

Build a Budget-Friendly Shed

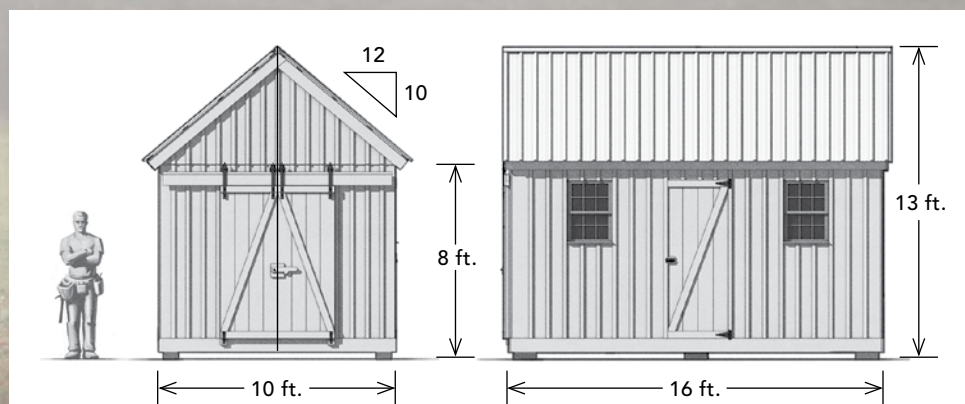
Get ample storage and traditional styling on a budget of just \$2000

BY JUSTIN FINK

Call me a building snob if you want, but I think most sheds are ugly. The response when I say this to people is usually, “Yeah, but who cares what it looks like if it gets the job done?”


In some ways, I agree. I have no problem with an ultracheap or even downright homely storage shed that is being built just to keep tools and equipment out of the weather. But why settle for an oddly proportioned, poorly built shed that isn't durable, is adorned with appliques that don't match the main house (or even the region of the country the shed is located in), and doesn't offer enough storage space or the right type of access to suit its purpose—especially when even the smallest of these lackluster factory-built sheds cost thousands of dollars?

I challenged myself to design a shed that provides lots of storage but that can be built for a low price. To meet the needs of most homeowners, a shed must be bigger than 8x10 or even 10x12, so I set my sights on a 10x16 structure. For the budget, I set a goal of \$2000,



Proper proportions A bit of planning and some measured drawings are crucial to ensuring that you don't end up with an oddly proportioned backyard eyesore. I like to design using SketchUp (a free design program available online), which makes it easy to draw a basic shape and to adjust the height and width of walls, the height and pitch of the roof, the depth of overhangs, and the size and placement of doors and windows. Whether you use a design program or just some graph paper, you can experiment with changes to work out problems before you put on your toolbelt. For more on the basics of shed design, check out “Drawing Board” on p. 92.





A durable roof Metal panels last long and look traditional, and although they required a special order from my local big-box store, they were nearly the same price as architectural shingles. They made it possible for me to use skip sheathing on the roof rather than continuous sheathing. As an added benefit, I was able to install the corrugated panels faster than I would have been able to lay shingles.

Traditional board-and-batten siding

Here, I used full 1x8 spruce for the boards, and rip cuts from the same stock as battens to pin the board edges and allow for expansion. To keep the bottom ends of the battens from wicking ground moisture and rotting prematurely, I had them land on a skirtboard rather than running all the way to the bottom edge of the building.

Wood windows Single-pane, true divided-lite wood windows not only look better than vinyl products, but they are about the same price. If you can't find such windows at a local yard sale, recycling station, salvage yard, or building-supply store, or if repurposing isn't your thing, try betterbarns.com for affordable options. Here, I repurposed some old sashes.

Lots of access A big door on the gable end accommodates a lawn tractor and other wheeled items. A smaller door on the eave wall offers access when I need hand tools and other items. This setup alleviates the common problem of having to move multiple items to reach the one you want.

which I knew would be difficult to meet. The final challenge: The shed had to look better than the low-pitched, cheaply clad, cookie-cutter models being sold at most big-box stores and shed retailers.

“Look better” is, of course, subjective. My personal taste leans toward a traditional style, so I took cues from tobacco barns and other New England farm-style outbuildings in my area while relying on as few obviously modern building materials as possible. It may sound crazy, but I wanted to enjoy the interior of my shed as much as the exterior, and as long as it would keep out rain and snow, I didn’t mind it being leaky enough to let in streaks of sunlight. To that end, I decided to forgo the convenience and strength of sheet goods and used rough-sawn, knotty, 1x8 spruce boards for many parts of this shed, leaving them unfinished so that they eventually would weather to a pleasant gray. If you want to streamline the process and aren’t concerned about achieving a true old-fashioned look, then by all means go for OSB or plywood. It probably will save you money compared to the solid-wood alternatives I sourced, not to mention that it will simplify the wall bracing. Some panel goods, such as T1-11, even double as finished siding.

Speaking of simplicity, it’s good to set reasonable expectations for a project like this. Every project boils down to a balance between time, money, and quality. This build will save you some money, but you won’t be able to crank it out in a couple of days. I wasn’t trying to turn a profit here, so when I could shave off a few bucks by putting in some extra legwork and using slightly warped or otherwise wonky materials (such as the 1x8s), I was perfectly willing. Likewise, if I could have fun making my own barn-door hardware to save \$50, that was a win-win. In fact, aside from the windows that I picked up years ago from the side of the road (you can buy equivalents from betterbarns.com for about \$100 apiece), I built this entire project using materials from my local big-box store. □

Justin Fink is Project House editor.

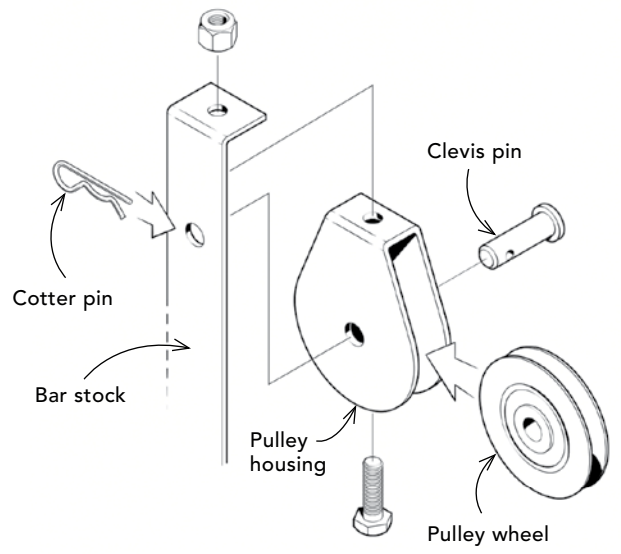
A HYBRID FRAME FOR A CLASSIC LOOK

In many ways, this shed is built like a standard house, with dimensional-lumber framing for the floor, walls, and roof. But because the design uses boards where panel sheathing normally would be, it was necessary to incorporate some traditional bracing to strengthen the frame and to provide solid nailing for the siding and the roof panels.



Budget boards The heroes of this build are the inexpensive rough-sawn spruce 1x8s used for floor sheathing, siding boards, and door panels, and ripped into narrower strips for girts, battens, bracing, and trim.

Bracing strategy Ideally, the diagonal bracing would be continuous on both eave walls of the shed, but even though it's interrupted by window openings, it still does its job. If your interior storage plans don't include using the space between studs, consider notching the bracing into the studs for an even stronger frame and faster girt installation.



Homemade door hardware

I made the roller hardware for this shed's barn doors myself, using a variety of locally purchased components. The savings were marginal compared to prefab farm-grade track hardware (about \$85), but much greater compared to barn-door hardware with the type of traditional look I wanted.

For the wheels, I chose 3-in. swivel pulleys and cut off the swivel portion of the pulley assembly. I bent and hammered a piece of 1/4-in. bar stock into an L-shape, then drilled and painted it. Finally, I attached the wheel and housing to the bar with a bolt and a long clevis pin. The wheel and strap assemblies ride along the edge of the track, which is just a piece of 1/4-in. by 1 1/2-in. steel angle. To keep the bottom of the door from swinging outward, I used a type of fence catch meant to accommodate a 2x4 door bar, furring it off the building so that it would fit the thicker door (not shown).

A 2-ft. grid Walls are laid out on a rough 2-ft. grid, with studs and horizontal girts spaced 24 in. on center to provide nailing for the siding. Most of the girts are ripped from the 1x8 rough-sawn spruce, but the upper parts of each gable have 2x girts so that the upper siding can lap easily over the lower siding.