

Bookshelf to Tortoise Table Project

Disclaimer: We are not considered handy people. This is our first DIY project, and it turned out great. I just wanted to emphasize that ANYONE can do this with the proper materials and a little bit of time.

Final Project:



Supplies Needed:

- Old bookshelf (\$20 on FB Marketplace)
- Pond liner (\$30 Lowe's) (most expensive part)
- Hinges with screws (\$1 at Lowe's)
- Whatever features/hides/accessories you want for your tortoise

Tools required:

- Saw (we used a power saw)
- Drill
- Staple gun with staples
- Wood glue (gorilla brand from Lowe's)

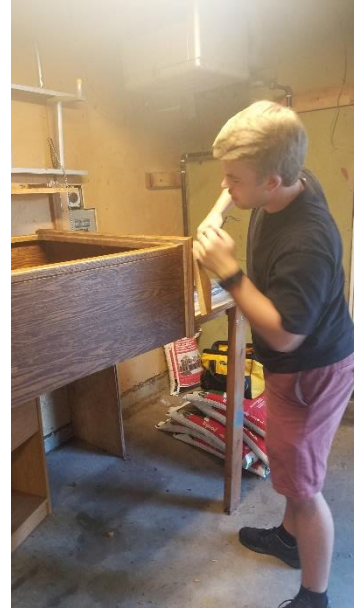
Day 1:

We started by removing the legs from the bookshelf. We kind of just used brute force and a hammer.

(all of the pictures are of JT, but don't worry I helped just as much!)



Next we thought about what walls we wanted in the table. We decided we wanted a dark area for her to sleep, like an "inside" part of the tortoise table. We also wanted one more wall because we had read that if tortoises can turn a corner and see something they didn't see before they think that the area is bigger. So we cut two shelves to make walls. This saw came with our house (when we moved in the previous owner left all sorts of fancy tools), so I'm not sure exactly what it is, but it got the job done.



Next we put the walls in using wood glue along the bottom, and screws on the sides. We put two screws in each wall. We used a power drill, and the screws did not scuff up the side at all. It looked clean and nice.

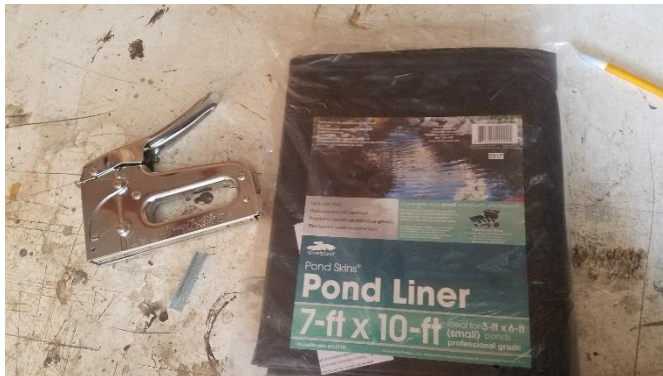


One thing to consider – We wanted an "inside area" and planned on using another shelf to be the roof of that area. We made sure to put the wall one shelf-width away from the top of the bookshelf so that would work out.

Day 2:

We let the wood glue dry for a week. It only needs 24 hours, but we only have time to work on the weekends anyways.

The main project for this day is to put in the pond liner. We chose to use a pond liner so that the damp dirt would not damage the wood and cause rot or mold. I've seen other people use stick on tiles and things, but I thought this would be the easiest way to ensure a complete seal. With the stick-on tiles you have to caulk every seam.



We borrowed a staple gun from JT's parents, and got the pond liner at Lowes. Fitting the pond liner into the table was a struggle. We had a hard time making the corners look nice and neat at first. We ended up cutting it into pieces and doing each section of the tank separately. After the first section, it got easy. We overlapped the seams and used a waterproof black tape to finish the seams without compromising waterproofing.



Next we attached the hinges using the power drill.



And that's about it! We got the lamp stands, Zoo Med Reptile Lamp Stand from Amazon. For substrate we used 50/50 coconut coir and topsoil. It looks nice in our living room, even with the lamps!



Tutorial, photographs, and tortoise table by Liz Graupner (and JT Farley, of course)

Ask me questions whenever (:

Tutorial made for Russian Tortoise Keepers and Care on Facebook.

Special thanks to Mo, the best tortoise ever.

