

QRP in the Park





Like all areas of ham radio, multiple picnic table/QRP niches are out there. You'll have to decide which best fits your interests/needs.

QRP in the Park Objectives

Why do you want to do QRP in the Park?

Try to avoid the Cheshire Cat Syndrome

Alice: “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

The Cheshire Cat: “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

Alice: “I don't much care where.”

The Cheshire Cat: “Then it doesn't much matter which way you go.”

Possible Objectives

- Get out of the house
- Fill in extra time during visits to friends/family
- SOTA or POTA or other QRP/Outdoor oriented operating event
- Restrictive antenna covenants
- Limited antenna space
- Get away from local RFI
- Break while traveling
- Explore low power homebrew
- Sharing a rig between home and picnic table use
- Other?

What equipment features might be related to your objectives?

- Portability/Luggability
- - Weight
- - Size
- Travel/Luggage friendly
- Modes?
- - SSB?
- - CW?
- - Digital?
- External computer needed?
- Which Band(s)?
- Multiband?
- Power level?
- Weather proof?
- High function?
- Built in ATU?
- Handheld SSB HF mode / pedestrian mobile
- More?

My Objectives

- Get out of the house
- Fill in extra time during visits
- Break while traveling
- Home and picnic Table use

Where did this lead me?

Must be easy to pack along in the car => lightweight, small, not a lot of pieces. No computer

Small/light weight rig => CW is the main mode

Lightweight (including power) => low/QRP power level but still QSO friendly

I choose my operating times/places => No need to be particularly weather proof

Most opportunities for heading for the park or travel breaks are in the day time => 20 mtrs for day time propagation. Backup is 30 mtrs

Random/short term operating sites => easy setup/takedown including antenna

Equipment may be shared between home and portable station => High function

My Home/Winter Station



What I Pack



Antenna Options

It is not surprising that antennas come up a lot when talking about picnic table operating. Many times the antenna (or lack of one) is what got us out to the picnic table in the first place.

A few examples...

Vertical

Center fed Dipole

-Resonant

-Non-resonant

Endfed

-Resonant

Magnetic Loop

¼ wave Vertical with 4 elevated/tuned radials



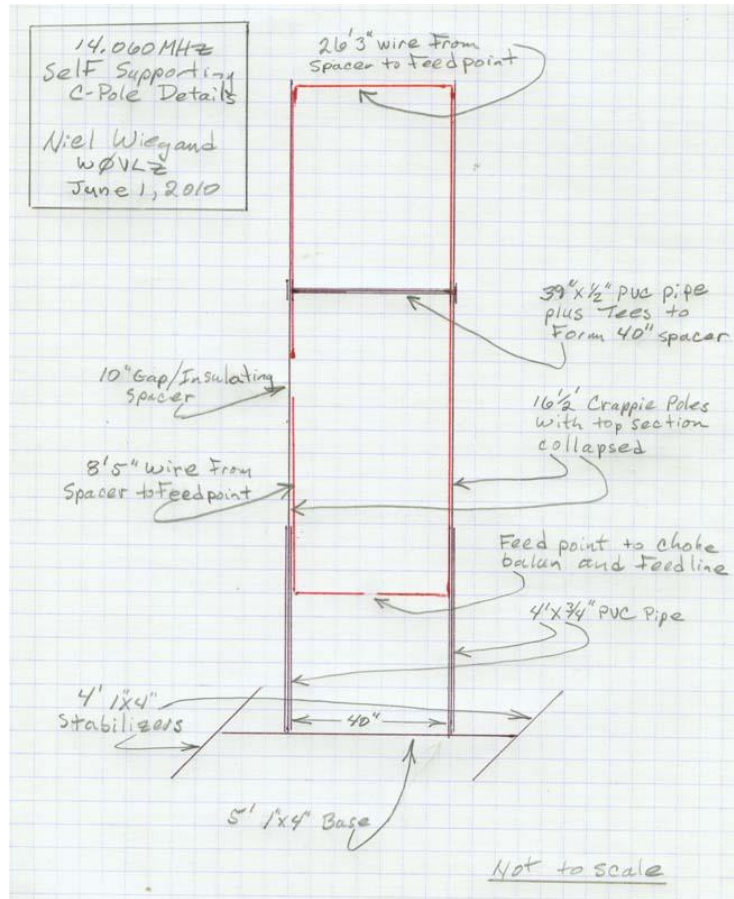
Single band – 20 mtrs

Built around 18' collapsable Crappie pole

Wire lengths = $234/f = 16.6'$

Works fine but 32' diameter radial field makes it public campground unfriendly

Vertical C-Pole



- Apr 2004 QST
- Looped off-center fed 20 mtr vertical
- Cabin and campground friendly but not hikable
- 5' long bundle but could be hung from a tree limb for smaller/lighter bundle
- Long term setup ... vacation cabin? Campground?
- 15 minute assembly...

Center fed non-resonant Dipole

MFJ 1778 - G5RV



- 51' legs + ladder line
- 80-10 mtrs
- Horizontal or inverted Vee
- Rqrs Ant Tuner
- May be cut in half for 40-10mtrs

Center Fed - ½ wave Dipole



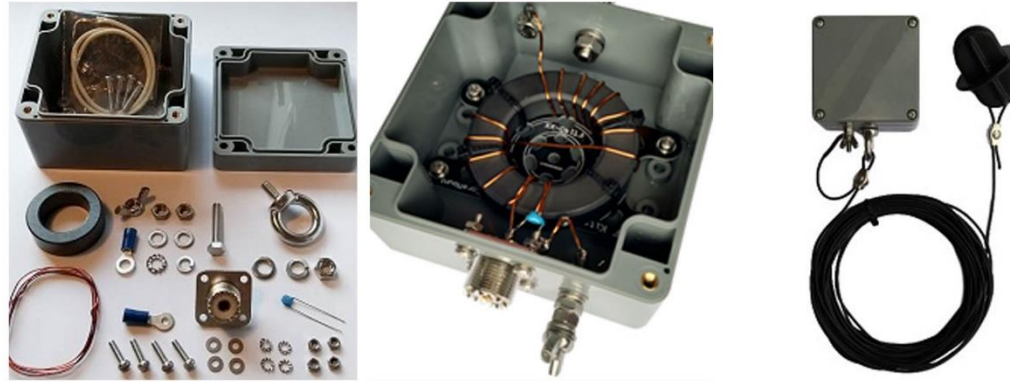
10 – 30 mtr

Replace clothes line with stranded wire marked
for each band

$$30 \text{ mtr Leg Length} = 234/10.1 = 24'$$

End Fed Wire – EFHW

End fed antennas rqr only one support



- Sensitive to surroundings
- May rqr tuner or trimming to single band
- ARRL
- - 250 watts
- - \$80

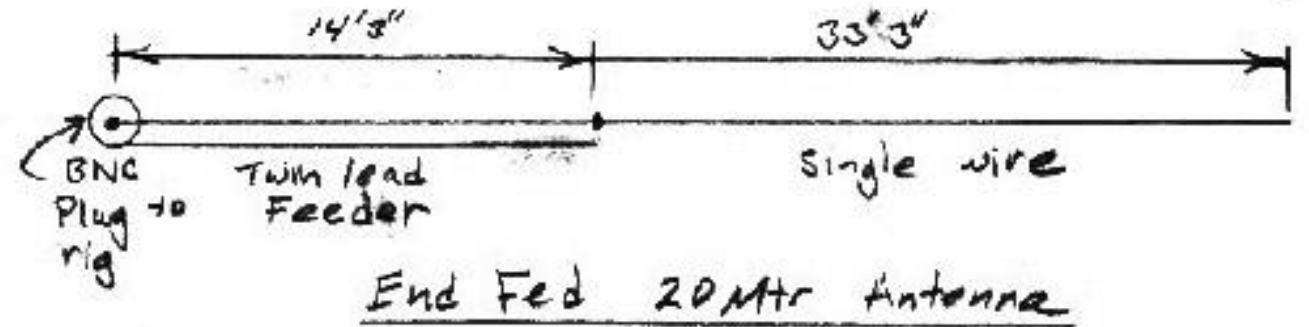
QRPGuys offers several QRP versions

End Fed Wire – EFHW with Tuner



- Tuner kit from QRPGuys \$40
- 10 watts PEP
- Single band depending on wire length
- Includes antenna tuner with SWR indicator

My current picnic table antenna of choice



- Single band
- Flat wrapped twine packs easily
- Twin lead acts as high to low impedance transformer
- At QRP levels Insulated wire lays across tree limbs without problem
- Rqrs an antenna tuner



Mag Loop

- Small foot print
- Low bandwidth => retuning reqrd after frequency shift
- Directional => Can null out interference
- I've no experience with one

What else?

The Reverse Beacon Network can give an idea of propagation

- Use CW Keyer with canned CQ or TEST msg
- Filter on your own call
- But guaranteed no contacts if you don't get on the air

Where to operate from?

- Shade
- Picnic table
- Exposed tree limbs
- High/exposed terrain
- Essex Park
- Frontenac State Park

Don't forget

- RF Safety
- Copy of your license

Where to go for equipment or help?

[RARCHams Groups.io](http://RARCHamsGroups.io)

w0vlz.blogspot.com

[QRP Groups.io](http://QRPGroups.io)

QRPGuys.com

QRPKits.com

QRP-Labs.com

4sqrp.com

MFJ.com

ARRL.org

Elecraft.com

ICOM.com