

# The Potting Shed

## Construction Guide

**Preparation:** Before you can actually start building you will need to prepare the site, dig any necessary foundations, ensure that all materials have been delivered to site and collect together all the tools and equipment necessary for the job.

The scale of the foundations will rely on the size of the construction you are planning to build and the composition of the ground at the site. In the case of this demonstration the Potting Shed is only going to be 6'6" x 7'6" and will be built on the site of an old greenhouse. As the ground is already very well compacted all we have had to do is to extend the existing concrete pad, but in many cases proper foundations may need to be dug.

The materials will include all the components for your chosen design of Potting Shed from Redwood Stone as well as a variety of other products for flooring, walling and roofing. As this is going to be a working building rather than purely decorative we have opted for a simple concrete



floor, but any number of artificial or natural stone tiles or pavers could be used. The Potting Shed that we are building here uses a mix of new and reclaimed local natural stone for the two visible elevations and concrete block and render for the hidden elevations. A very popular alternative for the walling is reclaimed brick (as used in the Hillier Ruin). The choice of reclaimed slate for the roofing was dictated by the Manor House in whose grounds we were building. In general one's choice of materials will either be governed by a desire to make the structure as well suited to it's surroundings as possible or by a desire to evoke some more contrasting style or period (as is often the case with a Folly).



Simple masonry tools and equipment are all that is required here. Among these should be a mixer, wheelbarrow, cement and aggregate, buckets, shovels, lump hammers, bolsters, trowels, builders lines, spirit levels (one wide enough to span any planned openings is always handy), wire brushes, a tape measure, straight edge, and any protective clothing. You will also require stainless steel dowels, a proprietary epoxy resin glue and possibly some lifting gear.

**Wall Construction:** The plinth course should be set out first and checked rigorously for dimension and level, then the walls constructed using the builder's line for straight-(ish!) vertical and horizontal correctness. A little 'poetic license' can be used to lend rustic charm and a sense of age to the finished building. Although here we are building essentially a single skin wall construction, care has to be taken to make sure that each corner has a pier 9" square on which to set the Springer Stones that will support the gable ends. You will find that all the Potting Shed components are designed to course with bricks and 9" cement blocks, but with natural stone coursing needs a little more thought.



Detail: The aforementioned ‘poetic license’ is a matter of personal taste but great attention must be paid to the accuracy of door jambs, window jambs and cills. The openings, heights and levels must be kept consistent as the components rise so that the heads will fit correctly. We always try to finish a day’s work at cill height for the windows and with the door at last jamb height. This allows for the mortar to cure overnight and we can start fixing the door head and window jambs and mullions on a firm base. With the windows it is best to fix the jambs and in-fill the wall around them, leaving again overnight for added stability when fixing the heads - especially with the Tracery.



Dowelling Jambs and Mullions: Although it is not really necessary to dowel the door jambs except in special circumstances, it is vital that the window jambs, mullions and heads are dowelled. The components are supplied pre-drilled and we recommend the use of stainless steel dowels secured in place by an epoxy resin glue. Proprietary brands are generally supplied in two parts; glue and hardener.

Beware - using a higher ratio of hardener causes the glue to set faster.  
Trial or error!



This really is a job where it is advisable to have everything prepared and ready to hand before starting as panic can soon set in as the glue starts to set before you are finished. We advise mixing only a small quantity at a time and fixing only one component at a time. Mix the glue, help it into the pre-drilled hole with the dowel, coat the top of the dowel with glue, bed the joint with mortar, fix the jamb or



mullion and check for height, level and opening then secure until the glue sets. A helpful tip is to leave a residue of glue on the mixing palette so that you can check it periodically to ascertain how the glue hidden in the joint is progressing. Once the jambs are set it is advisable to build the stone up around the jambs, allowing to set before fixing the window head. We fit the mullion at the same time as the head always leaving it slightly lower than the jambs so that the weight of the head is taken on the two side jambs and there is no danger of it pivoting on the central mullion.

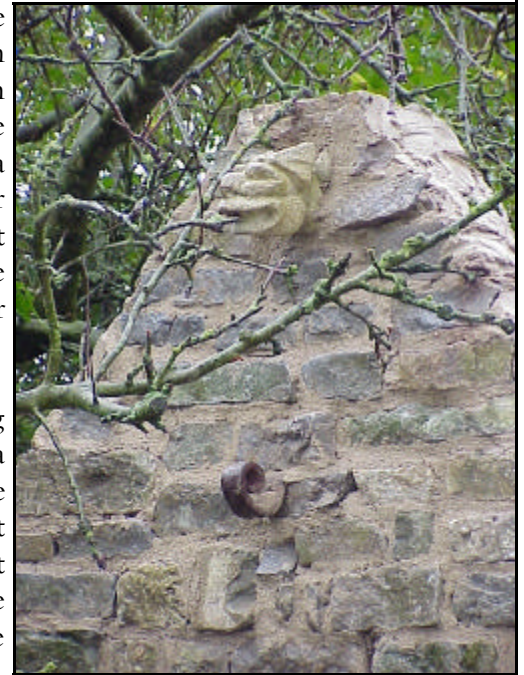


Fixing Door and Window Heads: Not only are these components invariably heavy but you are also working at height. Lifting gear is advisable for items such as the Secret Door head and some form of steady raised platform will be very useful. Again, we like to plan our work so that the day is finished with the door and window heads in place and the surrounding walling built up around them to secure them in place (this picture was taken half way through the day to show the lifting gear and the vulnerability of the heads until the walling is completed.). It is also useful to have the Springer Stones set at this juncture so that you can carry on with the gable ends the following day.



Detail and Joints: We always try to design in some quirky features such as this Gryphon and the rusty metal hook for a lantern. This is up to your imagination and a great opportunity to include some curiosity from your local antiques yard.

**VERY IMPORTANT**  
To get these aged looking mortar joints we use a graded limestone aggregate and brush out the joints early the next morning to expose the aggregate and the occasional flaw.



Roofing: Once the gable ends are solid all that remains is to install the roofing timbers and batten ready for tiling. We can supply separate technical sheets for these timbers but always try to use whatever reclaimed timber is readily available. This is more difficult with batten but fresh timber can be treated so that if viewed from inside the look is in keeping with the aged appearance of the Potting Shed.



Tiling, Slating or other: Do remember to space your batten to allow for sufficient overlap. With roof tiles you may want to go for very consistent spacing but with random tiles such as these you might like to achieve a more rustic look. With me fixing the slates you don't have much chance of achieving anything else! We opted to build this Potting Shed under the branches of an established apple tree. It looks a picture in the Spring when the tree is in full blossom but it was back breaking work fixing the slates and ridge tiles on the far pitch with the tree pinning you to the roof. However it is worth making the point the more natural the setting, the less 'softening' required.



Finishing Touches: Once the kneelers, apex stones and ridge tiles are in place (the hessian/burlap sacks are there to protect fresh mortar from an overnight frost) you can get to work repairing and planting the surrounding ground as quickly as possible so that your Potting Shed looks as if it has been there forever.



The Stoneworks, West Horrington  
Wells, Somerset BA5 3EH England  
T: + 441749 677777  
F: + 44 1749 671177  
Email: mail@redwoodstone.com

**REDWOOD  
STONE**  
www.redwoodstone.com

23500 Mercantile Rd, Suite L  
Beachwood, OH 44122  
Tel: 216 464 0933  
Fax: 216 464 1403  
Email: redwood.stone@att.net

#### CONSTRUCTION GUIDES

We produce a series of 'project construction guides' and more detailed 'component construction guides'. Please call for hard copies of the guides of your choice or download them in .pdf file format from the Gothic Folly\Introduction\Construction page on our website.

#### Project Construction Guides:

The Potting Shed  
The Chelsea Ruin  
The Garden Façade  
The Corner Folly  
Tools and Materials

#### Component Construction Guides:

The Gothic Arch  
The Tracery Window  
The Secret Door

