Simple DIY Awning

A lot of folks think that using a sewing machine is some combination of science and witchcraft and best left to the female of the species – WRONG – It is actually quite simple and once mastered it is a very handy tool in the hands of a 4 X 4 enthusiast. Making your own covers for hi lifts, fridges and such becomes a simple & economical exercise.

Building your own awning is just such a project that should take about 4 – 5 hr and cost a fraction of the commercial product.

I have used an old domestic sewing machine and the only change from working with delicate fabric was to change the needle to something more substantial. For delicate fabrics something in the line of # 7 – 11 is used whereas# 16 – 20 is used on more substantial fabric together with thicker thread.

Materials:

Canvas for the top and pouch
.5m 20mm Webbing for anchor ropes
2.5m Zipper
1m 50mm Webbing for pole guides
Aluminum poles for the frame work
Adaptors for the poles
Guy ropes
Eyelets for the pole mounts
You will notice that I have not given quantities for the canvas and poles as this will be decided by the size of your awning. Canvas comes in 1.2, 1.5 and 1.8 m width and various thicknesses, choose one that will suit your purpose, keeping in mind that thicker material is more difficult to sew and work with where the thinner stuff does not last as long.

Assume that we require an awning of 2.5 X 2.5m. This would require a seam in the middle. Begin by cutting the two main panels for the roof bearing in mind that we need two poles, front and back, for the frame that has to be enclosed in the canvas. Allow for a 10mm seam front and back as well as a 50mm skirt on the sides.

The above drawing gives a basic idea what we are working towards. The dimensions are not cast in stone and should be modified to suit your application.
One important point to remember is to avoid having raw edges, this just helps to make the end product look more professional.

Start by joining the two main panels stitching the raw ends of the seam back on itself to create a rolled seam that is double stitched to increase strength.
Next would be the back tube for the mounting pole, start by seaming the 10mm end seam and then
overlap the 50mm part to create a tube. The front part gets two additional triangular gussets to reinforce the eyelets and rope tie downs, these are two 150mm square pieces folded diagonally and stitched in place. Once this has been done the front tube can be stitched. Remember that this tube does not run the full length as you will need space for the ends of the front pole to protrude so that it can be joined to the side and supporting poles. Lastly the two side aprons are stitched and two loops of 20mm webbing are sewn on to the triangular gussets for the stay ropes.

The side poles can secured with short pieces of 50mmm webbing sewn to provide tubes or simply 4 pieces of Velcro just to hold the top to the side poles. Insert two eyelets in the front gussets, taking care not to position them too close to the edge, and the work on the top is all but finished.

Now just for the pole work and a pouch to keep all of your hard work nice and tidy and all is done.

Polework always seems so intricate and tends to scare people, the opposite is true. The front and back poles are solid units and are hardly ever removed whereas the side and support poles are telescopic and fold up with the front and rolled up with the awning. Poles & fittings can be obtained at most caravan shops. In the picture I have illustrated the fittings I have used on the front corners as well as two different types of eyelet for the top.
The side poles clip on to the back pole with c clips also from caravan shops.

Lastly the bag to fit all the goodies in.
Taking all the poles together roll the awning up onto the poles, this will give you the size required for the bag.
Cut the sides about 50mm larger than required and stitch on three sides on the wrong side.
Turn the bag inside out and fit the zipper to the open end.
I have chosen to mount my awning with 6mm galv cup squares through the inside of the bag and rear
pole of the awning directly on to my roofrack.

I hope this guide helps to motivate some of you to have a go at making your own awning. I know there are a lot of guys out there tat is going to say this is not the way to do this and that, possibly, this worked for me and that is all that I am sharing with you. If you can help designing a better mousetrap, share tour thoughts.
Good luck.

Henk