



The Viking Gate

by David Bullene

One hundred years ago, the Santa Cruz Lumber Co. built a log pond and sawmill on Pescadero Creek, a spring-fed stream that originates in California's Santa Cruz Mountains and empties into the Pacific Ocean. Though logging operations shut down in the 1970s, some old-growth redwood logs remained in the old mill pond and stream and, about 20 years ago, I salvaged a few. I then milled the wet logs into $5/4$ and $8/4$ slabs and stored them under cover.

When a friend recently asked me to build him a garden gate out of old-growth redwood, I immediately thought of my stash of now-dry redwood. Far from clear lumber, the weathered slabs were highly figured with knots and checks, perfect for the Nordic-style door I had in mind. My design was inspired by my travels in Scandinavia—in particular, a curved detail at the top of the door (A).

I built the inner frame out of 2x6 PT lumber, sizing it to fit the garden arbor that I had built earlier. I joined the bottom rail to the stiles with mortise-and-tenon joinery reinforced with four countersunk 6-inch structural screws at each joint—two in each direction—and Titebond III glue. At the top, I freehanded the curved detail on the 2x12 redwood rail, adding a short PT 2x6 to complete the design. After joining the top rail to the frame with biscuits, screws, and glue, I fastened a diagonal 2x4 brace to the frame to keep the door from sagging (B).

Among the door's unique features are the dozens of screws used to fasten the outer boards to the inner frame (C). I wanted to create an old-world rivet look, so I used a T-square to carefully lay out fastener locations uniformly spaced 1 inch on-center. Then I drilled countersunk pilot holes for the screws, which I

partially inserted into the holes prior to final glue-up to speed up assembly (D).

As I glued and screwed the boards to the frame, I snugged them together with bar clamps for a tight fit. After assembly, I gave all sides of the door three coats of PPG ProLuxe (formerly Sikkens) transparent matte finish to bring out the redwood's beautiful grain and color. To match the door's rustic look, I sourced hand-forged gate hardware and four giant carriage hinges that were made in England but stocked by a local supplier. Heavy-duty hinges were required since the assembled door weighed more than 250 pounds; I was happy that my friend was able to help me install his new Viking gate in the arbor (E). ♦

David Bullene is a custom builder with over 35 years of woodworking experience. He lives in Scotts Valley, Calif.

PHOTOS BY DAVID BULLENE