

The Downeast Thunder Farm Nesting Box

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At *Downeast Thunder Farm* here in Millbridge, Maine, we design and fabricate our own structures, farm implements, and equipment as we need them. On occasion, we hear from other folks looking for various plans and/or instructions on how to go about doing something themselves but don't know where to begin. We believe in helping out our neighbors and fellow farmers by sharing our knowledge and experience, so the Downeast Thunder Farm Nesting Box is an offering from us based on such requests.

This nesting box may not be the "end-all" of designs, and may not win any awards. It is very simple, easy, fast, and inexpensive to build though. It's a practical piece of equipment, and based on inquiries we've received, a popular one folks want to build themselves.

There is no charge to download the plans and instructions. We do not expect anything in return. We do invite your comments though, and if you do in fact build our design, we'd love to see a couple of photos if you might be so inclined to send them.

You'll note from the materials list and instructions, we suggest use of indoor/outdoor carpet to line the floor of each nesting box cubicle. The reason for this results from our own experience. Our hens seem to kick out the wood shavings or straw we line the nesting boxes with. When they lay their eggs, there is no cushion and sometimes an egg will crack. By lining the boxes with carpet, we no longer get any cracked eggs. Using indoor/outdoor carpet allows us to easily wash the carpet sections now and then.

Remember to keep your tools sharp, and wear safety goggles during construction. It wouldn't hurt to wear a dust mask while cutting wood as well.

Do you have a pond on or near your farm? Do you need a small skiff or dinghy? If so, check out one of our other web sites: www.shoestringshipyard.com

Best Wishes,

Paul J. Bennett

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It is not the purpose of these plans and instructions to reprint all the information that is otherwise available to the author and/or publisher, but to complement, amplify and supplement other texts. You are urged to seek out, and read all of the available material on Do-It-Yourself (DIY) nesting box construction, and learn as much as possible to tailor the information to your individual needs.

Every effort has been made to make these plans and instructions as complete and as accurate as possible. However, there **may be mistakes** both typographical and in content. Therefore, these plans and instructions should be used only as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of home based nesting box construction information. Furthermore, these plans and instructions only contain information on the subject matter up to the date of printing/publication.

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Building Instructions

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Consult Drawing A-3 (DWG A-3) for the suggested layout of all the plywood components used in the Downeast Thunder Nesting Box. Duplicate this layout full size in pencil on a 1/2" sheet of CDX plywood. Make sure you allow a 1/8" space between parts when drawing the parts on the plywood. This space allows for the saw kerf (the amount of wood eaten away when cutting out the parts, typically with a circular saw).

Look at Drawing A-4 (DWG A-4). Cut one of the 1"x3"x8" pieces of strapping into two 4' long pieces. Note that the actual cross section measurement is 3/4"x2-1/2" and radius the ends of one 4' length of strapping 2-1/2" as shown in the drawing. This will give you the front retainer strip for the nesting box and a longitudinal support strut which will fit into slots cut into the tops of the support legs, and will support the plywood bottom panel.

The support legs that are also found in DWG A-4 are cut from a short length of 2"x10" KD building stud as shown. Note the actual cross section of the 2x4 is 1-1/2"x9-1/2". Note the construction detail in Drawing A-5 (DWG A-5). You will note "cleats" with a 3/4"x 3/4" cross section. The cleats are not shown in the DWG A-1 or DWG A-2 drawings for clarity, and to keep the drawings from becoming too busy or complicated. The cleats are ripped on a table saw from the second piece of strapping in the materials list. They are used as something solid to nail and screw into during assembly of the nesting box. Use wood glue and brads and/or wood screws as needed. The cleats are cut to length as needed during the construction process.

At this point, you should have all of the components pre-cut and ready to begin assembly.

As you assemble the nesting box, refer to DWG A-1. Not all dimensions are present as the drawing would have been too crowded. Note the drawing has a scale (1"=1'), and you can take any measurements you need directly from the drawing by using an "architect's scale." This is a three sided rule with various scales printed on it. They are available in just about any office supply store, and the "student" version works fine (about \$3.00).

Begin assembly by inserting the longitudinal strut into the notches of the support legs using wood glue. Next step is to install the bottom panel such that the forward edge of the panel is flush with the support legs on one side. This will be the front of the nesting box. The rear of the nesting box will show about 1/2" of support leg protruding beyond the backside of the bottom panel. If you look at the drawing, you will note this space will be filled at a later step when the back panel is installed. In fact,

the back panel can now be put into place with wood glue and nailed into the back edge of the bottom panel with a few brads – this is just a temporary means of holding the panel in position for now.

Start placing the dividers in position, using glue, cleats and screws/brads (see DWG A-5) as needed. You may also place cleats along the back edge of the bottom panel where it meets the back panel, and you can use cleats vertically in the corners. Cleats along the front edge of the bottom panel will allow a stronger installation of the retainer strip which you can then install. A few more cleats along the top edges of the dividers will give you a solid surface to glue, nail and screw the top panel into, which you can also do now.

Your nesting box is almost complete and should look similar to the image in DWG A-2.

Cut the indoor/outdoor carpet to fit inside each nesting box cubicle. You'll still use wood chips or straw as nesting material, but the carpet will help keep eggs from cracking (we have experienced the occasional cracked egg, but the carpet solved this problem). Make sure the carpet is simply placed in position but not glued so it can be removed when necessary for cleaning or replacement.

Feel free to modify this design to suit your own requirements. You can easily make this nesting box shorter or longer. You can also build additional modules that can be stacked on top of the base unit and screwed together.

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Bill of Materials

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Qty (1) - 4'x8'x1/2" CDX plywood

Qty (2) - 1"x3"x4" strapping

Qty (1) - 2"x10"x30" KD stud

Qty (1) box of #8 x 1" flathead wood screws

Qty (1) box of 1" brads

Qty (1) Titebond III™ Weatherproof wood glue

Qty (1) 1'x4' strip of scrap indoor/outdoor carpet