



## Japanese Potting Shed

by Fran Casselman

### Items used:

#72019	The Serendipity Shed
#86920	Wisteria Vine
#11800	Garden Delights Bushes
#999	Green Spruce Trees
#965	1 1/2" Squeeze Me Bushes
#9736	1" Squeeze Me Bushes
#10108	Douglas Fir Tree
#9717	Green Foliage Mat
#54026	Three Patio Jars
#21018	Dusty
#21263	Tiger

### Materials & Tools:

#1249	Weldbond
#1073	Fred's Wood Weathering Stuff
#80873	Grey Age-It Easy
#7004	Unfinished Pine Shingles
#39011	Rustic Plank Siding
#9146	1/4" Square Strip Wood
#1746	Magic Water
#7503	Picket Fence by Houseworks
#17516	3/16" Square Strip Wood
#67196	Three Handy Tools
#54400	Reverse-Action Tweezers

### Introduction

This project involved much research in an attempt to capture the subtle beauty of a Japanese garden while imagining an aspect that is never seen: the utilitarian space necessary to house the gardener's tools and materials. My inspiration was the Jo-an tea house in Nagoya, Japan, which dates from the 17th century and has been designated a national treasure.

Since this is a project I have long wanted to do, its components come from a wide variety of sources in addition to HBS/miniatures.com. Some items shown are from my personal collection; some were crafted by me at an earlier date but can easily be replicated. Some items were altered from standard craft-store items. Some were purchased some time ago and may or may not be currently available.

The moody nature of the image makes some elements difficult to see, but all of the items mentioned are in the scene. I divided the project into segments for the build, so I will describe each one individually here. This is not a step-by-step tutorial.



### The Structure

After the initial dry fit, a table saw was used to narrow the side walls at the edge of the window openings. The roof braces were installed temporarily with rubber cement; when the cement was dry, the roof was put in place and marked to the wall dimension. It was cut on a 15° angle and the braces on the cut piece were removed so it could be flipped over and joined to the larger piece, creating a ridge. The braces were glued permanently in place (although the rubber cement is very secure if not disturbed) and the ridge joint was reinforced with a strip of Tyvek (recycled from a rip-proof mailing envelope) from the underside. Masking tape held everything secure while the glue (#1248/#1249 Weldbond, used throughout) dried. An additional reinforcing strip of Tyvek was glued to the top of the ridge since it would be covered by the shingles. The roof is still removable.

The shingles, #7004 Unfinished Pine, were aged before installation with #1073 Fred's Wood Weathering Stuff (small batches in a shallow bowl of solution, removed with tweezers and allowed to dry on paper towels). The naturally occurring color variation and slight curling gives exactly the weathered look I was hoping to achieve. After installation with hot glue (in rows 3/4" apart and overhanging slightly at the front and sides), some areas were given a very sheer green wash to suggest mossyness. The ridgepole and the gutter are from one piece of very lightweight bamboo (from the dried florals area of a craft store), split lengthwise, hollowed out and stained with alcohol markers.

A new front wall was cut from scrap MDF, although plywood, foam core or any other thin, rigid material could have been used. The window is an inexpensive bamboo trivet, stained with #1073.

The roof support posts and front wall doorway edge are natural twigs/branches (found randomly or from yard trimmings), very thoroughly dried and "sanded" with a plastic scrubber to remove any loose bark. The doorway edge of the front wall was cut with a jigsaw to fit against the post, which was intentionally chosen for its slight bend.

The wall corner posts are each three lengths of 1/4" quarter-round, glued together to form a three-quarter-round post that wraps to the outside. Any dried glue was scraped away with a knife edge and the posts were stained cedar-brown with alcohol markers.

The round window, 4" diameter, was cut with a jigsaw and the cut edge painted to match the interior. "Twigs" of dried natural bamboo were glued across the opening - some on the inside and some on the outside - to form a grille. (I did not have access to fresh bamboo, but twigs that are more flexible could have been woven together within the opening rather than glued to the surface.)

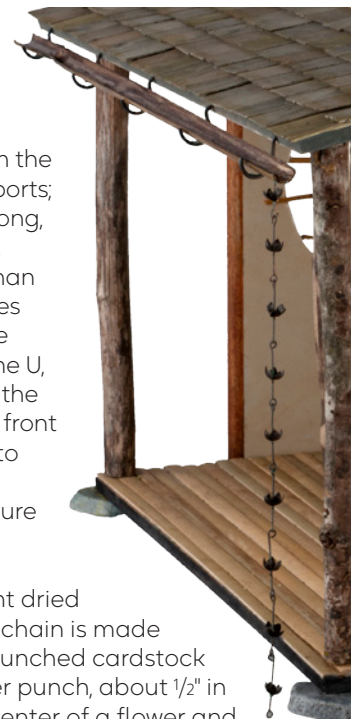


The interior walls were painted pale cream with matte acrylic paint. The exterior walls were "wallpapered" before final assembly with a handmade off-white scrapbooking paper that has a very rough texture. On the side walls, a "stone" foundation was painted at the very bottom edge (below the level of the floor) and a strip of #39011 Rustic Plank Siding, aged with #1073, is glued on above that. The floor is covered with flat bamboo strips (from a disassembled place mat); actual flat stones are used under the outer front corners and for the stepping stone.

### Gutter and Rain Chain

The gutter supports are made of heavy soft copper wire pieces that I picked up from the construction site of a friend's new home, so I assume it was scrap from the electrical wiring. There are five supports; each is basically a U shape with a long, horizontal tail at the top of one leg. Each one descends slightly more than the previous one so the gutter slopes appropriately. Wrap a length of wire halfway around a dowel to make the U, then use flat-jawed pliers to shape the tail. Drill evenly spaced holes in the front edge of the roof, trim the supports to length with wire cutters, paint them matte black and glue in place. Be sure to keep them in order for the slope.

The gutter is a length of lightweight dried bamboo, split lengthwise. The rain chain is made of eye pins (jewelry findings) and punched cardstock flower shapes (use any small flower punch, about 1/2" in diameter). Make a pin hole in the center of a flower and use a ball stylus to cup the flower. Slide it onto an eye pin, add a drop of glue to keep it in place and use round-nose





pliers to make another loop. Snip the end; the links are about 1" long. Drill a tiny hole near one end of the gutter and feed an eye pin through; add the cupped flower, make the loop and trim. When you have enough links, paint matte black and join them all together. The chain should not touch the ground, but should end just above a shallow, sandy basin.



### The Wall

The wall is based on research images and an actual Japanese garden wall at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. It is made of 1/2" thick foam core (available at art supply stores and some craft stores). It sits, on edge, on the table surface and is fastened to the Homasote board with long, ball-head pins through the foam core and into the board.

The visible height of the wall is 6", so the foam core wall panels are 6 1/2" high by 28" long (for the side walls) and 23" long (for the back wall). The panels are covered with another textured artists' paper in a different cream shade. The inspiration wall has a foundation of flat slate stones, which I replicated with painted stones on a strip of grey artists' paper and glued to the wall. The vertical boards are Skinny Sticks, stained with alcohol-based markers, but 1/4" Strip Wood (#9146) aged with #1073 would also work.

The wall roof is made of 3/16" foam core strips, 1 1/2" wide, joined at right angles with glue (and pins, while the glue dries). I was using scrap foam core, so there are some joints in the strips, also glued and pinned. Be sure to offset any joins of the strips forming the roof peak when they are glued together. The finished assembly is very strong. The assemblies were set and pinned in place in top of the walls; cardstock was cut and folded to make the compound angle joins at the corners. Foam core assemblies and cardstock pieces were painted on all surfaces (to avoid warping) with a neutral grey-beige acrylic paint. Because the wall must be able to be disassembled, the cardstock corners were glued to the back wall roof only; the side roofs slip into place underneath the cardstock. Mark the side wall roof where the cardstock ends.

The entire wall roof was shingled with #7004 cut in half both dimensions (or #H7004), aged with #1073 as before and applied with hot glue at 3/8" row spacing. (A hot-melt glue pot is very helpful for this.) The join where the side roof slips into the corner, under the cardstock, is disguised by the pattern of the shingles. (From the corner out, shingles are glued to the cardstock; shingles glued to the wall roof do not extend into the area covered by the cardstock.)



### The Pond

The pond I used was a resin one I had purchased online some time ago. Something similar could be easily made with a paper cup and #1746 Magic Water. With acrylics, paint the inside of the cup dark blue/green, add pebbles and fish, such as #29740 (or make your own), if desired. Once paint and glue are dry, add the "water" to your chosen level (about 1/2" here), allow to cure, and tear away the cup above the water level. The "stone" that appears to be the basin was made around the water pool with paper pulp from packaging, softened with water to allow shaping and then saturated with dilute white glue and allowed to dry. Paint on more layers of glue if needed to provide stiffness. After drying, sand away any roughness and refine the shape, if necessary. My material was gray to begin with, so I did not need to change the color, but I did add some aging with #80873 and some areas were given a very thin green wash to suggest mossiness.



To create the pond's surroundings, I first glued it in the middle of a thin cardboard base, large enough for the finished element. Very carefully selected rocks were positioned around the pond - with planned spots for the fountain and a purchased lantern - and glued in place. Be sure to glue them to the pond basin as well as to the base and other stones. Smaller gravel/pebbles were glued between the cracks, and tiny tufts from #9717 Green Foliage Mat (or any similar greenery) were added with tweezers to soften the crevices. When the glue was thoroughly dry, I cut away the excess cardboard.

The fountain is made from bamboo; a smaller piece with an angle-cut end fitted through a drilled, slanted hole in the larger piece. The "flowing stream" is a piece of heavy monofilament intended for use as picture wire. (Multiple lengths of thinner monofilament would also work.) Glue the fountain to its designated rock.

### The Setting

The foundation board is Homasote, available from select lumberyards in 4-by 8-foot sheets. This is a very useful material which has been around for more than a century. It is a very dense, bulletin board-type material and is used often by model railroaders for their layout boards. It is 1/2" thick, and can be cut with a sharp mat knife (and a steady hand, for which I thank my husband, Bill). My board is 24" x 28"; the wall (detailed separately) is built around the outside edge of the board. The visible "dirt" surface is a sheet of textured artists' paper, something that might be used for pastel drawing.



Greenery used, from left. Against the wall are: groundcover from the leafy mat of #86920 Wisteria Vine, #11800 Garden Delights Bushes, #999 Green Spruce Trees and some craft-store greenery. The "tree" to the left of the shed is a branch of plastic floral-department greenery that I modified by building up the trunk and branches. I used floral tape and some thin dowels for the trunk; more floral tape for the branches, followed by modeling putty, gesso, and a final coat of texture medium. Over the white surface I applied #80873 Grey Age-It Easy, which darkens with repeated applications.

In front of the shed are #965 1 1/2" Squeeze Me Bushes and #9736 1" Squeeze Me Bushes, cut with scissors and "planted" flat-side down. To the right of the shed are ground cover from a craft-store floral mat and #10108 Douglas Fir Tree in the corner. The large tree is a manzanita branch that had been de-barked and bleached before I found it at an antiques mall. It has a finely textured surface, which I stained with #80873 before attaching plastic leaf clusters with hot glue. (I sawed the bottom of the trunk flat and secured it to a thin wooden plaque as a base with a screw driven up into the wood. It is much taller than what is visible, and must be weighted or pinned in place to stand upright.)

At the far right, the pond area (detailed separately) has another #999 Spruce Tree; tufts from #9717 Green Foliage Mat are tucked into crevices between the natural rocks.

After all these elements were positioned, I added sand (using a plastic teaspoon) around the entire setting to soften the transition between the elements and the "dirt."

### Accessories

All of the bonsai were either made by me or purchased for my collection from a wide variety of sources over many years. The slat stands that hold them are made from sections of #7503 Picket Fence, aged with #1073 after the pointed tips had been sawn off and the section cut to size. Legs are made from #17516, 3/16" Square Strip Wood. The vase on the porch is the largest of #54026 Patio Jars, painted to resemble an irregular glaze pattern. The cats are #21018 Dusty (near the porch) and #21263 Tiger (at the pond). Items inside the shed are various crates, pots and baskets from my collection.