

Planning and Building the Gazebo (By Sherpa)

Somewhere early July 2007, I received a request from Little Sun, if it would be possible to make her a Gazebo. My answer was: "That should be possible, but what is a Gazebo?" "A garden house or a teahouse, but in an English way" she replied. Well, surely that could be possible, right in time for my month off work. I'll create an outline and get started!

Six corners, no wait, octagonal that's beautiful. And what kind of roof? One floor or rather two? Supplies are no problem. A shop for miniature aircrafts just opened in our hometown and all kinds of wooden strips are for sale. So on to the store and let's get some wood...

First start is the floor, like a porch, on the wish list. I thought it might be nice to make it in the shape of an octagon, instead of having all the boards lined up next to each other.

I got a green light from Sun, and started creating a mould, so that the eight segments would be the same.

It is our first time building on scale and we do not have the proportions in our head. The segments have a length of 9.5 cm, which would bring the gazebo to a diameter of 19 cm. The more we work on it, the more we find, that it will be a very small gazebo. In 1:1 scale, it would be a 228 cm diameter, which isn't a lot. Just enough for a chair and a table, and that's it. Hmm, maybe we should change the plan a bit?

We also have a Camel walking about in the house, who likes to be involved in the fun. He has a lot of comments, but also presents us with an idea... If we would double the segments in length, the diameter would become 465 cm in 1:1 scale, and that would be reasonable. No, we do not have a garden with room for a gazebo like that ourselves, but that doesn't alter the fact that we have dreams.

So, let's go back to the store and get more wood. New moulds that connect to the already-made segments are made, and we continue with the floorboards.

And then you find out that your plane is waiting. Has the time gone quicker than expected, or has it been a lot more work, than we've envisioned? On itself, the floor consists of 224 pieces of wood, and getting it all right, simply takes a lot of time.

Well, let's go on vacation and after that, it should be easy, to finish the Gazebo. At airport Schiphol they serve coffee, with beautiful wooden stirrers.. What can I do with them? Yes, I know! Trellis for the roof. Let's see how to get some more. I have one now, and with the next cup of coffee, I have another...

I'm doing volunteer work in the USA, at a festival in the desert. It lasts for 14 days, and yes, they have the same coffee stirrers. On my last day, I go and ask if I could have some, and that wasn't a problem. Hurray!



I'm going home, with in my bags a lot of coffee stirrs, and many ideas for the Gazebo.

Back home, we pick up the project where we left it. Camel has his own ideas, and doesn't always keep his mouth shut, so, every now and then, we shut him up with a cloth pin...

Next is the roof, and that makes it exciting for me. I do not have any drawing, nor a description, and have to do everything by looking and trying. I've left school before they could teach me about mathematics, so I'm not able to calculate anything. Well, okay, it is just an octagon, and there are just three levels in the roof...

Again, we work with separate parts, that will later on be connected. We make frames and beams out of balsa wood.

Soon we find, that the floors were easier... That was flat, this is not only a triangle, but also standing a bit upwards. We make a mould of cardboard, and hope for the best. Camel provides the necessary help, holding the glue, or testing the roof, by using it as a lazy lounge chair.

Whilst waiting for the glue to dry, I'm working with the coffee stirrs. With some glue, some headpins, some soft board, the trellises start to grow. It appears that there will be 420 coffee stirrs needed, so we're busy for quite a while. We glue them on, 8 pieces at the time, on the soft board covered in baking paper, to avoid the glue sticking to something else.

And while the glue on the trellises is drying, we return to the roof... That is, if we can keep it out of Camel's paws.. We try to imagine the height between de roof levels, and what to make between the medium and smallest roof. We thought slats would be nice. The trellises are planned between the biggest and medium level of the roof.

We'll try and see. It's getting more difficult than expected, because the whole thing is getting pretty big, and not too easy to handle. Fortunately, the Tacky Glue dries rapidly.

It's a lot of work, but the roof grows to be just like the image we've had in our minds and finally it gets ready for the roof shingles. We've talked a lot about these tiles.. Sun finally decides, she wants the shingles, as seen in a kindergarten in Leiden, and they could be made in scale, out of wooden tongue depressors.

We have no idea, how many we will need, but we start with ordering 5 boxes. That should do, there are a 1000 shingles to be made of them.

Wel, it turned out, that we needed 995 shingles for the roof. We have to sand every single one of them, to make sure, they lie nicely flat over each other. It's a lot more work, but it shows. The more we look at it, the more we think, the roof is sure looking like a pineapple.

The trellises are getting finished, and ready for the roof. Camel and his fiancée MissMouse, (who normally has a residence in Groningen, but her home, Villa Kattenhart has been sold, so she's staying at our place) love to test every part of the new Gazebo, and keep a close look at everything that's happening. They also provide us with necessary and (especially) unnecessary comments.

Time flies and the Dolls House Fair in Arnhem is coming up, which suits me very well. We do not have all the necessary materials at home, and it's also a good opportunity for searching for ideas.

There's a little fence coming in 7 of the 8 sides, and we have no wood for that. The shop Houthoekje provides us, with railings and the large poles, that should keep the roof up. At the fair in Bocholt (B), we find the little posts for the fence.

We would also like to get some lacy consoles in the upper corners, and we order those by Veronica, of shop De Maneschijn. The consoles are the only parts, in the whole project, that are glued, when we buy them... But we still have to alter a lot, to make them the way we like it.

Later on, we will make a plastic cube, to cover the entire project and keep the dust out. But for now, it's time for Christmas. According to my counting, there are now 1983 pieces of wood in the project.

Looking back, on the construction, I think we've done very well.. it's our first project, and though we still have to learn a lot, we've given it our best, and it sure has become a beautiful Gazebo. The building was an opportunity to buy lots of new tools, and learn how to use them.

Decorating the Gazebo (By Little Sun)

While Sherpa is building the Gazebo I'm dreaming of, surfing and planning, how to decorate it. Somewhere, on the internet, I find a chandelier, with the wow-factor I'm looking for. The frame takes a while to make, but that gives me the time to make some vines, to decorate it.

The many flowers and plants are made with Cerro Porcelain. Some of them were early in the project attached to the Gazebo, which is not always a good thing. Sherpa did try to work around them, but it's not always easy to avoid touching them. (Not to mention the many times his sleeve was caught..) Fortunately, the porcelain doesn't break easily.

We finally decide, to make a square lawn under the Gazebo. We put the Gazebo on eight pegs, to make it stand a bit higher, and make some stairs for the entrance. We take a piece of triplex of 49 x 49cm and make grass on it. In the middle, we leave a big space, because, according to us, there cannot be green grass underneath a Gazebo. We fill it up with tacky glue and old coffee, to make it look like soil.

To keep his mind from the project, every time when things didn't work for a while, Sherpa has been working on children's toys in 1:12 scale. We also made a little apple house, for the birds, and logically, the next step, would be a little bird house. The remaining parts of the tongue depressors turned out to be very handy, and some leftovers of the coffee stirrs, provided roof shingles, similar to the Gazebo roof shingles.

For the inside of the Gazebo, we needed some furniture of course... I'd love to have wickered chairs, and a swing. It took a while to learn how to wicker on scale, but it worked out, just fine. The tiny embroidery for the pillows also was a challenge, but somehow, it is a lot of fun, to make these tiny details, and they turn out looking better than expected.

Because a Gazebo should be a tranquil place, to work and rest, I really wanted it to be the place of my fantasy... Lots of food, with calories that don't matter, alcohol you won't get drunk of, and lots of things to do and make. The sangria bowl, the pie and ice-cream, and the embroidery-standard should make all my dreams come true...

The making of the little oil-lamps was fun to do, the electricity wire, is covered with the plants.. Just like all the other wires, necessary to have all the lights burning.

After filling in the inside of the Gazebo, it's time for the outside. Working with Cerro Porcelain, is new to us, and we have never made any flowers that were so tiny... We start with the Wisteria, and it's amazing, what a beautiful result it gives. Looking on the internet, we find a lot of workshops, for all kinds of flowers, and we learn... We love to make the flowers as real as possible.

On a Dolls House Fair in Eindhoven, we've found a couple of goldfishes that would like to have some place to swim in. On the fair, they had metal basins, Sherpa would like them in a pond, but I don't think so at all. Finally we come out, to make a barrel of wood. Easier said than done, the wheels in Sherpa's head are spinning at full capacity, how to do this.

His eyes fall on a plastic lid of the peanut butter jar. But the cap is white, and if we make wood on the outside, you'll still be seeing white on the inside. Finally we find a way to make the lid thinner, and glue coffee stirs on both the in and the outside. We put the entire lid halfway in the grass, so it is deeper on the inside than shows on the outside. This looks very realistic.

We're coming to the end of the project... We've found a little exotic nut shell on a fair, that would make a perfect bee hive... Making 1:12 bees is the next challenge...

All and all, we know, the Gazebo will never be really finished.. There are more than 30 different plants surrounding it, but every time we look at it, there are new ideas, some more plans, and visions..

We really think, that the best part starts right now... trying to make it all as realistic as possible, and adding tiny details.

We've loved working on it, we've learned a lot, about working together, about working with new materials, and above al...

Learning how to make a dream come true.

Sherpa and Little Sun