first. Set them in place with biscuits, then use your 1/2" plywood block to check and adjust spacing. Adjust the slats so they're all square to one stringer, then let everything dry before repeating the process with the other stringer.

You'll find that this second side takes a bit of patience, since the slats you put in want to wiggle out as you work on the others. I fixed this problem with a loose pipe clamp installed across the stringers at one end of the frame. Tighten it slowly as you add slats and things should go well. It also helps to keep a scrap of wood underneath the slats, so they don't fall down if their biscuits happen to pull away from the wood.

Once all the slats are loosely in place, persuade the one-inch dowel into place between the stringers as a final assembly step. Clamp the lounge along its length when all pieces are in position, checking again for spacing and check for square before allowing the glue to dry.

The plans show the added support strip required underneath the slats along each stringer. If you've made your stringers curved, custom-cut the support strip to match this shape using the stringer template as a guide.

Duplicating the assembly process with the backrest will be a snap after the practice you've had. When it's dry, bolt the completed backrest to the lounge stringers, as shown in the plans. With the main part of the project finished, fasten the legs.

Next comes the adjustable backrest prop assembly. Fasten the two adjuster pieces to either side of the backrest using two-inch bolts and washers. The plans show how the washers act as spacers, ensuring that the backrest adjusters operate freely.

With these parts in place, measure the distance between them and cut a length of dowel to go between the parts. Be sure the adjusting unit is square to the backrest, then secure the dowel with glue and one #6 x 1 1/2" screw at each end.

Now it's time to move on to the sliding table. Make up the two L-shaped runner assemblies using the wide and narrow table runner parts. The table surface itself is made using the same method as the lounge, with slats connected to edge pieces. I used glue and a brad nail gun shooting 1 1/2" fasteners to attach the table edges and stiffeners to the table slats. When the table is ready, clamp the L-shaped runners to the underside of the lounge, then slip the table in place. When you're happy with the sliding action, mark the rail positions and remove the assembly. You'll need to attach the leveler pieces to the runners before securing the assembly to the lounge. These allow the table to pull out without tipping forward. Place the levelers 1 1/2" back from the runner ends so they sit just inside the stringers.

Whether you're at home next to the barbeque, at the cottage or eating peeled grapes while discussing Plato, you'll enjoy the fruits of your labour relaxing on your own version of the kline lounger.

Tools and Materials

Part	Material	Size (T x W x L*)	Qty.
Lounge Surface			
Stringers		1 3/8" x 3 1/2" x 75"	2
Support strips		5/8" x 5/8" x 37"	2
Backrest stringers		1 3/8" x 3 1/2" x 32"	2
Back legs		1 3/8" x 3 1/2" x 9"	2
Front legs		1 3/8" x 5" x 9"	2
Lounge slats		3/4" x 2 1/2" x 22"	16
Backrest slats		3/4" x 2 1/2" x 19"	10
Wide table runners		5/8" x 1 3/8" x 25"	2
Narrow table runners		5/8" x 5/8" x 25"	2
Table slats		5/8" x 2 1/2" x 14"	5
Table edges		5/8" x 5/8" x 14"	2
Table stiffeners		5/8" x 5/8" x 12"	2
Table levelers		3/8" x 1 1/4" x 22"	2
Adjusters		3/4" x 2 1/2" x 12"	2
Adjuster dowel		1" dia. x 20"*	1
Connector dowel		1" dia. x 23"*	1
Hardware			
Leg and backrest bolts/inserts		5/16" x 3"	10
Adjuster bolts/inserts		5/16" x 2"	2
Adjuster dowel screws		#6 x 1 1/2"	2
Table runner screws		#8 x 2 1/2"	4
*Custom-cut			

* Length indicates grain direction

Plan

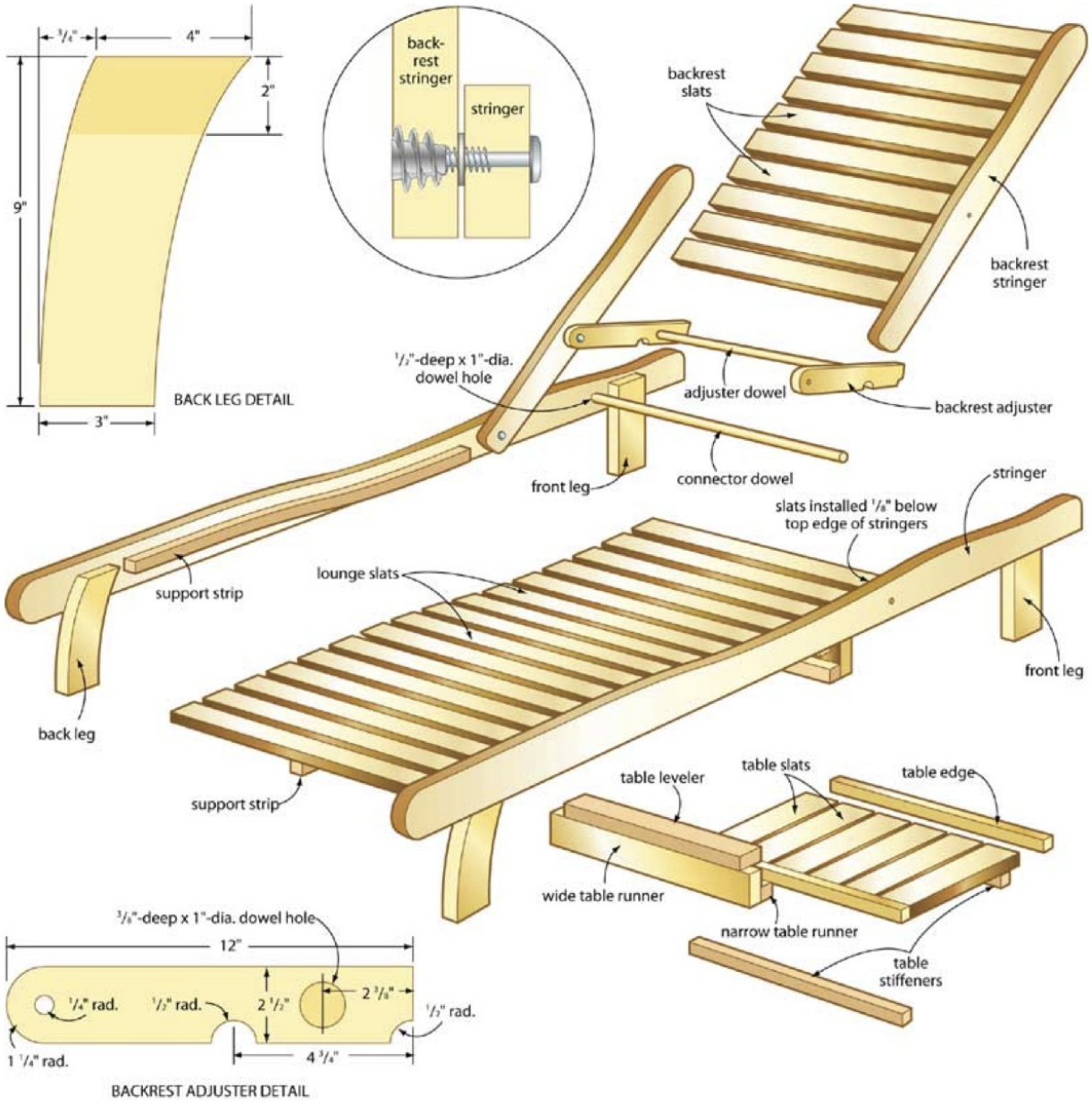

Illustration by Len Churchill