

Carving scrolls

Dennis Zongker explains how to carve decorative scrolls on table legs

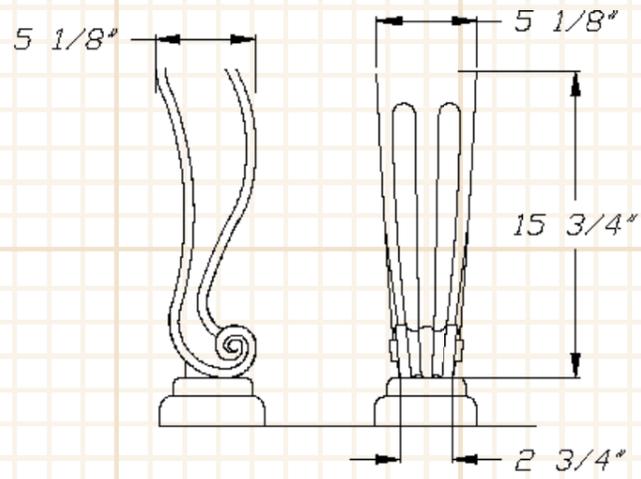
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennis Zongker has been a professional custom furniture maker for over 28 years and is co-owner of Zongkers Custom Furniture in Omaha, Nebraska. He teaches woodcarving and marquetry classes at Midwest Woodworkers. To see more of Dennis' work, visit www.zongkers.com



Carving scrolls into furniture is a technique that has been around for many centuries because of its simplistic beauty and accurate clean lines blending together several different radiuses. Scrolls can be incorporated into any style of furniture from a complicated baroque chair to a simple, modern-style table.

When designing this end table I wanted the upper section of the legs to resemble a griffin, a mythical creature which is part lion and part eagle. On the lower section of the leg I wanted a simple form to complement and balance the entire leg.



Drawing Layout of Scrolled Table Legs

Things you will need...

- Tools:**
- Carving gouges: No.2, 20mm, No.2, 12mm, No.3, 5mm, No.3, 8mm, No.3, 12mm, No.3, 16mm, No.5, 8mm, No.5, 12mm, No.5, 16mm, No.7, 6mm, No.7, 14mm, No.8, 7mm, No.8, 18mm, No.9, 15mm, No.8a, 7-spoon gouge
 - Bandsaw
 - Mallet
 - Detail riffler files
 - Poster board
 - Tape measure

- Wood:**
- XXXXXXXXXXXX



1 After gluing up the block of wood, make a drawing template out of poster board, which is a thicker piece of paper for the pencil to follow when transferring it to the wood. Using a template is an important step as it will ensure that all four table legs will match up to each other. Using a bandsaw, cut out the side profile by following the outside edge of your pencil line



2 Once the side profile has been cut out place the back cutout piece onto your bench, then sit the table leg on top in order to draw in the two outside edges. Use a seamstress tape measure and pencil to make sure that both sides are equal distance with the lower scrolled foot smaller in width than the upper section where the flutes end



3 Then tape the cut off bottom to the leg so that it rests flat and steady while you are cutting. Cut the taper off the front on both sides with a bandsaw



4 Next, use the drawing template to redraw in the side profile carving lines



5 For drawing in the front flutes I use a pencil and freehand the carving lines. Follow the same angle on the outside edge of the leg. Make sure that the lower section of the foot has tighter, closer lines, then gradually draw it bigger towards the upper section



6 Starting at the centre of the scroll, stab cut with your carving knives at a straight 90° angle and work your way to the end of the scroll using a variety of different carving knives. Make sure you use a mallet and tap your knife lightly approximately 455mm deep into the wood



7 Use a No.3, 12mm fishtail carving knife to relieve cut up to the stab cut. Keep repeating these two steps, 'stab and relief' cutting, leaving the centre of the scroll as the highest point and carving deeper as you move outwards around the scroll



8 Match up your carving knives to the scroll. Carve in a reveal around the edge that will blend with the side of the scroll



9 Use a No.2, 20mm carving gouge to flatten up to the end of the scroll



10 Use a No.8, 18mm carving gouge to carve the flutes into the face of the leg and lower scroll section. Follow the pencil lines and go deeper into the flutes towards the upper section of the leg and gradually carve shallower towards the lower scroll



11 To carve into the smaller inside flutes on top of the scroll use a No.8a/7 spoon gouge



12

Use a No.9, 15mm gouge for carving the deep and wide section at the very top of the flutes. When carving this wider area you will need to slowly shave and blend the thinner mid-section of the flutes together



13

On both sides of the table leg there is a centre recess with 11mm wide edges that follow the front and back edges up to the scroll and follow into the scroll. The depth of the recess is approximately 4.75mm deep. Start off by stab cutting the border lines using three different gouges – No.2, 35mm, No.2, 20mm and No.2, 12mm – and use a mallet to cut into the wood around 3mm deep



14

Use No.2, 20mm and No.3, 20mm gouges to remove the centre recessed wood. The goal is to have a flat recess, so the flatter the gouge the better the results



15

Repeat steps 13 and 14 to get the right depth of 4.75mm. Use a No.3, 12mm gouge to clean and flatten next to the scroll



16

The last couple of carving steps are to radius the corners of the flutes to blend with the other edges. Use No.5, 8mm, No.3, 8mm, No.5, 12mm and No.3, 12mm gouges upside down at different areas to arch the edges to where they will flow together



17

Around the tighter radius of the scroll, use a No.5, 12mm to blend the concave and convex arches so that they also flow together



18

Use an assortment of detail riffler files to clean up all the carving gouge marks. This is a great way to smooth the carving and also gives the project crisper details



19

After all the carving marks are cleaned up, sand the carving with a 150-grit sponge block. I only sand enough to smooth and blend the wood evenly, this way I don't remove any detail but leave the carving looking clean and crisp