

Rounding the Riverbend

by Brett Robinson



PHOTOS: CANDICE WHITLOW



When my clients asked me to build a curved deck on the riverbank behind their home in Van Buren, Mo., I designed the multi-tiered, 1,500-square-foot structure shown here. At the level of the backyard, two decked areas flank a nine-step stair (photo, left) that fans out onto a lower deck overlooking the Current River. From there, stairs along the inside of the skirting (photo, bottom) lead the rest of the way down the bank to a wood-veneered concrete dock on the river's edge.

Anchoring the deck to the steep slope are four rows of seven 2x2x2 footings spaced 6 feet apart and the dock, which is reinforced with steel and tied into the bottom main post supports. On the dock, two planters filled with gravel and topped with large decorative stones also help keep things in place.

All the wood (including the dock veneer) is treated lumber, sealed with a clear finish. To bend the doubled 2x12 rim joists,

I made relief cuts 1 inch on-center and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep in the back of each board, then hooked a strap to the ends and slowly tightened it. After securing the curves with cross-boards, I installed the floor joists. We matched the rim's radius when cutting 2x12s for the railings and trim.

The skirting is $\frac{5}{4}$ by 6-inch decking placed vertically and held by blocking at 45° to the rim joist. The Current River floods frequently, and this design allows floodwaters to pass through, but not large debris that could damage the framing. Plus it creates a cool shadow effect when you pass by in a boat.

We didn't remove any trees, instead integrating them with the project. They prevent erosion, supply shade, and look great at night with a halogen light wash coming up from below.

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