

Roughing It, North Carolina Style

by Bryan Parker

I am a “toolbelt” general contractor and I’ve personally built every one of my projects with a select crew. My company, Dreamwood Builders, primarily builds in the mountainous regions of North Carolina, where most of the homes sit on view-facing ridges, with the decks projecting over the edge.

On the deck pictured here, as on most of our decks, the rim joist is double 2x12s, and the common joists are 2x10s 16 inches on center, except under the hot tub, where the framing is beefed up to meet the hot-tub manufacturer’s load requirements. Posts are 6x6s set in above-grade anchors on 3-foot-square by 2-foot-deep rebar-reinforced footings. (On a taller deck or on very steep terrain, we use 8x8s and deeper footings.) Decking is installed on an angle for additional strength.



The A-frame roof above the hot tub (photo, left) is basically a mini timber frame, with 4x6 white-pine rafters and collar ties and a white-pine ridge beam. It’s sheathed with 2x6 tongue-and-groove spruce pine (a southern species used because it’s almost knot-free and has a clear look) and topped with 26-gauge metal roofing.

The fascia is what we call feather board (also known as mountain siding). It comes out of the sawmill with the bark still on one edge and the other edge sawn square. We peeled the bark

off — it would fall off over time, anyway — leaving a feathered edge. I used a drawknife to make the feathered edges line up at the peak and the gable ends.

With an adze (a old tool originally used in shipbuilding), I hand-hewed the white-pine posts supporting the hot tub’s roof. The white-cedar railing and balusters come smooth and round; I used a drawknife to give them the look you see here.

Bryan Parker owns Dreamwood Builders in Ferguson, N.C.