



Better Barns photo

Super Sheds

In recent years, the lowly shed has become much more than just a place to store stuff. See how the right approach can make a shed just as good-looking (and useful) as your home itself.

By Wyatt Meyers

Comfortable. Cozy. Inviting. These are hardly the words that come to mind when you think about a shed. Quite the contrary, the typical image is a dark, dingy, steel- or vinyl-sided building that's jam-packed with all the tools, equipment and supplies that were deemed unworthy of the garage.

But a handful of new companies are offering buildings, materials and project plans that will turn your notion of what a shed should be on its ear. Not only are these sheds built for much more than storage, but some are so nice that they've transformed a shed from a place you avoid entering into a building where you could spend countless hours.

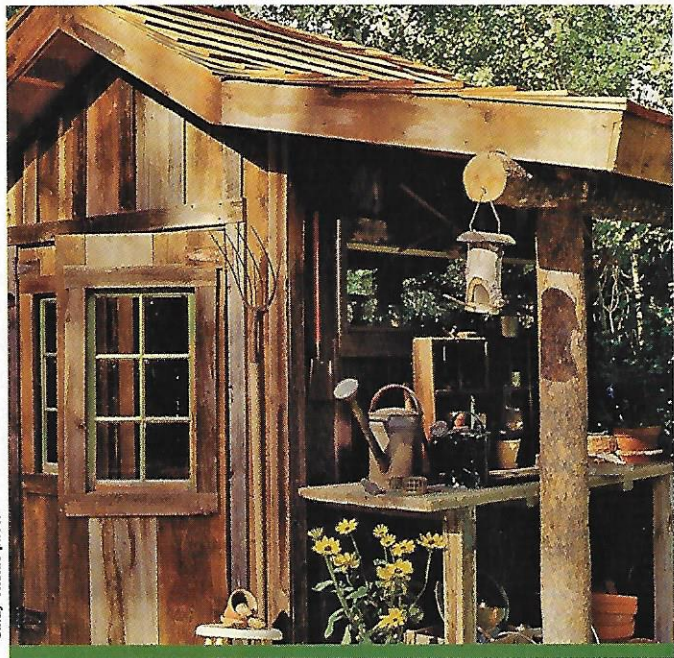
Of course, a shed that's

this nice on the inside has to have an exterior to match, and these new sheds also deliver on that count. Most are trimmed with solid wood, rather than steel or vinyl, and many are custom-built to match the look and feel of the home itself.

You may be thinking, "Sounds great, but it also sounds pricey." The good news is, these sheds are much more reasonably priced than you might expect. Read on to find out everything you need to know about the new breed of sheds.

Meet the New Shed

According to Pete Charest, owner of Better Barns in Bethlehem, Connecticut, the new shed can be so much more than those cobweb-filled



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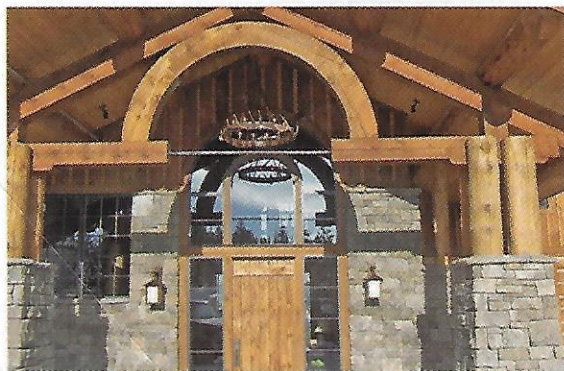
More than just a place to stash your gardening tools, the new shed functions as a sort of garden center—in other words, it's the headquarters for your favorite hobby. Make it the kind of place you want to go by investing in storage systems that will keep your tools neat and organized.

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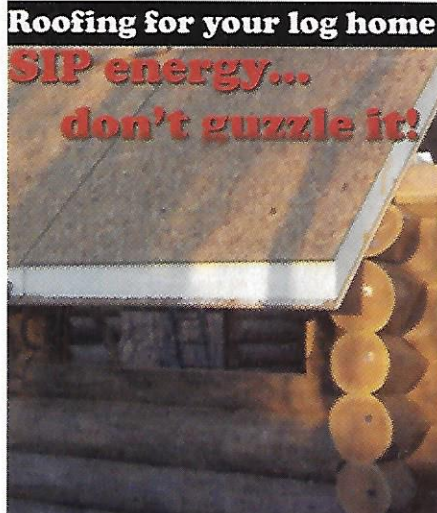


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No longer just for storage, sheds are the perfect quiet space for a home office or studio, away from the hustle and bustle of your house.

chambers of the past. “More than ever before, we’re building sheds as separate living spaces,” he says. “A lot more people are working at home, and they need a quiet place to work and be away from the house, whether it’s as a home office, an artist’s studio or a writer’s workshop.”

Of course, Pete admits, a number of his customers still want a shed that fulfills its original purpose: simple storage. But even on that end, sheds are changing. “Most of the sheds we build now are a lot bigger than they

were 25 years ago,” he says. “People just have a lot more stuff.” The most common sheds that Pete builds are either 12 by 16 feet or 12 by 20 feet.

According to Pete, this trend toward larger (and hence more visible) sheds has led to another trend as well. “Most of my customers are very interested in a classic, traditional look that matches their home,” he says. “They don’t want their shed to be an eyesore.”

Before You Start

Regardless of its size, any separate building you add

to your property is going to require some important considerations.

Start by determining the size of shed you need, Pete says. “Whatever size you think you need, get a shed that’s about 50 percent bigger than that. You’ll always end up needing more room.” To get a sense of your space needs, stack everything you plan to store in the middle of your garage to see how much space it will actually occupy. “It will take up more room than you think,” Pete observes.

“More than ever before, we’re building sheds as separate living spaces”

The other consideration before you start putting up a shed comes in the form of red tape: building codes, permits and zoning regulations. The best approach here, Pete advises, is to get your blueprint in front of local officials and make sure you’re doing everything by the book. “Most municipalities have a number of rules, such as setbacks, wetland restrictions, distance from the septic system and historic district regulations, that you’ll



Better Barns photo

A shed with a front porch? Sure! If your shed will function as a living space, treat it like an extension of your home, paying attention to architectural features and interior decor.

need to make sure you're in line with," Pete says. "It's usually not a big deal, but it's best to take care of this first to prevent any problems down the road."

Outfit It Right

If the idea of a shed as a separate living space (studio, home office, woodworking shop) sounds intriguing, keep in mind that this approach brings a host of other complications with it, namely outfitting the building with plumbing, electricity, heating and cooling.

When it comes to adding modern amenities to a separate building, Pete has a simple

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If you're concerned about your shed matching your home, using logs is one way to go—but it's not the only way. Better Barns' Pete Charest recommends sheds with cedar siding as a way to complement the look of your log home.

rule of thumb: "Avoid plumbing if you can," he says. "Adding electricity is relatively easy and inexpensive, but plumbing can be trouble. If you want to add a bathroom, that can require installing a whole new septic system." The bottom line? If you can handle making the trek to the house a few times a day to use the bathroom, it can save you thousands.

As far as heating and cooling go, electric is obviously the easiest choice, but gas isn't out of the question. Pete says the easiest option is to outfit the shed with a small propane tank to fuel a gas fireplace or stove.

A Touch of Home

If your shed truly will be an extension of your home, whether for storage or for a workspace, then it

should look like your home. The good news for log-home owners is that you don't have to tack on the added expense of a whole new log-built structure to get this look. Better Barns has a number of plans for conventional built sheds that complement a log home. (For other shed sources, check our mini guide on the next page.) "The key is cedar siding," Pete says. "The

Do-It-Yourself Sheds

If four grand still sound like a lot for a shed, there's always the DIY route, which will immediately cut your costs by 50 percent. But before you undertake such a project, Pete Charest of Better Barns has a few words of wisdom:

Pick Your Spot Wisely. Once you start building in a certain area, you're stuck, so take some time to plot it out right. And also remember that you'll need to get construction materials into the area easily, so don't make it too remote.

Gain Some Experience. If your biggest construction accomplishment is a

birdhouse, you may want to consider hiring a pro. But don't be intimidated—building a shed doesn't require an encyclopedic knowledge of construction. "As long as you have some experience making things level, straight and square, you should be fine," Pete says.

Invest Some Time. Your shed won't go up overnight, especially if you want to add details and features to match your home. Be prepared to make it a summer project, rather than a weekend project.

Get Some Help. Just as you can't do it quickly, you also can't do it alone. Installing walls and a roof takes an extra set of hands.

Shed Sources

Arrow Sheds
800-851-1085
arrowsheds.com

Better Barns
888-266-1960
betterbarns.com

Cabana Village
800-959-3808
cabanavillage.com

Capitol Sheds
888-828-9743
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CedarShed Industries
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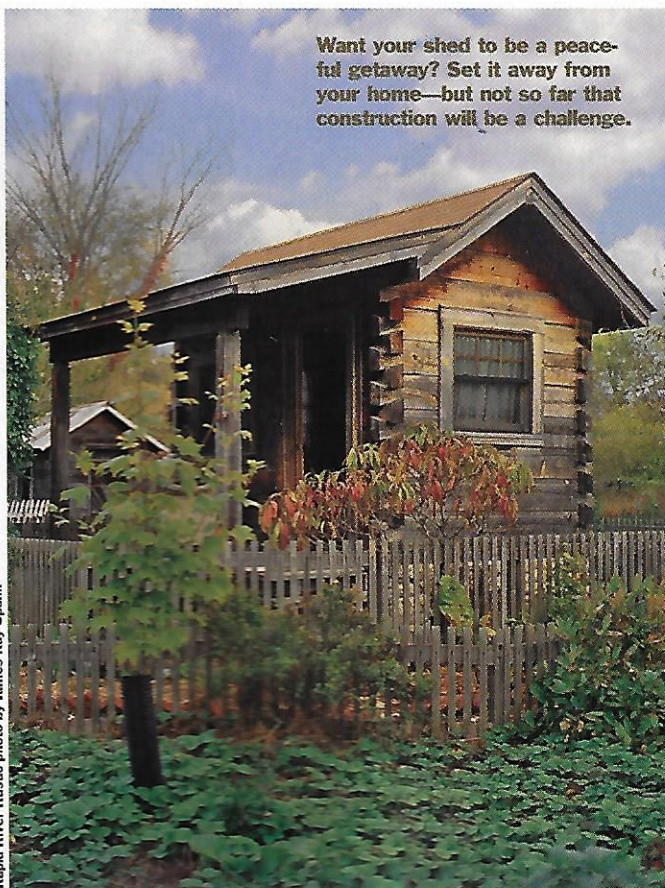
will give the shed a natural look that will match a log home quite nicely."

In addition to siding, there are other small details, such as shingles, shutters, trim color, gable extensions and hardware, that you can add to your shed to make it look even more like an extension of your home.

The Right Price

The best feature of the new shed, however, is that even with all these amenities, it won't have you reeling from sticker shock. Better Barns' sheds range in price from \$4,000 for a 10 by 12 foot shed installed to \$10,000 for 12 by 20 feet. "A log home is a unique structure," Pete points out. "And considering it's a building you're going to have for a long time, it's worth the money to have something that will complement your home." 🏠

Rapid River Rustic photo by James Ray Spain



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