

sounding board

Our bulletin board for letters, comments, and timely updates

Solar kiln plan leads to career as sawyer

Back in June 1994 (issue 70), you showed a diagram of a wood-drying solar kiln (see photo, *below*). In a way, that article changed my life and allowed me and my wife, Patty, to start a new woodworking business.

Several years ago, I hired a friend with a portable mill to cut lumber from trees on our farm. I needed to dry the lumber, so I ordered plans and built your kiln.

The kiln, which I built on skids for portability, came out great. My first attempt at drying, though, was a disaster. Heavy rains caused one corner of the kiln to settle, so the whole load twisted and warped as it dried.

I fixed and leveled the kiln, and cut a batch of new stickers. The next load

was outstanding! I dried all of my lumber, and some for a few customers.

The next year, I leased my friend's mill and dried 6,000 board feet of lumber for myself and for a growing number of customers.

In November of 1998, I bought my friend's sawmill, *right*, and his dehydration kiln to keep up with requests for custom-drying.

As my volume of work increased, I needed more kiln space. In 2001, we built a 3,000-board-foot solar kiln, shown *below*, based on your original design. It works great.



A Wood-Mizer bandsaw mill, located in an open-sided shed, makes Mark Shupe's setup complete, allowing him to cut logs into lumber before kiln drying.

What was just a hobby has become a business. We stay booked for months at a time with custom milling and drying. It's all thanks to that one simple article.

—Mark Shupe, Toledo, Ill.

Mark Shupe now dries enough stock to fill his original **WOOD**® magazine solar kiln, left; his new, super-size solar unit, right, that holds 3,000 board feet of lumber; and a commercial dehydration kiln, not shown. Great job, Mark. Keep that beautiful lumber coming.



Note: To order plans for our 1,000-board-foot-capacity solar kiln, a copy of the original article, a materials list, and information about drying, send \$9.95 to: Solar Kiln, WOOD PLANS®, PO Box 349, Kalona, IA 52247; or call 888/636-4478.

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Tool-test update

•7 mid-priced bandsaws (issue 144, p. 78):

The horsepower rating for the Jet JWBS-16 is 1½ hp.

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