



For do-it-yourselfers, Toronto-based Summerwood Products offers a good selection of kits for garden sheds or workshops, like this Saltbox design.

No 'ho-hum' look to these garden homes

► Sheds From H1

Some were constructed with poor-quality materials and others, of better quality, "were lacking in visual appeal."

So a few years ago, Denington built a "Gothic style" eight-square-foot garden home, which he uses for garden tools and backyard recreational storage.

Nestled at an angle into the corner of his garden, it's a handsome little place, almost with the look of an enchanted cottage, with its red door, black gingerbread trim, Gothic revival door frame, slate roof with a Victorian pattern in the tiles and grey-tone board and batten-look siding.

The crowning touch is a beautiful, custom-turned roof finial. The door is recycled, like many of the windows and doors he uses in the garden homes he builds.

People who saw the house were so complimentary that he got the idea to create a special sideline of garden homes.

It gives him a chance to "do what I love, which is carpentry," says Denington.

He also has lots of ideas for heritage-look garden homes because he's got a number of antique pattern books used by Victorian and Edwardian builders.

Although they are all custom-designed to fit where a client wants them, Denington has construction details he adheres to.

On level ground, he uses pressure-treated sleepers on a gravel bed, or a concrete pad if that is preferred. If the site is sloping, he can use a pier foundation like those used to build decks.

Floor joists are pressure-treated and the walls are framed using spruce studs.

Siding options vary from plywood to virtually any available wood or composite. People can stain or paint.

Generally, Denington uses asphalt shingles on the roof, although cedar shingles give a more "heritage look."

Depending on what sort of design is involved, he and his work crew can put a custom garden house together in about a week — two days pre-cutting off-site and three days on-site assembling and shingling the roof.

"Most of my customers..."

me to leave — so they can get inside the house and start using it," he jokes.

If you want to build your own garden shed or workshop and don't want one of the quickie, economical versions at the big box outlets, a Toronto-based company called Summerwood Products has a good selection of better-quality kits.

Spokesperson Haroula Theodorakis says the demand for our "own little havens and sanctuaries" has grown noticeably over the past few years. Projected sales this year are \$5 million for the company, which offers ready-to-assemble kits for a wide range of outdoor structures, including studios, garages, playhouses and recreational cabins.

There's a special listing on the Web site, www.summerwood.ca, for garden and storage sheds. Pre-assembled kits come with an installation video/DVD, as well as detailed instructions. (You can also buy pre-cut, which is a little more expensive but comes with minimum pre-assembly components).

There's also helpful information on topics such as foundations, materials, staining, assembly and more, under the title "Stuff to Know."

The Web site states that depending on the size of the structure, most of the pre-assembled kits can be put together in a couple of days by two people.

Prices vary. For example, The Palmerston gable end roof shed, the most basic and popular Summerwood design, which includes two windows, a door, two flower boxes and shutters, costs \$1,995 for the five-by-seven-foot pre-assembled kit. (Taxes, delivery extra.)

Summerwood also offers installation crews for an added price, starting at about \$1,000.

Gardening guru Mark Cullen of Unionville went the installation route. He wanted a backyard cedar cabana that he could use for a swimming pool change room and also to store garden implements. He bought a five-sided Summerwood cabana kit and had it installed last spring — at a total cost of about \$4,000.

Cullen says he's very satisfied with the product and its appearance.

The Summerwood showroom is at

Toronto Star August 7th