

## WEEKEND PROJECT/DECORATIVE TRAYS

Trading Spaces' Leslie Segrete finds some ordinary wood trays, adds a dash of color, lines them with pretty shell veneers, and wows us with the shimmering result



PHILIP FRIEDMAN/STUDIO D

**THE FINISHING TOUCH** “I saw two bonsai plant stands at a flea market, and thought they were so pretty with their ornate detailing on the sides of the bases. Then when I turned them upside down, I realized they would make great catchalls for a nightstand, vanity, or entrance table.” >

## WEEKEND PROJECT

### STEP-BY-STEP WITH LESLIE

■ **GETTING STARTED** For \$15, I bought two of the stands, and for another \$8, two tiny trays made in a Thai mission. You can buy new bonsai plant stands for \$10 to \$15 at [www.joebonsai.com](http://www.joebonsai.com).

■ **FINDING VENEERS** I had once seen the most beautiful tray that was inlaid with abalone, so I called New York Central Art Supply (800-950-6111) and ordered two 5½-by-9½-inch sheets of abalone and mother-of-pearl veneer for \$46 each. A store rep can help you pick different types, depending on what's available and what you want. Each veneer has unique characteristics, from soft, circular, bubbly shapes to linear, architectural ones, and from iridescent monotonous to busy, active sea colors.

■ **PAINTING** After I sanded the pieces, I primed and painted them, choosing colors that I already had on hand—Poolside Blue, Lavender Ice, and Simply White, all by Benjamin Moore and all semigloss. But any craft store acrylic paint will do just fine.

■ **LACQUERING** Brushing outward from the center, I coated the backs of the veneers with an equal part mixture of Lascaux Transparentlack I-UV, a varnish, and Golden Fluid acrylic paint—Titan Buff for the mother-of-pearl and Black for the abalone (all ordered from the art supply store). Because the veneers are sheer and delicate, the varnish adds strength and the acrylics bring out the true tones embedded in the shell patterns. I let each veneer dry for about three hours, then applied some clear Lascaux to the topside to enhance the luster.

■ **CUTTING** It was now ready to cut to size. I used sharp, small-tipped scissors, and worked slowly. It's not a good idea to attempt an odd-shaped design the first time you try this. A rectangular or square tray or dish will work best.

■ **GLUING** Finally, I applied acid-free glue onto the insides of the trays—using a paintbrush to avoid globules—and lay the veneers down. For less than \$150, I had four great-looking new trays. ●



Leslie Segrete sands a tray, TOP, before painting it blue; applies a mixture of varnish and acrylic to the back of an abalone veneer, CENTER; and glues the veneer into place, ABOVE.