

# Old Grain Bins Make Great Pig Shelters

"I had two old grain bins that I wasn't using anymore and got to thinking one day that they sure would make inexpensive shelters for my hogs," says Ontario farmer Eric Hartemink. The smaller 2,000-bu. bin was 14 ft. dia. and 12 1/2 ft. tall. The larger 5,000-bu. bin was 19 ft. dia. and about 14 ft. tall.

Hartemink first tipped the bins on their side and removed the roofs. He cut the corrugated metal bins exactly in half from top to bottom, which produced two half-moon shaped pieces from each bin. He overlapped the pieces from each bin end to end and bolted them together, which produced two quonset roof buildings about 25 ft. long.

"The smaller bin gave me a building 14 ft. wide and the larger one is 19 ft. wide," Hartemink says. He closed off one end of each structure with hinged plywood doors to keep out rain, snow and wind.

Hartemink set and anchored the quonset buildings on 2 by 2 by 4-ft. long cement blocks next to his conventional hog barn. The blocks raise the side walls off the cement floor and provide a ceiling height of 9 ft. in the smaller quonset and 11 ft. in the larger one. Hartemink starts 100 pigs that weigh about 65 lbs. in the smaller building. A month later he moves them into the larger building where they're fed to a finished weight of 260 lbs.

"I bed with plenty of straw so the pigs are comfortable year around," Hartemink says. "In the summer they have a shady place to rest, and I can open the plywood doors for



**Eric Hartemink converted 2 old grain bins into inexpensive, "quonset-style" hog shelters. He tipped the bins on their side and removed the roofs, then mounted the roofs on metal posts to create a carport-like shelter that covers his feeders.**

ventilation. In the winter I add more straw so the pigs are out of the wind and cold," Hartemink says.

The slab extends 20 ft. outside the open end of the buildings so pigs have an area for exercise, eating and drinking. Hartemink mounted the original grain bin roofs on metal posts to create a carport-like roof that covers the feeders. One frost-free drinker is shared by both pens. Runoff from the slabs

and roofs goes into a 4 ft. wide gutter that runs across the front of the slab. That empties into a larger pit, which also serves the conventional barn.

Hartemink raises about 1,100 hogs a year in the two shelters and the conventional barn.

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# California Artist Brings Big Gourds To Life

For the past 20 years, California gourd artist Betty Finch has transformed gourds into lifelike people and animals.

The unusual hobby grew out of Finch's FBI training in forensic facial imaging and her work reconstructing faces out of clay on human skulls.

"I sketch the face on the gourd in pencil first. Once the size and position of the eyes has been determined I drill holes to set plastic doll eyes in." The rest of the face is built out of gourd parts. Clay is used to fill seams. (Clay that works well on gourds can be obtained from the Caning Shop ph 800 544-3373; [www.caning.com](http://www.caning.com)). "When the face is finished I cover the clay with paint, being careful to blend the colors to match the gourds and hide my work. I want them to look like they grew this way naturally," says Finch.

She uses gourd seeds for the teeth, and some sculptures have a tuft of hair from her horse, her dog or herself.

The rest of the body parts are ordinary

gourds. Finch grows everything from 1-in. miniature Nigerian bottle gourds to giant Zucca gourds. Her favorite variety for arms and legs is a cross between a snake gourd and bottle gourd that she shapes with stockings as they grow. She has a 40-ft. shipping container filled with gourds organized by shape and size to create the parts she needs.

"I use a dowel to connect the arms to the torso on people. The dowel acts like an axle so the arms can move. The legs are usually rigid with an internal structure that you cannot see, which supports the sculpture. Sometimes weight is added to the legs to create the proper balance to allow the sculpture to stand," she adds.

It's challenging to create a 9-ft. tall sculpture that breaks down to fit in a car and is stable, she admits. While gourds will last centuries if kept dry and protected from the elements, they'll break if they fall.

Finch's website includes instructions on how to shape and manipulate gourds as they grow and provides tips for wood burning,



**California gourd artist Betty Finch transforms gourds into lifelike people and animals. The body parts are ordinary gourds that she grows herself, shaping some of them with stockings as they grow.**

embellishing and creating sculptures with gourds.

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