

Tiny Homes Have No Wasted Space

If you've ever thought about downsizing your living quarters, you might want to check out the Tumbleweed Tiny House Company. Owner Jay Shafer offers blueprints for homes that range from 65 to 837 sq. ft. He makes every cubic inch count in the tiny homes.

Shafer finished his first mini home — 89 sq. ft. in size — in Iowa City in 2000 after he "got fed up with spending money and wasting resources to live happily" (featured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 25, No. 4). The art graduate, who had an interest in architecture, found out there was a lot of interest in his homes so he started building them for others.

In 2005 he moved to California, where he discovered even more demand for his blueprints and seminars

"We're getting larger groups every time," Shafer says. "I think people are recognizing the value in building their own homes now. The small ones on wheels are popular as are the 800 sq. ft. models for people who don't want to be quite as extreme about it."

Other companies offer plans for small houses, but Shafer notes his company's blueprints also include interior layout details down to the 1/16-in. level.

"We spend a lot of time on proportioning houses that are visually nice, and we lay out interiors very thoroughly," Shafer says. His designs include using vertical space such as

shelves all the way to the ceiling, sleeping lofts and built-in couches, bookcases, desks, etc.

The smallest models are built on wheels, because they don't meet building code size minimums. But the benefits are that they are mobile and are often licensed as a camper instead of taxed as property.

At seminars throughout the country, Shafer explains how to build, vent and brace the homes. They can be built in all climates. An Iowa man lives in a 7 by 8-ft. house with a slightly bigger loft that he heats for about \$160/year with a boat heater.

Well-insulated with thoughtfully chosen appliances, windows and materials, the homes are good quality and have a higher per foot cost than typical homes because they still require the heating, plumbing and other operating systems. However, some builders save money by recycling materials. One woman built her tiny house for \$10,000.

Shafer lists estimated prices for plans and finished homes on his website. Blueprints range from \$500 to \$1,000. He also has a schedule of seminars planned throughout the U.S. and overseas.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tumbleweed Tiny House Company, Jay Shafer, P.O. Box 941, Sebastopol, Calif. 95473 (ph 707 548-0177; www.tumbleweedhouses.com).



Tiny homes range from 65 to 837 sq. ft. The smallest models are built on wheels so they're taxed as campers, not property.



Designs typically include book shelves all the way to the ceiling, sleeping lofts and built-in couches, desks, etc.



Self-propelled cart works great for feeding out big square bales in tight quarters.

Big Square Bale Feed Cart

A new self-propelled cart from I.H. Rissler Manufacturing makes it easy to feed out one big square bale at a time in tight quarters. Hydraulic drive wheels combined with twin 12-in. pneumatic swivel tires make 90 degree turns possible. An extra long wheelbase ensures stability, and the 16-in. lug drive wheels offer plenty of traction.

The cart is based on Rissler's popular large round bale unroller, but with features specific to square bales.

"This was really my pet project, as I needed a way to use big square bales on my farm," says Ivan Rissler. "I designed it so you can drive up to a big bale and load it with the cart. You can even pick up a partial bale if it's against a wall or other support."

The tilting bed has a front powered rotor. The 20-in. wide rotor has five toothed sprockets that grab the bale to pull it up and onto the cart platform. Plastic 3-in. caster wheels mounted to the side of the rotor prevent the bed from digging into the surface beneath the bale as it's being loaded.

"It's available with a 6 1/2-ft. bed or with a telescoping bed that can extend out an additional 20 in. to carry 8-ft. bales," says Rissler.

The standard cart is priced at \$7,000, or



Front-powered rotor grabs bale to pull it up and onto cart platform.

\$8,000 for the extended-bed cart. Both are powered by 9-hp overhead valve Honda engines. Hydraulics for the 16-in. lug drive wheels, power rotor and tilting bed are provided by a 5.5 gpm open-center hydraulic pump. Three solenoid valves feed power to the wheel motors and bed lift. The joystick handlebar gives the operator on the riding platform fingertip control of the all-hydraulic cart.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, I.H. Rissler, 448 Orchard Road, Mohnton, Penn. 19540 (ph 717 484-0551; toll free 800 436-5623; fax 717 484-1069).

Elevator Made From Forklift Mast

Instead of stairs down to their basement, Bill and Doris French have "Elly," an elevator made from a forklift mast.

The Virginia couple built their log home together 13 years ago and didn't want a stairwell that would take up a lot of space.

"Actually I think I just wanted to build an elevator," Bill French admits.

He started with a forklift mast that he found at a junkyard for \$250. He purchased a hydraulic pump and reservoir from a surplus store and two 6-volt golf cart batteries, which he hooked up to two solar panels that keep them charged.

French built the elevator frame out of angle iron. Three of the elevator's walls are covered with plexiglass. The top of the elevator is finished off with floor tiles that match the floor above. Those same tiles were used on the elevator floor.

To get the correct lift height with the two-stage pump, French adjusted the amount of hydraulic oil available so the elevator stops in the correct position at the top floor. He installed up and down switches in the basement, first floor and in the elevator.

The 2,500-lb. rated elevator is used daily, the Frenches say, and is very convenient for moving things between floors. They can take all their groceries down in one trip, and raise it to a comfortable height to unload when stocking the pantry and freezer.

French estimates he spent about \$900 to install the elevator. Elly is indispensable and safe, he says. Even if a hydraulic hose were severed, the elevator would drop slowly enough not to cause any harm.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill and Doris French (ph 276 952-1125).



Three of the elevator's walls are covered with plexiglass.



Top of elevator is finished off with floor tiles that match the floor above.