

Wood Shed Competition Alaskan Style

You can't teach an old dog new tricks, or can you? Recently, The Woodway, the premier hearth retailer in the interior of Alaska, introduced the first ever Wood Shed Competition for residents of Fairbanks, North Pole and neighboring small communities.

Fairbanks has some of the worst winter time air quality issues in the entire United States. For Kent Severns, owner of The Woodway, proper operation of clean burning stoves and properly seasoned firewood are of paramount importance for improving the air quality. For wood to season properly it must be given the adequate time, protection and air circulation. A good woodshed is a must. Air quality issues center on the importance for wood burners recognizing the need to burn well seasoned fuel and that can only happen when wood is harvested as to allow for long enough periods of drying time and protecting it from the elements.



What better way to capture the interest of the wood burning community and raise awareness to the need for dry wintertime fuel than to conduct a contest and award prizes, like a new chainsaw or free chimney sweeping or wood splitter rental. All entrants received a free moisture meter as well. This past summer more than 40 individuals submitted pictures of their wood storage sheds and through a process of elimination, the top five entrants had their sheds examined and evaluated by a panel of 3 judges.

Jim Smith with the State of Alaska Forest Service, Chris Neufeld of Blaze King Industries and Jeff LeClaire of ICC Industrial Chimney Company were recruited by Severns (far right) to lend their expertise.

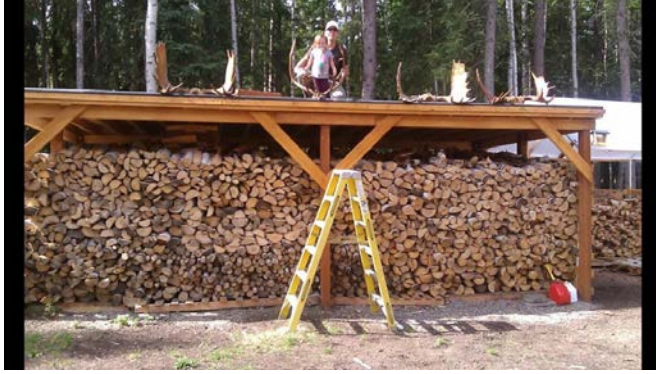


So exactly what were the judges looking for? The top 5 wood sheds were judged on functionality, aesthetics and structure. With score sheets and moisture meters in hand, the judges set off to visit the homes of the finalists.

Functionality required consideration to orientation for wind and exposure to the sun. Protection from the elements, such as having an overhang to keep rain and snow from access to the stored fuel. Proximity to the home, ease of access and consideration for rotation of fuel from one season to the next. Lastly, method of stacking of the fuel, safety and ground clearance rounded off the consideration. Many of the sheds lacked sufficient overhangs, side or rear protection and with any sort of wind at all, the rain or snow could easily access the stored wood.



Aesthetic considerations included general appearance, proximity to neighboring homes or property lines, street views, investment or material costs and when applicable the integration of recycled materials. Clear working areas, free of debris and piles of scrap materials which might encourage insects, like carpenter ants are important as well. Of course, no wood shed in Alaska is complete without proper decoration.



Structure parameters centered on construction quality, engineering, choice of materials and workmanship. It is paramount that a properly engineered wood shed can handle the snow load experienced in the interior of Alaska.

So what were some of the highlights of the competition? One wood shed received high marks across the board until you realized the owner had built it with a few feet of his neighbor's garage, creating a potential safety issue as well as requiring the neighbor to look at the back of a wood shed.

Wood sheds with solid floors, such as ply wood, limited air movement and resulted in moisture accumulation, creating an environment for mold and rot. Floors built with pallets or slat designs allowed for more circulation of air through the wood pile.

One shed owner scored extra points for reusing trusses from another building project as did another shed owner for recycling the rubber roof removed from a motorhome that was in the process of being parted out.

The ability to store more than one seasons supply and having a detailed rotation system was viewed as a bonus. Building a shed that is 8' in depth and then only using the front half of the stored wood will result in unnecessary handling of wood in order to rotate oldest wood to the front of the shed.



The eventual first place winner had a wood shed with a divided design, sliding doors, rain gutters with down spouts and excellent air circulation design for all sides, and the floor of the shed.

To see all the actual entries, visit

https://www.facebook.com/pg/TheWoodwayAK/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1102003933232463