

Reprinted from the On The Anvil Newsletter, of the Philip Simmons Artist Blacksmith Guild

PSABG Newsletter

Anvil Base - Stump Preparation

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---Quality Anvils Since 1886---

Traditional tree stumps as anvil bases are my favorites. They are pleasing to the eye and very serviceable. When fastened securely to the anvil, the stump becomes an integral part of the anvil and a heavy base makes a small anvil act like a bigger one.

There are many ways to prepare a stump, but this is the one that works for me. This system works if the blacksmith knows how high he wants his anvil, as it is not a system for which the height is easily adjusted.

It is best to use a heavy wood that doesn't split easily. Some non-splitting and heavy woods are American Elm (best but hard to find), Sycamore, Honey Locust, Walnut, and Sugar Maple. Woods that are heavy but split easily are Oak and Ash. These stumps can be strengthened by shrinking an iron hoop or ring around the top and bottom of the stump. Often the local tree service company will have, or can acquire, a suitable tree. Lighter weight woods such as Cottonwood, Pine, etc. are last choice woods for an anvil stump.

The anvil should be fastened down very tight! A solid/tight fastening system stops both the bounce and movement of the anvil and diminishes greatly any ringing/noise. Wrought iron anvil bottoms are sometimes uneven, but they can be trued up by a machinist or with careful use of a belt sander or angle grinder. Sometimes a piece of leather, thin lead, silicone caulk, etc. under the anvil helps the surfaces mate.

Anvil height is always a compromise. Old time blacksmith books suggest a height of knuckle height. After trying several different heights, knuckle height is the one I like the best. Some blacksmiths suggest wrist height as being less hard on the back and easier for them, but I find it awkward given the methods that I use. With wrist height, I find that I need to raise my shoulder uncomfortably high and more often. I find that it leads to a stiff neck and uncomfortable shoulder at the end of the day. Remember that the surface being forged is often above the anvil face such as when using a hot out, fuller, or just if the metal is thick. Also when working with a bar positioned at a 45 degree angle over the far edge of the anvil, the bar holding shoulder will naturally be high and a lower anvil is appreciated, but when doing so with the bar on the near edge of the anvil a higher anvil is desired - again a compromise is necessary. Usually when working with a striker, a lower anvil is desired.

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Square the top and bottom:

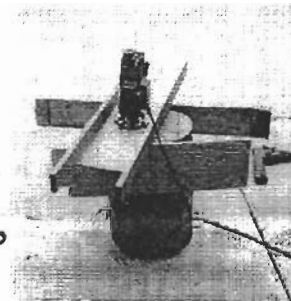


Step 1 Cut log of sufficient diameter to length about 2 inches longer than desired. Cut as square and straight as possible - typically with a sharp chain saw. The top of the anvil should be just big enough for the anvil to fit. If the base is too big around, the blacksmith can't stand as close as he might want.

Step 2 Determine the side of the base that is the most square and place it

on the floor, then fasten 2 straight scrap boards at least 2 ft longer than the diameter of the stump, one on each top side with about 1 inch sticking above the base. To ensure a square router cut, when fastening the boards, measure and make the top of each end of each scrap board the same distance from the floor. If the bottom isn't square enough, shim it up so the log/base is perpendicular to the floor.

Step 3 Make a sled for the router out of 1/4 inch plywood with some side supports of 3/4 inch wood. The sled usually replaces the plastic router base. Then use the router/sled and flatten the top side of the stump. The router rides on the 2 scrap boards screwed to the stump.

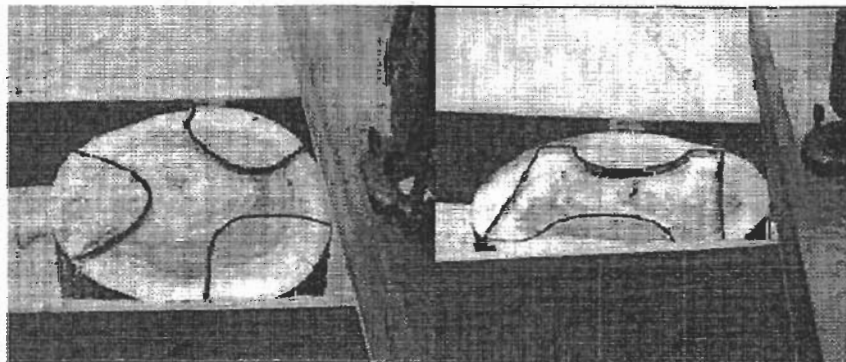


Step 4 Turn over the stump, and repeat the process to flatten and straighten out the other end.

Router a 1/2 inch Deep Hole for the Anvil and Around 3 Legs:

Step 5 If the stump will be placed on a hard floor (cement, wood, etc.) mark 3 pads/legs on the bottom of the stump for the stump to rest upon. Route out the area between the pads/legs approximately 1/2 inch deep. This makes a 3 legged stump which sits best on an uneven floor. The pads should be a minimum of 6 to 8 inches in diameter to give enough support for the anvil and base.

Step 6 Determine if the stump leans out of perpendicular. A little lean is good as the stump can be positioned so the bottom of the stump is further away from the blacksmith's feet. Once position is determined, mark the top of the anvil around the base of the anvil. Router it out approx. 1/2 inch deep.



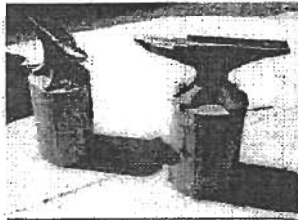
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Fasten Down the Anvil:



This is a good way to fasten down the anvil as long as the stump doesn't split from the lag screw. The lag screw should be a minimum of 5 to 8 inches long. A lag screw works great if the stump is American Elm, Sycamore or some other non-splitting wood. Woods which readily split require that the lag screw be put in at an angle so it cuts across the grain, or a different fastening system should be used. If using a wood that splits easily, bolts instead of lag screws going all the way through the stump are good, if the means of drilling that long of a hole is available.



Two finished bases. Anvils ready for use. The anvil on the left is a 160 lb. Peter Wright and the anvil on the right is a 215 lb. Arm and Hammer. Both of these anvils have had the edges repaired with Stoody 2110 work hardening welding rod, although now I use MG Industries 710 electrode. The Stoody is softer and is a different color than the original anvil face. The MG rod is 55-60RC as welded and is approx. the same color as original face metal. The cost for each type of rod is about the same, both expensive.

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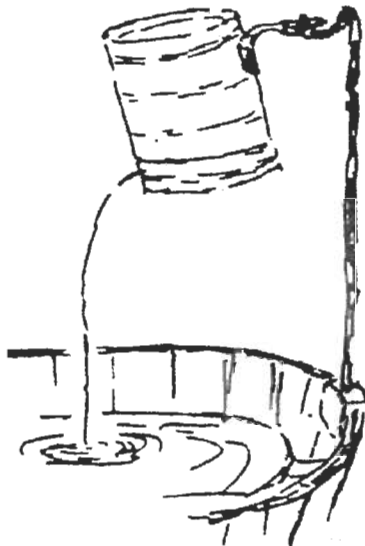
Reprinted from The Upsetter, the Newsletter of the Michigan Artist Blacksmith's Association

Tip

Reprinted from the Western Canadian Blacksmiths' Guild August 2000.

By Greg Hartell, Klamath Falls, Oregon

When it is necessary to localize a heat, a tin can mounted on a rod above the edge of your slack tub can provide a steady stream of water, leaving both hands free and keeps the floor dry.



Reprinted from the New England Blacksmiths

Alan's Corner-

Napkin Holder-

Adjust the stock size to the wind speed at your place.

