

Better-Looking



Water-shedding wooden doors improve a common backyard eyesore

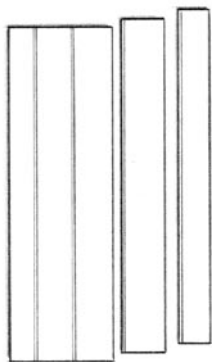
BY DOUGLAS MOORE

Prefabricated metal bulkhead doors do the trick. They're inexpensive, they are easy to install, and they work OK. But they can look industrial, they clang when you shut them, and they rust. Wooden bulkhead doors are an attractive alternative that can be built to complement almost any house.

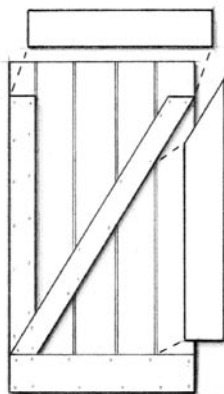
The key to building wooden bulkhead doors is to use rot-resistant materials and durable finishes. The doors won't be waterproof, which isn't a problem if the area inside is unfinished, but they can be made nearly so by incorporating some simple water-diverting features.

I built these bulkhead doors five years ago to replace ill-fitting, rusted metal doors. They work remarkably well, requiring only periodic cleaning of the rain gutter and, recently, a fresh coat of paint. The best thing about the new doors is that they blend in with the rustic look of the house. □

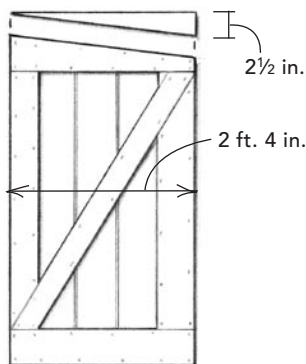
Douglas Moore is a research scientist in Providence, R.I. Photos by the author.



1 Assemble the skin. Edge-glue tongue-and-groove cedar siding. Rip the outer boards to create the appropriate width, but leave the skins long for now.



2 Attach the frame. The top, bottom, and outside boards are 1x6 cedar. The inside and diagonal boards are 1x4s. Glue and screw the frame to the skin, and biscuit the joints.



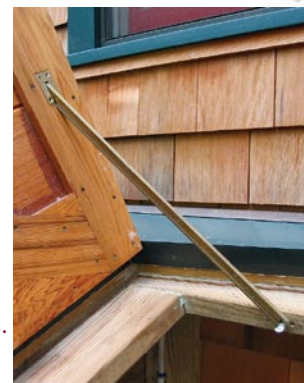
3 Cut the top. With a circular saw and a straightedge, cut the top so that the inside edge is 2½ in. longer than the outside edge. When the trim and curb are applied above the door, this angle will create drainage toward the sides.

DOORS

The doors consist of two parts: a tongue-and-groove skin and a cedar frame. I sized the doors so that they overlap the 2x10 top plates by 5 in. I glued the skins and frames together with West System epoxy (www.westsystem.com) and finished the underside of the doors with Varathane (www.flecto.com). After setting the assembled doors in place, I trimmed around them. All sides of the trim and the siding are primed with Benjamin Moore's Fresh Start All-Purpose Alkyd Primer (www.benjaminmoore.com). The bulkhead is finished with Benjamin Moore's MoorGlo 100% Acrylic House & Trim Paint.

HARDWARE

The most common problem I've seen with wooden bulkhead doors is the hinges being torn off by the unsupported weight of the doors. To support the doors, I used a pair of custom door stays. The stays limit how far the doors can open, and they can be locked in place. Alternatives to custom-made stays include short lengths of chain and fold-down legs.

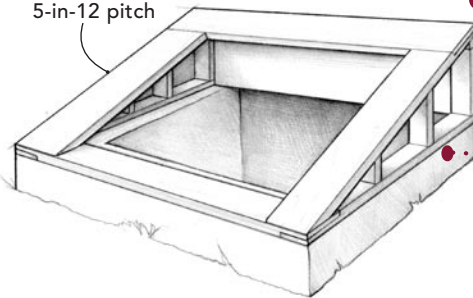


Bulkhead Doors

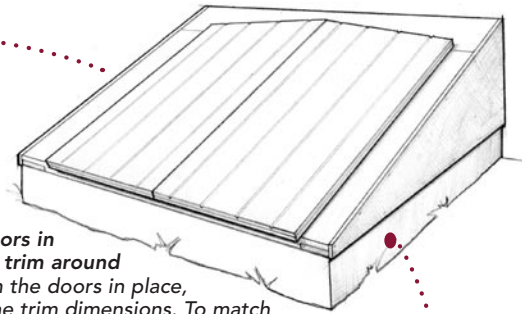
FRAME AND TRIM

I used pressure-treated lumber for the frame. An angled 2x6 ledger anchors the frame to the sidewall. Before applying trim, I attached a pressure-treated 1x spacer to the top plate. This way, the 1x cedar trim is flush with the doors.

5-in-12 pitch



1 Determine the pitch. The frame is made of two sloped 2x6 rake walls with 2x10 top plates that provide a stop for the doors. For my doors, aesthetics determined the 5-in-12 pitch, but to ensure that water drains well, make the pitch at least 3-in-12.



2 Set the doors in place, and trim around them. With the doors in place, measure the trim dimensions. To match the 1½-in. thickness of the door, use a pressure-treated 1x spacer and 1x cedar trim.

A 1-in. by 1-in. cedar curb bedded in silicone caulk catches and diverts water.

Copper flashing slips under housewrap.

Fifteen-lb. felt from bulkhead sidewall slips under housewrap.

The cedar trim overhangs the siding for a drip edge.

Tongue-and-groove siding

15-lb. felt

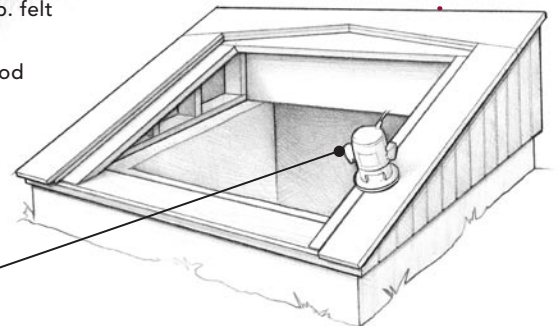
¾-in. plywood sheathing

Pressure-treated 1x spacer

1-in. by 2-in. cedar trim

A 1-in. by 2½-in. cedar strip prevents water from entering between doors.

Aluminum moisture barrier between foundation and sill



3 Rout a rain gutter all the way around the opening. Using the trim as an edge guide, cut a rain gutter into the top plates with a router and a top-bearing straight bit.

