



How to make a possum box and place it in a tree

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What you'll need

2400 x 1200 x 17mm (5ply) industrial strength ply (doesn't have to be marine ply)

5/8 6G screws (approx 23 per box)

Continuous hinge (approx 15mm wide x 200mm length per box)

Clothesline wire (approx 500mm length per box)

45mm x 25mm hardwood (approx 250mm per box)

1 large nail

Wood glue

Thin wire (approx 500mm length)

Putting your box together

- 1 Cut out all pieces according to diagram remembering to cut out entrance hole in front and attach the box/trunk support (fig. 1) on to one side piece before joining together
- 2 Join sides to front and back pieces using wood glue & 6 screws per side and making sure it is squared

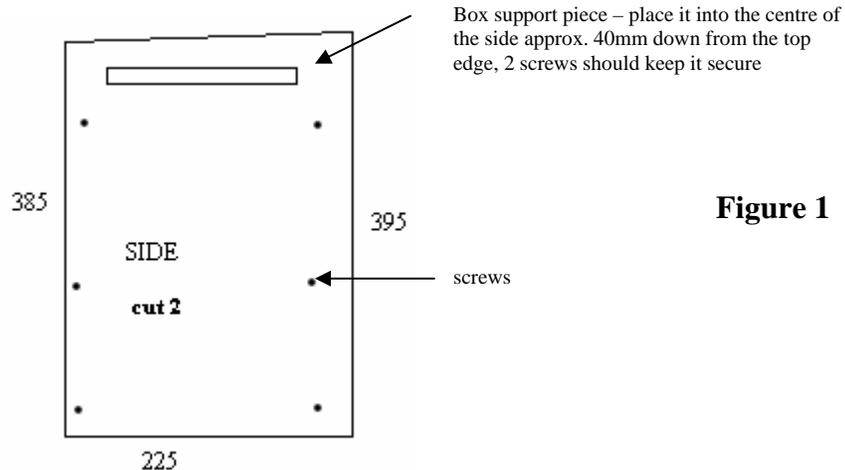
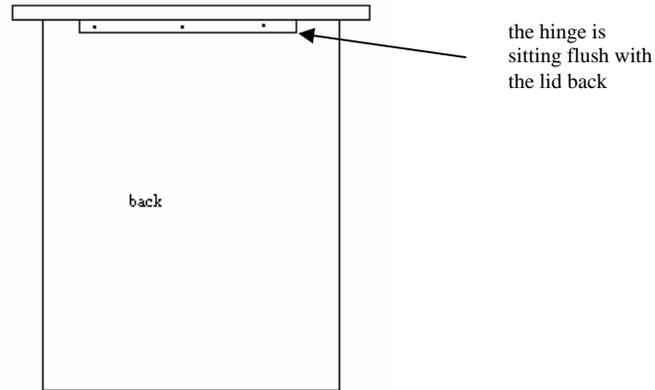


Figure 1

- 3 Drill drainage holes into the base piece. 10mm holes are sufficient and it should only require 4-6 holes randomly placed.
- 4 Place the box frame over the base piece and fit into place, use a few screws to hold base into place if required.

5 Attach the lid. The lid should sit flush with the back but overhang the front piece and sides when fitted correctly. Cut your hinge piece and mark out the drill holes. Secure the lid to the box as shown in figure 2. Your hinge piece should have approximately 3 evenly spaced screws per hinge side.

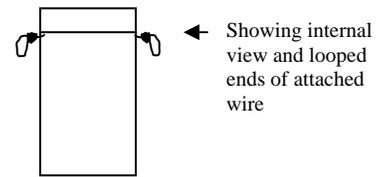
Figure 2



6 The object of the next section is to attach a nail to wire and using a block of timber on the underside of the lid design a locking mechanism to allow the lid to be closed and opened.

Using a left over piece of the 45 x 25mm hardwood cut out a 30mm piece and glue it to the underside of the lid so it is flush with one of the sides. The easiest way to do this is hold it in place with wood glue through the nestbox entrance hole. When the glue has set drill a hole through the side/hardwood block slightly larger in diameter than a nail. On the outside of the side piece position and attach a small screw. Before firmly attaching this screw wind around a piece of thin wire 20cm length (fuse wire works well). Then finish attaching the screw to the side. At the other end of the wire place a nail head and wind and twist the nail to attach to the wire. This is to prevent the nail being lost.

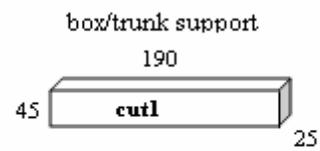
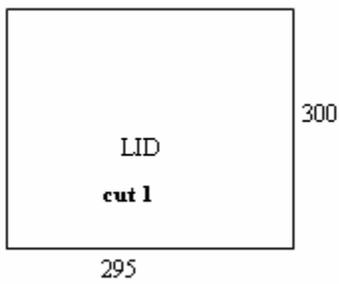
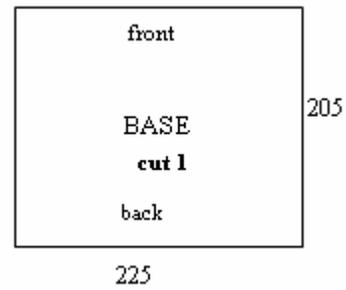
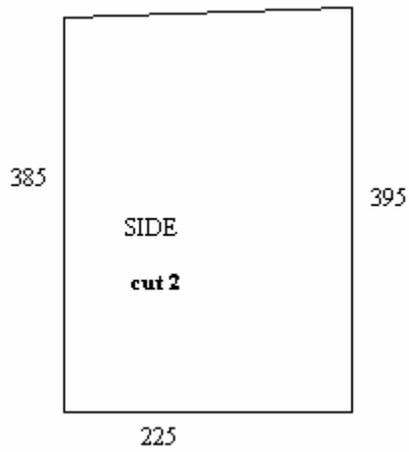
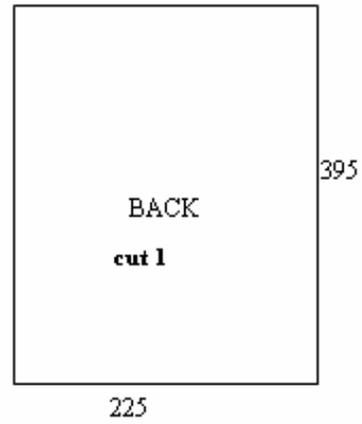
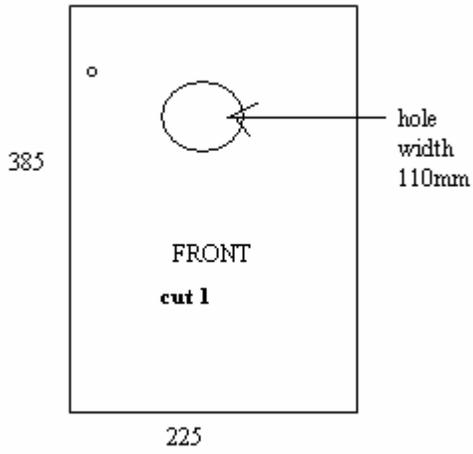
- 7 For attaching the box to the tree you will need to drill 2 holes to thread wire through the box. In the image and diagram below you can see the wire placement. The ends on the outside are looped and twisted to prevent them from coming back through the holes. This also serves as an attachment point for more clothesline wire to go around the tree, so it needs to be very tightly twisted.



Your box is now ready for an animal, you may just like to smooth all the edges with some sand paper. Particular the entrance hole. There is no need to paint your box. The ply has been shown to withstand weathering for many years and most possums like to chew the entrance hole so not painting it will prevent poisoning. They will also like the box better when left natural as it will have a possum/bush smell after time.

WILVOS POSSUM BOX DIMENSIONS

All measurements are in millimeters (mm)



HOW TO PLACE YOUR POSSUM NESTBOX



One the Sunshine Coast we are lucky to have 3 types of possums. The Common Brushtail, Short-eared Brushtail and the Common Ringtail. Studies performed by the Wilvos have shown that in most circumstances you will be guaranteed of successfully having a local resident in your nest box if you consider the information provided in this handout.

It is a good idea to go out for a night walk within your area and try to observe the animals you have in your yard and neighbourhood. This will give you more of an understanding of where your nest box will be best placed. If after 12 months your nest box shows signs of cobwebs at the front entrance it might be best to move it to another location.

Box Preparation

You will need the following items to hang your new box

30-50cm piece of garden hose

Approximately 1 metre of thick fencing wire or clothes line wire

Cutting pliers

Gardening gloves

12-20ft step ladder

Paperbark or soft eucalyptus leaves, soft pine leaves

Fill the interior of the nest box with 10cm lengths of fresh soft paperbark, eucalyptus or pine leaves. Only fill to just under the nest box entrance hole. This will encourage a new arrival to visit the box.

Try to place the box atleast 12ft up the tree although Brushtails will accept lower it will generally deter cats if the box is higher. If the nest box is placed on a tree with lots of overhead foliage the side of the trunk is irrelevant as rain will not be much of a problem. If the box is more exposed then you will need to know which direction in your area is more likely to be getting forceful wind and rain. Generally we usually place our boxes to the North-east in the Hinterland but to the North-west on coastal areas.

Your box should have been provided with 2 drilled holes at the top or attached wire on one side. This is to allow you to hang the box. To hang the box in the tree place your ladder safely at the base of the tree and hook a length of wire through the box holes or attached wire. The length of wire you will need will be determined by how wide the tree trunk is.

Usually around 1 metre of wire will be sufficient. Thread your piece of garden hose over the wire and fold the other end of the wire to prevent the hose from falling off while you climb. Take care to climb the ladder safely and place the box in a fork of the tree to rest. Position your self well and wrap the wire covered hose around the tree trunk at a fork. The hosing is to prevent stress on the tree bark. It is best to wrap from the back of the box around the tree towards you. You will then be able to hook the wire through the box hole/wire and wind it around to finish with pliers.



WILVOS HANDY HINTS

it is a good idea to have someone holding the ladder while you climb to prevent it moving

to make hauling the box up into position you can attach rope and pull the box up when you are positioned in the tree

The Brushtails

You will naturally find wild brushtails within dry sclerophyll forests and rainforest habitats. Most also enjoy the town environment where access to fruits and garden flora makes it an easier life for them. When placing your nest box vegetation must include native or non native fruiting species within 100 metres of nest box placement. Trees such as a cheese tree, guava, persimmon, mango, advocado, lemon, orange are favourites. Vegetation must be more mature than that of ringtail areas. The area must be cool during the peak of the day but does not have to be as dense of foliage cover as ringtail needs, i.e. between 50% to 70%. The tree of placement does not have to be native but must have at least one branching area in close proximity to other foliage. The placement of the artificial home must be away from residential human contact.

The Ringtails

Ringtails are normally quite socially creatures who love to live together in a box. Obtaining properties with established palm trees and dense vegetation appears to be ideal for ringtail establishment. The dense vegetation providing the protection and seclusion they require. The palm trees providing an alternative nesting site if sought. Boxes are best placed in 70-90% canopy coverage areas. Wet sclerophyll areas are preferable. Ideal placement is in an area with intertwining vine such as strangler fig. Areas with pockets of mature palm species are high priority as these are ideal natural habitat sites. The nest box tree must have extensive overlapping of branches to adjacent trees. The branching must be relatively straight and close to nest box entrance. With this available the ringtails will be able to perform natural territorial rituals at their habitat site to enable them to gain ownership of the area. The performance of walking up and down the straight horizontal branching is vital particularly to the males in their role of making the female feel safe and protected while it adjusts to the area. It is not necessary for the male and female to habitat the same nest most will occupy adjacent trees that are linked by branching. The area where the ringtails are placed must be buffered from human noise or domestic animals. There must be native flora such as bottlebrush, grevillea, eucalyptus, lilly pilly or paperbark within 100 metres of the nest box tree.

The natural diet of our possums

Lemon Scented Gum
Spotted Gum
Tallow Wood
Small Fruit Grey Gum
Swamp Mahogany
Forest Red Gum
Cadaghi
Callistemon
Umbrella Tree
Tea Trees
Quandong
Banksia
Roses
Mango
Citrus fruits
Persimmon

Narrow Leaved Ironbark
Old Grey Gum
Grey Ironbark
Scribbly Gum
Narrow Leaf Red Gum
Moreton Bay Ash
Lilly Pilly
Calliandra
Crepe Myrtle
Paperbarks
Grevillea
Plumbago
Banana
Advocado
Guava