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# Backwoodsman

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# Building a Simple Root Cellar

by Steve Spears



We utilized our northern exposure hillside for a root cellar. This keeps sun exposure to a minimum. An 8'x9' size is optimum for a family of four. This allows plenty of room for produce.

Every part of the root cellar should be underground except for the front door, which should be insulated. The more ground around the root cellar, the better for keeping produce cool.

Excavate the hillside to accommodate the size of the root cellar. Lay a level pad of pea gravel to build on for the floor. This allows cool air from the ground to naturally cool the root cellar. Do not put any flooring on the inside.

Use four solid concrete blocks of sufficient size to carry each corner of the building. These blocks will carry

the total load of the building.

We used logs for our building material, since we have plenty of timber. Cut and peel logs to the size of the root cellar. Cope (notch) each end of each log to fit on the blocks.

Coping and peeling are done with a 4 1/2" grinder and King Arthur Lancelot attachment.

Check the squareness with a tape measure placed in opposite corners. The measurements must be the same distance corner to corner.

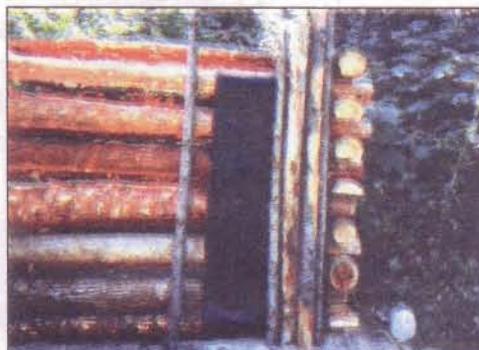
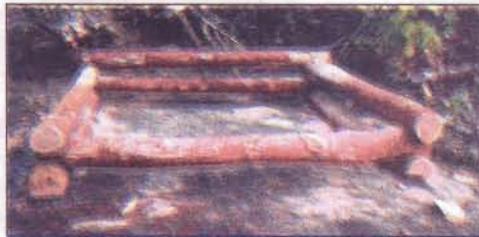
Once square, cope both ends of each log to fit each layer. Use a grade school compass to make the cope size on log end.

Once in place, drill 5/8" holes to accept the 12"x5/8" spikes. Pound in spikes with an eight-pound mallet or heavier. Do this for each end of every log until you have a proper

interior height to stand in. I used the tallest member of our household.

Cut a three-foot wide doorway and bolster each side between logs prior to cutting the doorway out with a chainsaw. I used 2x4s for my framing material, and six-inch lag screws to place the framing within the doorway. Screw one or two lag screws per log end, depending on log size. Use your best judgement. I doubled up 2x4s side by side because the width of the logs warranted it.

Because of the load on the roof, the largest logs should be used and placed side by side lengthwise. Cope ends and spike in place as before. Place five-foot long three-inch PVC pipe on the roof with elbow on top to keep moisture out and a second five-foot piece through the side. Use galvanized 1" metal strapping to attach



### MATERIALS LIST

- 1-4'x8' trailer load of gravel
- 1 box #16 vinyl coated sinker nails
- 1 box 5/8"x12' spikes
- 5 rolls 90# felt
- 2 rolls rolled roofing
- 1 coil 1' galvanized metal strapping
- 10 feet 3" pvc pipe
- 20 pcs used 2x4s
- 1 box 6" lag screws
- 1 box 1 1/4" roofing nails
- 1-5/8" drilling bit
- 3 metal hinges
- 1 locking hinge

1 #45814 King Arthur 5/8" lancelet attachment (King Arthur 800-942-1300)

- large shovel
- pick
- peavey
- 8# or 16# maul
- wheelbarrow
- 4 1/2" electric grinder
- chainsaw
- 1/2" electric drill
- grade school compass
- hammer

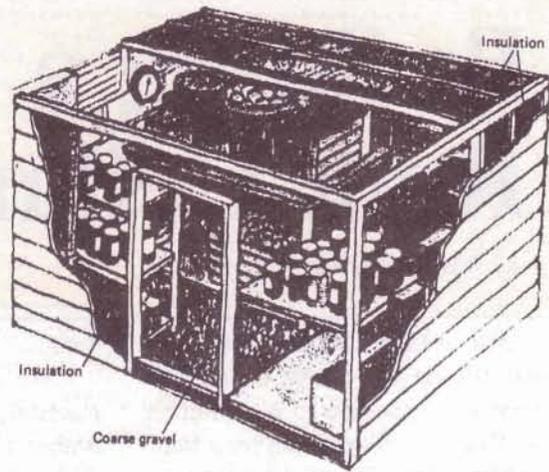
pipings in place. Place the side pipe low to the ground. These pipes allow air to circulate in and out of the

structure, keeping produce cool and moisture from accumulating.

I used 2x4s for shelving with a three-inch gap between wall sides. This keeps air circulating with no dead air spots, which break down produce.

Place a door onto the door frame. I made ours out of rough cut lumber (milled on site with an Alaska MK111) with metal hinges and locking hinge for the door handle. Place 90# felt on the inside of the door with insulation board cover.

Cover logs with 90# felt on all surface sides and roof. Then place smaller logs (2" or 3") upright side by side to cover all sides and roof. Attach them with lag screws, spikes and long nails. Then attach two more



Adapted from *Back to Basics*

layers of felt or one layer of felt and rolled roofing on the sides and roof. Frame a log frame around the outside of the doorway to keep dirt out. Cover all sides and roof with dirt.

Total outlay of materials: \$250.00. Good luck and happy gardening!



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