

Grampa's Browns Corner *Daily Blab* 4/20/20

Good evening, y'all. I gave serious consideration to skipping The Daily Blab tonight and instead writing something called *Shop Talk With Dad*.

And to a large extent that is what I am writing because I spent the afternoon building a couple of workbenches.

Of course there is a back story. I look at [craigslist](#) regularly. For those who are unfamiliar, craigslist is a free on line want ad site. It is great for finding stuff and great for selling stuff. There is always a lot of free stuff, such as the telephone poles which are the backbone of Zoe Ahaghotu Bridge and Gabrielle Bridge. Or the wood chips I use for garden mulch. Look at the aerial view; you can see my free wood chips from space. Or the past couple of years' firewood.

A couple of weeks ago I saw a posting for a free workbench with mechanic's vise attached. It was in Rock Hall which is nearby as things go. I made sure that I could just go pick it up and not have to shake hands or share drinks with anyone. The workbench turned out to be a huge disappointment and the vise also kind of cheesy.

It turned out that these folks had just bought the house and they had some other things they wanted gone, including a gasoline powered weed whacker and a gasoline powered leaf blower. I called Tim and said he'd take the two gasoline powered things. So the trip to Rock Hall was not a complete bust.

I had really been mostly interested in the vise and when I got the really crummy workbench home I didn't immediately know what to do with it. So I left it out in the driveway to decide its fate some other time.



Yes, that was the crummy bench in the picture of the tools the other day.

All the physical work horsing those steel channels around, splitting wood, schlepping lumber, and laying bricks has left my back occasionally aching. I have been flirting with back trouble my whole life and when I start to feel the ache in my lower back I try to slow down, back off, and try to avoid letting it become more serious. I know several people who seem to have lost that battle.

Doing the work of refurbishing those tools standing erect at a 34 inch high work table made me realize that ergonomics should not be ignored. Positioning the work to be able to stand erect is important.

I have also been working in the barn to get my workshop better organized. I'm making good progress but not ready for the virtual tour yet. It came into my head that I could make a narrow work table wide enough to straddle a stack of lumber but narrow enough to not intrude into usable floor space. That POS "workbench" I got for free from craigslist showed me the pitfalls of using particle board and OSB for a workbench top. Then I thought about the [Advantech](#)¹ sheathing product and figured out that I could buy a single sheet of ¾" Advantech, split it in two lengthwise, and make two benches, one for inside and one for outside.

¹ Advantech is a premium OSB (Oriented Strand Board) product made with premium glue for superior strength, stiffness, and extreme water resistance. It was what the floor of the loft was sheathed with and survived not only the fire in 2014 but also the deluge of water the firemen sprayed up there. Fifteen or twenty years ago the Huber Corporation flew me down to Georgia for a three day conference with a handful of other recognized experts in various fields of construction to brainstorm on applications and market development for Advantech. They knew how superior their product was and were trying to figure out how to profit from it.

I went to Amazon.com and searched for “workbench kit” which led me to these heavy duty stainless steel folding leg brackets which would help me achieve an important secondary feature. The legs should fold so that the bench can be leaned up against a wall for storage when not needed for use.



All of this led to the usual 4:00 AM visionary design revelation. So I called Chestertown Lumber and had them deliver one sheet of Advantech and a bunch of PT 2x4s. This afternoon I could not work out in the woods (more on that later) so I built the benches.



Importantly, both benches are 34” high, the same height as the top of my portable (thanks, Chris) table saw. This means that they can serve as material supports while feeding lumber or plywood through the saw. By coincidence they are also the same height as my extremely versatile

portable bench (Thanks, Chris) when standing on its end.



The narrow 20” bench nicely straddles the lumber stack.



Why couldn't Grampa go out in the woods?

It's about the mud. Along the trails I have been clearing there are many spots like this where the tractor has broken through the mat of leaf mold and roots and sunken in up to the hubcaps.



Ok, there are no hubcaps but you get the idea. The first pass, I can usually get through pretty easily due to low gear 4x4 and seriously knobby tires. The second time through becomes a challenge. The third time through, if I tried, would mean bringing in my Power Wagon



Unfortunately the BCBA Power Wagon is in the shop in Connecticut with some kind of fuel troubles and can not currently be relied upon as a tow vehicle. As an engineer with considerable experience in geotech, Grampa knows that it is easy to build a durable road over muddy ground by putting down a layer of *geotextile*, kind of like super duty weed mat, and then placing a layer of aggregate on top.

The geotextile serves as a separator and prevents the aggregate from sinking into the mud. As one textbook notes, “if you put gravel into mud you get lumpy mud” or something like that. There also was some reference to tapioca pudding.

SO, Grampa has ordered a roll of geotextile from Amazon, believe it or not. And tomorrow there will be a delivery of 14 cubic yards of recycled concrete aggregate (RCA) or about 20 tons.

Tomorrow there will also be two truckloads of free wood chips delivered. They’ll make a nice top dressing on the new high tech woods road. They also make good mulch. You can see them from space! (I added the arrows)



So, until the geotextile and stone is delivered, Grampa will stay out of the woods pretty much.

Tomorrow there are a lot of garden projects with seeds and bulbs to plant:

- Gladiolus
- Sunflower
- Wild flower mix
- Violas
- Pumpkin (I saved the seeds from the huge pumpkin last fall)
- Zucchini (Nana can’t make Z-bread without it)
- Transplant a couple of eastern cedar volunteers from the wrong places to the right places.
- Transplant day lilies and hostas

And furniture building is becoming once again possible as the workshop reorganization progresses. I think it may rain, making workshop activity seem good.



So for now, Good Night, Campers.

Lots of love from Browns Corner!