

# Lifestyles

## Romancing the Shed

By Emily Weathers Kennedy

When searching for our dream place when we moved back to Lawrence County, Kerry and I had one caveat: the property would be the priority. The house, to us, was incidental. After all, we loved nothing more than redoing something to make it fit us. We had already done this with two houses in North Alabama.

But what I really wanted was the same thing that I had growing up on the Weathers farm in Loretto: an established homestead with outbuildings and sheds.

Our barnyard growing up was one big adventure with a barn and no less than four sheds filled with more danger than any of us (kids and parents alike) ever considered. Stepping on a rusty nail just meant a trip down the road to find Daddy for a tetanus shot. He wiped many a tear and cleaned many a wound because of bare feet's treading in places they did not belong.

There was the tool shed that had a wooden floor and windows and had old cobwebby, rusty tools hanging from the walls.

This one was my favorite because it felt like a proper shop for hobbies or maybe a clubhouse. But even I recognized the hazards of cleaning out the rather scary looking implements dangling above my head and abandoned the notion.

There was the low roof big shed with nice shelving and more windows. My father stored seeds there, making a favorite hangout of mice and farm cats alike. This shed we used for neighborhood late night kick-the-can games. We climbed the nearby fence and hoisted ourselves onto the roof. From this vantage point, most of the lit portions of the yard were visible as well as the deeply shadowed areas around the barnyard.

Beside the big barn stood my grandfather's smokehouse with a dirt floor and abandoned snakeskins that gave us the woolies.

This was our least favorite shed and one that came to mind when I watched Slingblade later in life, shivering at the thought of the little boy being locked in a place just like our shed. Behind the house was the washhouse shed. This one had nice shelving too, and housed jars from my grandmother's canning days, left to collect dust and various bugs. One summer day my sister Mariann, my best friend Lynn, and I decided to make it our Secret 7 Clubhouse and went downtown to Sam Groom's store for paint to spruce it up. We soon tired of the work of painting and realized that we really didn't want to find



The Kennedy's soon-to-be-restored barn



Emily's garden shed

four more people to round out the seven or change our name to Secret 3.

The barn itself we pretty much explored daily. Our favorite game was the search for new kittens. Sometimes chose various rooms in the shed and played house and make-believe. We also made forts and tunnels out of bales of hay in the barn and jumped out the loft door to see how daring we could be. "Watch this y'all!" was our mantra.

In 2002, when Kerry and I drove around the last curve to the homestead we

eventually bought, the setting was as if pulled from my dreams. The house, new but farm feeling nonetheless, was indeed sitting on the site of the original house from the turn of the century. Moss covered much of the yard with established trees providing the most glorious of shade. Behind the house and towards the rather ill-kept barn were sheds! Glorious sheds! We knew we were home.



For the occasion of our daughter's wedding in 2011, we restored the first shed behind the house, used as a combination tool and garden shed, to provide a garden backdrop to her outdoor wedding. Recently, we had the propane tank that was perched behind this shed buried. We are designing potting benches and even an outdoor shower in this now cozy and inviting space.

We are also restoring yet another shed in the barnyard that will be Kerry's tool shed (leaving the first one for gardening and potting) and making plans to use salvaged windows and doors for a nearby greenhouse. The barn is awaiting a brand new finish and other loving touches.

For us, little defines a home more than its setting. We sacrifice amenities for our house itself in order to spruce up our beloved outbuildings. We are like children with our imaginations going wild with all of the possibilities of those diminutive outdoor spaces. We feel the natural rhythm of gardening and tending to animals much like a simpler time of life, and we understand the form-meets-function, the usefulness yet romanticism of such structures.

As we put up our tools and stand on the newly rebuilt shed porch, we're thinking we might have found yet another spot to tune up the guitar and do some porch sitting.

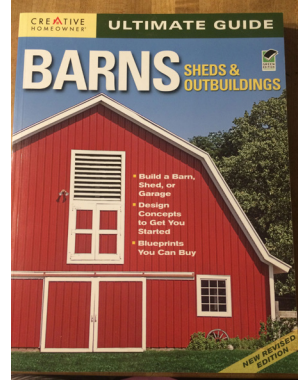
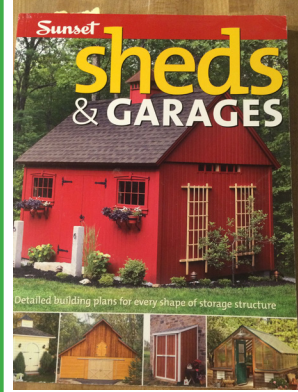
### Tips for Outdoor Buildings

1. Emily likes her sheds to be green like their surrounding foliage. This way, sheds blend into the landscape. She also suggests that even if outbuildings are built with differing materials, painting all the same color unifies and enhances outdoor spaces.

2. When restoring a barn, try to salvage existing materials. The Kennedys plan to use board and batten siding on the barn but will save the aged siding for interior spaces and other usages. "It takes way too many years to age barn siding! There's no reason to waste it! People are using it in their homes, especially in kitchens." Emily says.

3. Sheds and barns have little use if they are not wired and plumbed. Look for a professional to handle these jobs before planning a building's usage.

## Helpful Literature



Emily suggests scouring online sources such as Pinterest & Houzz for ideas for outdoor structures as well as picking up books from nearby Books-A-Million or Lowe's like these from Emily's library.



## Kids Say Goes to the Movies!



Javari Mccall

Q: What's your favorite part about going to the movies?  
A: The popcorn!



Ashton Castell

Q: If you were a superhero, what would your name be?  
A: The Ice Cream Man



Jett Dotson

Q: If you were a superhero, what would your name be?  
A: Mr. Cotton Candy

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