

Have You Ever Seen A Vertical Log Home?

Contributing editor Dee Goerge and her husband Scott have built a number of custom log homes over the years. So when a couple of story ideas came into FARM SHOW about building “vertical log” homes – instead of placing the logs horizontally – we asked Dee to find out what’s going on.

Want to build a log home but don’t have access to a stand of tall timber? No problem. Just stand your shorter logs on end.

That’s just one of the reasons why Mickey Clement built his first vertical log home several decades ago. “I also liked the fact that I could do it myself because the 8 to 10-ft. logs were much easier to handle.”

Clement says, “Because the wall logs are positioned in an upright direction, water is shed away from the logs. The possibility of center rot is virtually eliminated. Logs will also weather much more effectively in a vertical position. One person can complete almost all phases of construction on his own. There is no need for cranes or work crews. Logs for upright buildings can also be taken out of the bush much more easily

and inexpensively because of their shorter length.”

With his crew, Clement, now 84, has built more than 500 vertical log buildings. Many were for cabins in the bush. But he also built expensive homes for hockey players and resorts.

“I even know a couple of farmers who built vertical log barns,” Clement says.

He suggests cutting and peeling logs in late fall to early spring, then stacking them to dry for about a year. Cover them with plywood (not plastic) to prevent them from turning grey.

These days, Clement and his wife live in a vertical log cabin next to a river. Their son, Gilbert, continues to build in the vertical style. Over the years, the Clements



Vertical log homes use short 8 to 10-ft. logs that are easier to handle. The logs will also weather more effectively in a vertical position.

have adapted new products such as flexible chinking and have refined their technique.

For example, instead of using a chainsaw to cut grooves for plywood splines between logs, Gilbert runs logs through a sawmill to cut wide grooves for larger splines and insulation.

“I think vertical log buildings are good for farmers, tourists or even in town if you plan

and build properly to meet codes,” Clement says.

Clement wrote a book called “Upright Log Building” about 20 years ago that describes the process.

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Another Vertical Log Home Builder

Julian Lang says he got into vertical log building for several reasons.

“First, you only need short logs. Most of the logs we used for our cabin were only about 7 1/2 ft. long. Second, no heavy equipment is needed to lift logs into position. One or two people can easily handle the shorter logs. Third, there’s less problems with moisture because water runs off. There’s nowhere to pool.”

Lang takes the idea one step further by

splitting logs lengthwise with a chainsaw and a homemade jig. All joists and rafters are made from poles that he also flattened on one side.

Another advantage to building with logs is strength. Lang used them for the roof, which allowed him to make a 4-ft. overhang all the way around the cabin.

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Julian Lang’s log home has a 4-ft. overhang on all 4 sides.

Libraries Now Lend Garden Seed Alongside Books

The La Crosse, Wisconsin public library has a new use for those old card catalogues that were replaced by computers. They stuff them full of seeds. Like a growing number of public libraries around the country, it is offering patrons garden seed. Part of the offer includes information on planting, harvesting and saving seed to return to the library.

“In 2013 we checked out more than 600 seed packets of 24 varieties of open pollinated seed to more than 120 people,” says Kelly Becker, La Crosse Public Library. “This year we expanded to 62 varieties, including herbs and flowers, increased the limit to 10 packets each, and checked out a total of 1,400 seed packets.”

Becker and Cindy Mischnick coordinated the effort. Although the library asks people to return seeds, there is no overdue fine for those who don’t. Becker reports that about 40 percent of the “borrowers” returned seed, usually bringing in more seed than they received initially.

The library also offered seedlings both last year and this year. More than 500 plants representing 10 varieties were handed out in a 4-hour period this past May. Patrons were limited to 4 seedlings each of up to 10 different varieties on a first come, first serve basis.

Becker is quick to point out that La Crosse was the first seed lending library in the state,

but not the country. She based much of what they did on city libraries in Pima, Arizona and Richmond, Calif. “After we announced our plans last spring, we had others in Wisconsin contact us, and at least 4 or 5 had seed lending libraries running last spring,” says Becker. “This year at least 15 more opened up around the state.”

She gives a lot of credit to Seed Savers Exchange for help received with workshops, general information and seed sourcing.

“They were a huge resource,” says Becker.

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The La Crosse, Wis., public library stores seeds in old card catalogs.

or Seed Savers Exchange, 3094 North Winn Rd., Decorah, Iowa 52101 (ph 563 382-5990; www.seedsavers.org).

He Helps Returning Vets Get Into Farming

Jim McCormick knows first hand the stress that combat instills in military service people. He saw it with his dad, a Vietnam veteran, and he experienced it himself during 3 tours in Iraq where he was injured and received 3 Purple Hearts and 2 Bronze Stars.

“Working in the garden, digging and planting and watching things grow was an ideal place for me to sort through my issues,” McCormick says. “I could go out there for hours and plant, weed and get away from my personal demons. It took my mind off the tough things I’d been through in the service.”

Although the comforting manual work helped, it didn’t completely solve McCormick’s issues. He spent a year and a half in the VA trauma clinic while still enlisted in the National Guard. In 2008 he volunteered for Afghanistan, but didn’t make the medical standard, so he retired from the Army as a Captain after 22 years and went back to his farm.

When he started working as a disabled

veterans outreach specialist he saw the lives of many veterans who didn’t know how to adjust. “A soldier in a platoon has people to help and support him, but once he’s out of the military, he’s often on the street and alone. Many live under bridges.”

In 2009, it occurred to him that maybe other soldiers could benefit from gardening like he did. McCormick brought veterans from shelters to his farm and worked closely with them. A short time later McCormick suggested to the W. Va. Ag Commissioner that he would help develop the W. Va. Veterans and Warrior to Agriculture Project. Less than 3 months later the Commissioner gave the program a green light. Now the program is funded through non-profit support.

“If veterans don’t have property, I work with them on a special lease opportunity on state land where they can raise crops or animals,” McCormick says. “Beyond that program we’ve got probably 42 veterans who

are beekeepers across the state. By 2014 I hope to have more than 100 veterans raising crops and producing honey to sell.”

McCormick’s seed of an idea has grown way beyond his expectations, and he has more plans for the future. “We’re building an apprenticeship program where people will be in it for 2 years,” says Jim. “We’re taking folks who have zero knowledge about agriculture and training them to be farmers and beekeepers. We’re busting at the seams, but it’s a good problem to have.”

McCormick was recently honored for his work with veterans by The Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, comprised of 85 living Medal of Honor recipients. After a year-long search, Jim and two other Americans were given the Citizen Service Before Self Award. The award was presented at Arlington National Cemetery during National Medal of Honor Day. The Award provides special recognition for the recipient’s courage and willingness to



Jim McCormick helps returning vets get into farming.

sacrifice for others through a prolonged series of selfless acts.

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