

Nest Building

RECYCLED HOMES

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Industrial recycling takes on a whole new significance when you consider some of the unusual reclaimed materials that have been used to build shelter.

For example, pallet houses, like the sample currently only display at Touchstones, are among those assembled from rescued items called back into service.

Locally, the late David Brown's home on the east shore is known for its innovative use of discarded embalming fluid bottles. Originally, he constructed his 500,000-bottle miniature castle to live in, but soon tired of the continual parade of curious passers-by and turned it into a tourist attraction instead.

Others have used beer bottles, plastic water bottles and even beer cans cemented together to construct vertical walls and ceilings. Homes have also been made from decommissioned shipping containers, tyres, salvaged aeroplane parts and rolled newspapers. Often such creativity emerges in areas and during times when building materials are scarce.

Even abandoned ships and other vessels have been converted into landlubbers' homes. On Nelson's north shore, for example, the former Nasookin ferry is a familiar landmark and fully functional home.

Cardboard houses sound alarmingly flimsy but, with the proper preparation, several have stood the test of time, earthquakes and torrential rain in India and prototypes are being developed in North America.

Straw bale homes, also familiar in this neck of the woods, are made of tightly bundled straw stacked like bricks and finished with a stucco-like mixture of mud, sand, paste and straw fibres. The result may look like any ordinary home, or evolve as a more organic-looking cob house with rounded edges and arched openings.

Perhaps the three little pigs in the popular fairy tale were environmentally ahead of their time, building their houses from sticks and straw. But, before emulating them, make sure there are no vengeful wolves lurking in your neighbourhood.