

Building Homes for Squirrels

The number of hollow trees squirrels can use for dens is decreasing, primarily because of land clearing and intensive forest management. It takes 80 to 90 years or longer for nature to produce a tree that can provide a home for squirrels. The den remains usable for 5 to 10 years.

When natural cavities are hard to find, squirrels will readily use man-made dens—sometimes they even prefer them. This may be because the dens are dry and protect the squirrels from most of their enemies.

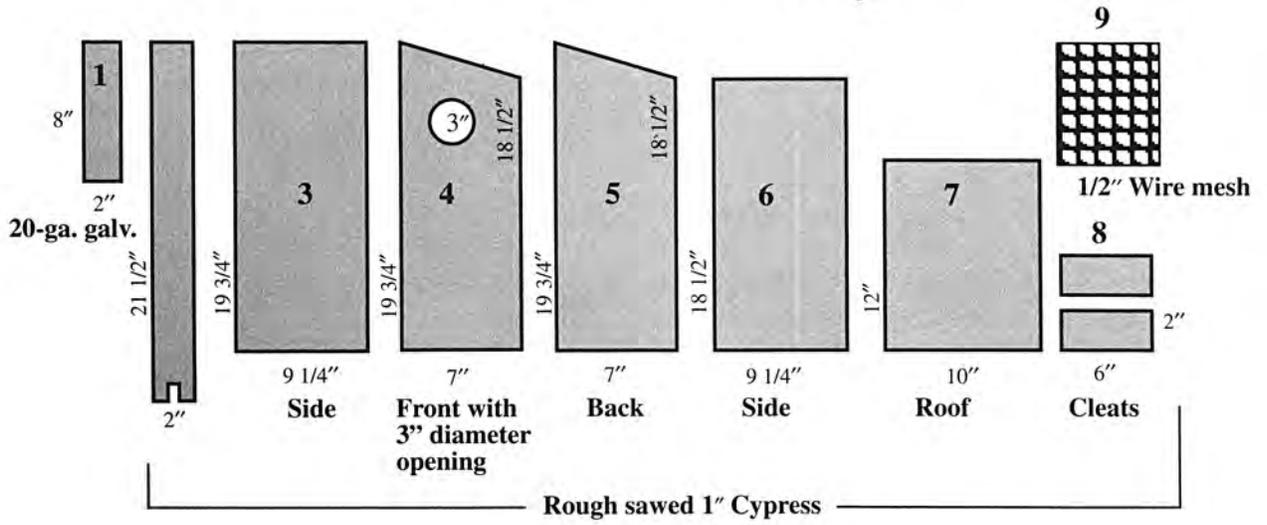
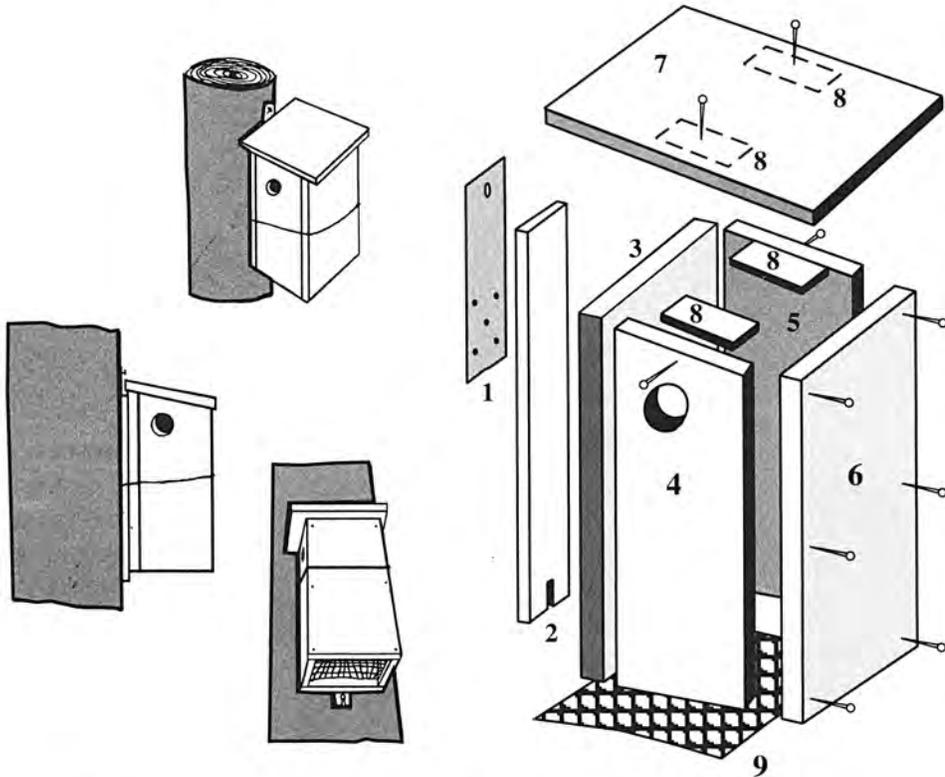
Reproduction has been found to be 2½ times more successful in tree cavities than in leaf nests. It is documented that artificial nest boxes made of wood or from rubber tires can increase the carrying capacity of woodlands for squirrels. In some instances, female squirrels have moved their young from leaf nests and natural dens into nest boxes soon after they were built. Man-made boxes play an important role in intensively managed forests.

Place the artificial dens in older trees, preferably oaks or hickories. Place them 20 to 30 feet up in the tree by December 1. Yearling female squirrels usually nest once a year (12 months following their birth date), and adult females usually nest twice a year (March and July).



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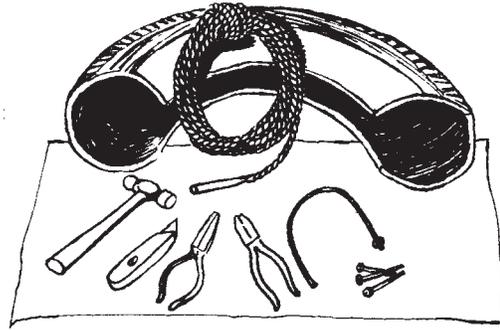
Box Home



Tire Home

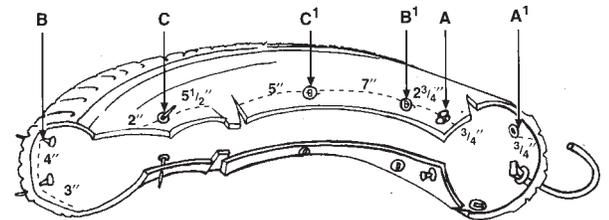
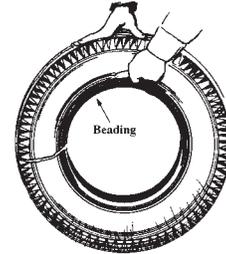
To make a tire squirrel den, you need the following:

- half of a tire
- 75 feet of rope with metal tubing pinched to one end
- hammer
- cutting tool
- pliers
- wire cutters
- wire support loop
- nails and washers (or bolts and wing nuts)

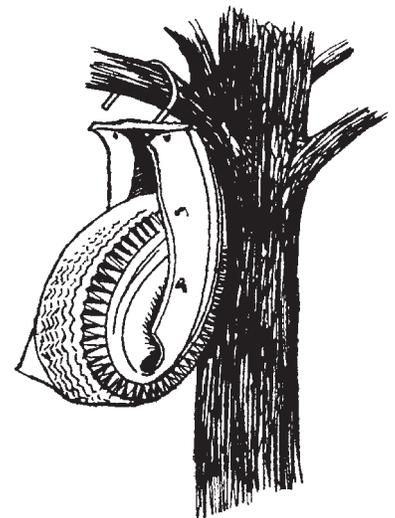


Follow these steps to make a squirrel den:

1. Remove the beading and cut the tire in half.
2. On each tire half, make cuts in the wall on each side. Your cuts do not need to be exactly as shown here; squirrels will still use the den.
3. Cut the holes so that the appropriate pairs match. Holes A, B, and C hold the nails or bolts that are then inserted in holes A¹, B¹, and C¹. All holes are punched a half-inch from the margins, except hole C, which is 2 inches from the end of the tire.
4. Bend the shorter end up and inside the longer one to form the nest opening. Insert the heavy wire loop to fit over the branch.
5. Fasten in three places on each side with 2-inch galvanized nails and washers and wing nuts.



6. Drill 8 to 10 holes in the bottom of the tire den for adequate water drainage.
7. Insert the U-shaped support wire into the metal tube fixed to one end of the rope. Throw the free end of the rope over the selected branch and pull the tire up to the branch. The U-shaped support wire slips over the branch. Shake the rope free of the wire tire support.
8. **The den is now ready for a squirrel!**





Squirrel tire home plans adapted from Extension Division Virginia Polytechnic Institute Publication 168, The Eastern Gray Squirrel.

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