

Log Cabins Built And Delivered

The sight of completely finished log cabins heading down the highway has become more common around southeast Ohio as folks across the country discover Trophy Amish Cabins, LLC.

The business started when Jim Gega and his wife decided to invest in a getaway building on their recreational property in Michigan. Campers and mobile units required too much maintenance and the pre-built cabins they found on the market were cheaply built and often unfinished. They finally discovered an Amish shop in southeast Ohio with the quality of construction they wanted.

"The cabin was perfect," Gega says. "It had taken years to finally see our dream cabin come to fruition. We felt that everyone should have the opportunity to own their own high quality custom dream cabin. That's when we decided to hire an architect, timber engineer and developed our own detailed build specifications. We partnered with the Amish shop, and the rest is history."

Eastern white pine is cut in 4 by 6-in. cuts and allowed to dry to 11 to 14 percent moisture. When a customer orders a cabin, wood is freshly milled into three flat-side, one round-side, tongue-and-grooved logs that

are scribed, routed, screwed and caulked for inset (not butted) corners. Ridge beams are made of solid (not spliced) 4 by 8-in. timbers. Tongue-and-groove pine boards are used in the floor, roof, cabinets and furniture – all custom-made for each customer with aromatic eastern cedar trim. With 4 by 6-in. treated floor runners, the cabins are solidly built to be transported and moved around. No plywood is used.

Cabins are fully assembled in widths up to 12 ft. wide and lengths up to 32 ft. long. A second story (loft) is also an option. The roof section is added onsite.

Gega proudly points out that except for fasteners, all the materials in the cabin are from the U.S., including the wood, stains, shingles and steel roofing. Another thing that makes Trophy Amish Cabins stand out is their reasonable cost.

"Average sales are \$15,000 to \$20,000," he says for the bigger and fancier cabins. The most popular unit is the 10 by 26-ft. cottage. Smaller, basic hunting cabins start at less than \$10,000.

"People get so excited. It's one of the very few times you feel like a child again," Gega says. He's watched macho hunters check out



Log cabins are fully assembled in widths up to 12 ft. wide and lengths up to 32 ft. long before delivery. The roof section is added onsite.

their cabin for the first time and talk about decorating ideas.

Due to the growing popularity of the cabins, the business currently has a 9-month waiting list.

"Our clients are our best sales people," Gega says. "We ask potential customers to call at least two people who bought a cabin.

You can't beat that for credibility."

Gega prefers to be contacted by mail or through the company website.

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Belt-Powered Buzz Saw Converted To Pto

Don Ramberg got tired of repairing and realigning the flat belt drive on his front-mounted buzz saw, so he fixed it. He converted it to a 3-pt. hitch, rear mount, pto drive and threw away the flat belt. It had been mounted to the front of an old Allis Chalmers WD, which limited how the WD could be used.

"The belt had become a pain," says Ramberg. "Plus I couldn't use a loader when I had the saw in place."

His first step was to make a 3-pt. hitch for the buzz saw frame. He dropped two strips of flat iron from the rear lift arms on the WD. An old drive shaft with a ring welded to it connected with the WD anchor point beneath the block to form the third arm of the 3-pt. Ramberg attached the other end to a cross brace between the front corner uprights of the saw frame.

To make a drive shaft to replace the belt drive, he took a rear end out of a 1970 Toyota Corolla. He cut off one side of the axle housing and removed one axle. He welded the spider gear to make it a constant drive and then welded a steel plate over the open axle housing. The cover did double duty. It sealed in the oil and also overlapped the housing to extend up and fasten to a cross member on the rear frame of the saw. This supported the differential in place, so the remaining axle pointed toward the tractor, and a stub drive



Don Ramberg converted the flat belt drive on his front-mounted buzz saw to a 3-pt. mounted, pto-drive unit.

shaft on the differential pointed to the side of the buzz saw frame.

"I put a U-joint on the remaining axle and fixed it to a pto shaft," says Ramberg. "I fastened the end of the axle to the top side of the reinforced front cross member."

By using the axle for the pto drive, he was running the rear end backward, which increased the rpm's. Ramberg increased the drive speed again. He ran a 1:2 ratio between the V-belt sheave mounted to the driveshaft and one mounted in place of the old flat belt sheave.

"I fabricated a cover for the sheaves and V-belt as I didn't want anyone getting their fingers in there," says Ramberg. "When I got it finished, it worked real well at a fast idle."

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David Schmidt converted a saw arbor and an old pull-type forage chopper into this pto-driven buzz saw.

Buzz Saw Made From Pull-Type Forage Chopper

David Schmidt, Oelwein, Iowa, converted a saw arbor and an old 2-row forage chopper into a low-cost, pto-driven buzz saw.

"I got the chopper and the saw arbor from local machinist Steve Jensen, who had already stripped the chopper down to the frame and drive system. I hardly added anything so it cost almost nothing to build," says Schmidt.

The arbor came mounted on a steel subframe that he bolted to the back of the chopper. The chopper's pto shaft runs through a right angle gearbox to belt-drive the arbor. He mounted a hydraulic cylinder on the chopper's hitch. "The cylinder tips the

whole unit forward for transport. When the cylinder is fully extended, the whole unit tips backward and the saw sits on the ground for stability when cutting wood," says Schmidt.

"It'll cut through 8-in. dia. logs. If you turn the log over to cut it from the opposite side it can handle 1-ft. dia. logs," says Schmidt. "I use it to cut slabs of wood that a local lumber yard delivers to me in 1-ton bundles that are 12 ft. long. I cut the wood into 4-ft. lengths that I use in my outdoor boiler. The 8-ft. long belt was originally used to operate the stalk spreader on a combine."

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Solar Heater Made With Scrap Parts

John Benoit heats his garage for free with his solar thermal heater. Not only is the sunlight free, but also most of the materials used were waste left over from past construction projects.

"I got the idea to build it when my neighbor replaced his windows," says Benoit. "Some of them had moisture between the double panes, but that has little effect on solar heating efficiency."

Benoit used treated 2 by 4's and 4 by 4's for framing and covered the frame with R-13 insulation and 1-in. wood boards. Before installing the windows, he positioned aluminum printer plates below the windows. The plates were recycled from the local newspaper and painted wood-stove black to

better absorb the sunlight.

The hot air is pulled from the solar heater and fed into the house by a 650 cfm blower purchased at a military surplus store. The heat intake is centered over the solar heater. Before the hot air is dispersed, it passes through a furnace filter to keep out dust and debris.

"This past January, the heater racked up 110 hours of heat, keeping the 1,100-sq.-ft. garage at an average temperature of 71°F," says Benoit.

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Hot air is pulled from solar heater and fed into the house by a blower. Before the hot air is dispersed, it passes through a furnace filter to keep out dust and debris.

