

How to Reclaim Building Timber



by **Murray Anderson**

Introduction

Reclaimed wood is not only beautiful, it's environmentally conscious as well. Just think, it's estimated that over 3 trillion board feet of lumber have been produced since the early 1900's, and much of that lumber is still in old buildings. Finding and reclaiming some of that old lumber will give any project you take on a unique appearance as well as demonstrate a commitment to preserving the planet for your children. However, to reclaim that lumber, you might need to be willing to take on a significant project.

Instructions

Difficulty: Challenging

Finding Old Timber

Steps

1 Step One

There are lumber dealers (online and local) who specialize in reclaimed wood. It's not much different than going to your local lumberyard and picking over what they have to offer. However, you can likely save yourself some money by sourcing your own reclaimable wood.

2 Step Two

Ask friends, work colleagues and neighbors if they know of anyone who has a piece of land with an old building on it.

3 Step Three

Drive around the countryside yourself and be on the lookout for old structures.

4 Step Four

Placing a small inexpensive classified ad in local rural oriented newspapers saying you are interested in finding old buildings could also bring you some potential sources of wood that can be reclaimed.

5 Step Five

Consider all types of old structures. Barns are the most common sources of reclaimed wood, but sheds, corrals and old houses can yield useful lumber. Even an old mill or grain elevator will have good wood in it, but they could be more of a project than you really want to take on.

6 Step Six

After finding a likely old building, make an offer to the landowner to tear down the building and remove the lumber, as well as clean up the site, in exchange for the old wood.

Removing the Lumber

Steps

1 Step One

Enlist friends and family to provide "sweat equity" labor in exchange for a share of the reclaimed wood.

2 Step Two

Take down the structure by reverse construction; take it down in the reverse order from which it was originally built. If it's not too sturdy, you could try pulling it over with a tractor.

3 Step Three

Use pry bars and hammers to free up wallboards, framing lumber and floor boards.

4 Step Four

Consider renting a dumpster to collect and remove non-salvageable materials.

5 Step Five

Once the reusable wood and salvageable materials have been saved, put the left over in the dumpster (or if fire regulations permit, burn it).

Overall Tips & Warnings

Consider drawing up a contract with the landowner stating that you are getting the building and all its contents in exchange for removing same from his property. Also include the fact that the landowner is not responsible for injuries to you or your work force while you're working on his property.

Make sure your tetanus shot is current. Accidents can happen and you will be working with old, rusty nails.

Taking down old buildings can be dangerous. Be sure your crew includes someone who understands construction and how a building is put together.

Always wear the proper safety gear, including steel-toed work boots with a steel shank, leather work gloves, eye protection and a hard hat.

Overall Things You'll Need

Sturdy work gloves

Truck or trailer to remove reclaimed wood

Hard hat

Eye protection

Pry bars

Steel toed work boots (including steel shank)

Hammers

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