

A backyard shed can boost your storage options

BY DEIRDRE O'SHEA
Copley News Service

After a spring cleaning, many people find that they own more stuff than they have space for. This may be a good time to begin planning for a new shed.

A small structure auxiliary to one's home can provide space for outdoor machinery and tools, a potter's shed, a playroom for the kids, a workroom — your own mini retreat. Veteran do-it-yourselfers may be tempted to jump in and start hammering. Resist these urges and embrace the planning process. Though a shed is a relatively simple structure, it's still a building, subject to the laws of gravity and local building codes.

"Just because storage sheds are utilitarian," said Joseph Truini, author of "Build Like a Pro: Building a Shed" (Taunton Press, \$19.95), "doesn't mean they can't be well-built and architecturally interesting."

With years of experience as a carpenter and writer, Truini provides guidance in his book from design considerations to construction techniques. What makes the book

unique is the final four chapters, which each show how to build a popular shed from the ground up: A saltbox potting shed, garden storage shed, storage barn and lean-to tool locker. (The plans are also available by mail order.)

To plan for a shed, Truini first suggests evaluating your storage needs.

"My research has shown that people don't think 'What exactly am I storing?'" he said. "If you have a 10-foot ladder, you'll need a 12-foot shed. I can't tell you how many people build a shed for a lawn tractor and can't get it in the door."

Lay out the footprint with stakes and string to see how the shed looks on the lot.

The interior design should be carefully thought out, as well. A shed has a way of filling up with sporting equipment and bins of dog food. Truini advises "accessible storage," as he puts it: "It doesn't cost that much more, relatively speaking, to build a 10-by-16-foot structure versus a 10-by-12. Adding on 20 percent to the cost upfront can make a big difference in the end."

If the shed will be used for

purposes beyond storage there are other design issues. Windows are always important aesthetically — and in proper proportion they make the structure pleasing to the eye. But for a potter's shed, a playroom, or a studio good light is vital. Will electricity be necessary? What about plumbing? If the shed will be far from the house, would a hose bibb make life easier? Will there be adequate ventilation?

Other considerations, said Truini, include the available yard space, any size restrictions imposed by the local building department, necessary distance from the property line (also known as setback distance), and the size of your budget.

The architectural style of the shed will be decided, in

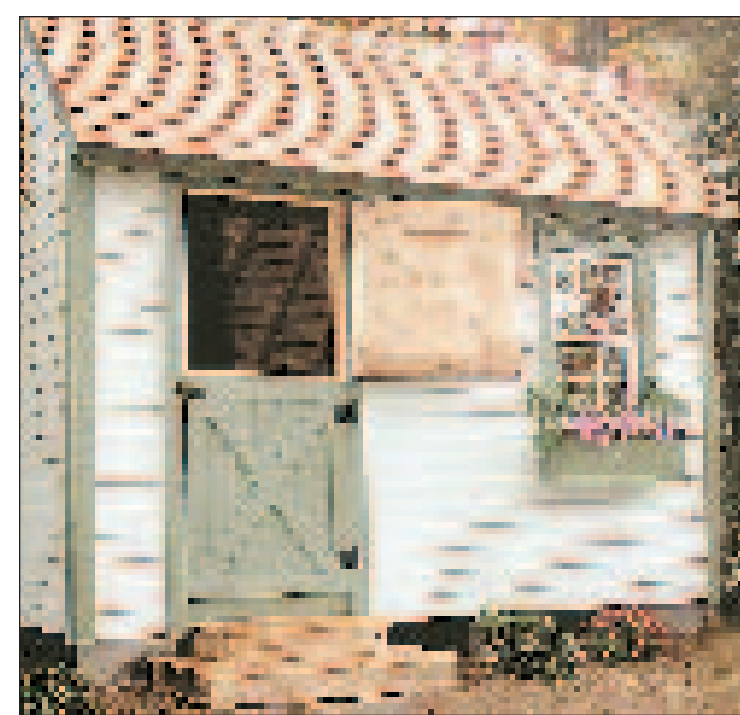
large part, by the roof design and the siding material, so get estimates for these from a lumberyard.

"Cost varies widely and price alone may dictate how your shed looks," said Truini. He estimates that the sheds in his book cost from \$500 to \$4,000 for materials.

Building a shed is a good-size project, so be realistic about your time upfront. If necessary, he said, hire help.

"My three top reasons to call in a contractor are to excavate a site, to pour a concrete-slab foundation, and to wire the shed for electricity," he said.

Another source of support is the building department. Permits will be necessary and so will an inspection if there is a permanent foundation or electricity.



CNS Photo courtesy of "Build Like a Pro: Building a Shed"

Looking more like a storybook cottage than a backyard storage building, this little shed is modest in size but features a lot of details, like bevel siding, A Dutch door and red-cedar shingles.

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