

Tiny Gnome Home

Turn basswood scraps into clever little cottages

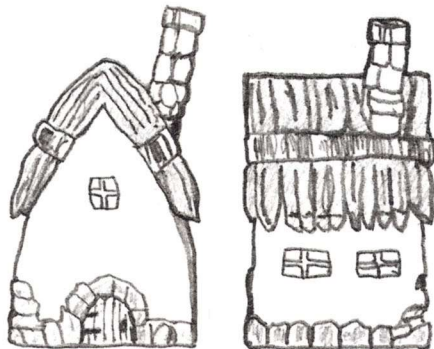
By Nikki Reese

I like to imagine a gnome kicking up her feet at the end of a long day and enjoying a pipe in this cozy little cottage. It's a simple project you can complete in an evening with minimal tools, and the customization possibilities are endless. I designed a stucco cottage with stonework and a thatched roof, but you can add half-timbering, a moss roof, a round door, or anything you like to yours. Best of all, you probably have dozens of scraps this size already lying around; it's a great way to turn low-cost materials into tiny works of art.

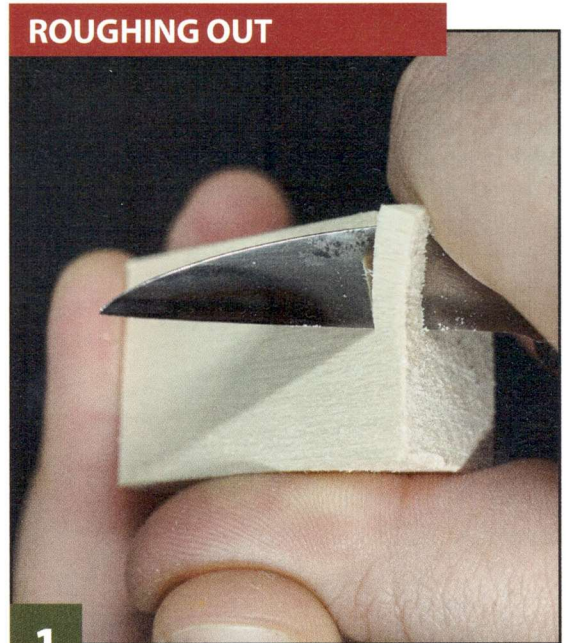
Getting Started

Prepare the blank. With a pencil, mark the top and bottom of the cottage. *Note: Always wear a carving glove and thumb guard. The photos were taken without them to clearly show hand and knife positions.*

Tiny Gnome Home Pattern



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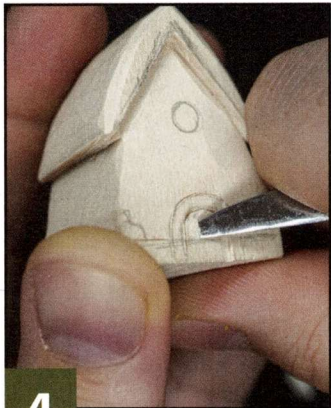
Carve the basic shape. Using a rough out knife, cut the corner off the top of your cottage blank to form one half of the roof. Carve off the opposite corner in the same manner, gradually creating two slopes that meet in the middle to form the peak of the roof.



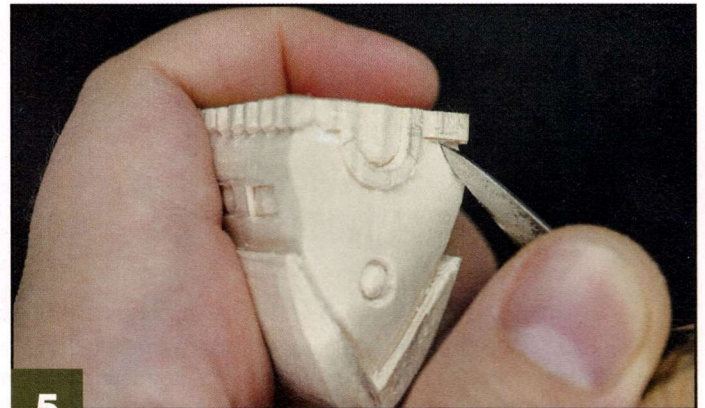
2 **Draw the landmarks.** With the pencil, add lines to indicate the roof, door, windows, foundation, and stones. As you carve, you will need to periodically redraw your lines.



3 **Separate the roof from the cottage body.** Make roofline stop cuts all the way around the cottage. On the front and back, carve up to these lines at an angle to sink the body of the cottage into the roof. The roof should hang over the body of the cottage noticeably. Deepen your cuts and make another pass all the way around. Then follow the rest of the detail lines you drew in Step 2 into stop cuts.



4 **Begin to shape the cottage elements.** Carve down to the foundation lines to create depth between the cottage and the foundation. Carve up to the stone lines around the door, and then carve the door from the inside out to the stop cuts to sink the door into the cottage. Carve the exposed stones in the walls. Use a knife of your choice.

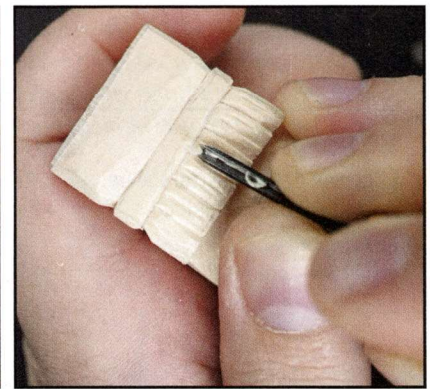
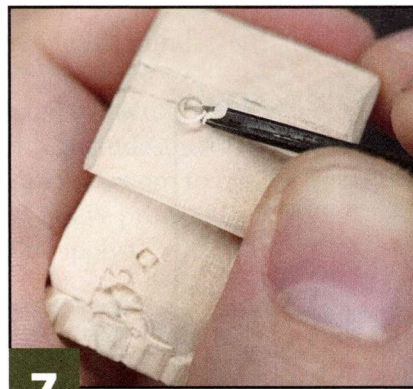


5 **Rough in the windows.** Carve the insides of the windows out toward the stop cuts to sink the paned areas into the body of the cottage. Carve the individual stones in the foundation and around the door by making stop cuts with the detail knife and carving around them to create depth and layering. *Note: You could also use a 1/16" (2mm) micro V-tool to separate the stones before shaping them.*

ADDING DETAILS



6 **Add the window details.** Use the 1/16" (2mm) micro V-tool to add crossbars in every window. *Note: You could also achieve this look by making V-cuts with a knife, if preferred.*



7 **Add the roof details.** Draw the roof bands on either side of the roof and carve along the lines using the 1/16" (2mm) micro V-tool. Use the same tool to carve vertical lines up to the bands, and from the tops of the bands up to the roofline. This creates a thatched roof effect. Use the detail knife to cut small triangles in the bottom of the roof, to make a less uniform thatch. Inspect the carving from all angles and clean up your cuts.

PAINTING



8

Carve the chimney. Use the same technique that you used in Step 5 to carve the foundation stones here. Separate the individual chimney stones with the $\frac{1}{16}$ " (2mm) micro V-tool, and then round over the stones with the tip of the detail knife. Glue this onto the roof with cyanoacrylate (CA) glue.



9

Paint the main body of the cottage. I diluted titanium white heavily with water to make a wash. Using a less diluted classic French gray, paint all of the stonework. Then add a tiny touch of licorice to the classic French gray and paint it into the cracks of the stones with a thin paintbrush. This will create a shadow effect.



10

Paint the door details. Paint the door itself with diluted cardinal red and the thatched roof with a diluted mixture of yellow ochre and real brown. Heavily dilute pure orange in water, and dab that into the windows. Once it's dry, apply yellow ochre or daffodil yellow in the same areas. This will create a mottled, glowing window affect. Dip a very thin brush in licorice to create door braces and a handle. For added depth, you can also heavily dilute classic French gray and use it to paint shadow lines under the roof.



Finishing

Apply a finish. I used FolkArt® clear wax, but you could use Danish oil or a wax of your choice. Let dry, disposing of any used paper towels or cloths safely.

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materials & tools

MATERIALS

- Basswood, $1\frac{1}{8}$ " (2.8cm) square: cottage, $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (3.8cm) long
- Basswood, $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) square: chimney, approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) long
- Pencil
- Glue: cyanoacrylate (CA)
- Acrylic paints, such as FolkArt®: real brown, cardinal red, classic French gray, daffodil yellow, licorice, pure orange, titanium white, yellow ochre

- Finish, such as FolkArt® clear wax, Danish oil or wax
- Paper towels or cloths

TOOLS

- Knives: rough out, detail
- Micro V-tool: $\frac{1}{16}$ " (2mm)
- Paintbrushes: assorted small

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

FURTHER READING

Carve a World of Gnomes

by Nikki Reese

Item 01777. Available for \$9.99 + S&H (parcel post) from Fox Chapel Publishing, 800-457-9112, FoxChapelPublishing.com, or your local retailer.



After several years of procrastination, Nikki started carving in 2019 and hasn't looked back since. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her wife and dog. Find her on Instagram @yetriage.