

Quality - I'll Know It When I See It, Right?

7 Things About Building Quality Into Portable Buildings... So You'll Know It When You See It!

Thanks for your interest in an Urban Shed Concepts portable building! We specialize in providing our customers with custom portable buildings that are high value, secure and convenient. We are honored that you are considering purchasing one of them!

We realize that purchasing a portable building can be a sizeable investment and the number of choices can be overwhelming and confusing. How can you be certain you are making a good decision with your investment?

To help with this decision, we put together this summary of what we believe are the critical things to consider when purchasing a portable building – what to look for, what types of questions to ask, and in general, how to be sure you are making a good investment.

The information provided below will guide you in making an informed purchasing decision. Of course, we recommend purchasing one of our buildings, but if you don't, our hope is that you find this information useful and we congratulate you on your purchase!

1. Does the 'price' include everything?

Often companies will list a special 'price' to attract potential customers and open discussion. These special prices are accurate – but only because certain 'options' are left off the building! For example, the special pricing may not include paint, shingles, flooring, assembly or delivery and setup. Be sure to go over the fine print or ask the sales rep if there is anything else you need to add to the price to have this shed ready for you to use.

2. Everyone talks about having 'High Quality Buildings', how can I tell?

Material: Quality has to do with the level of material and craftsmanship used in the manufacturing of the building. When it comes to material – in general, higher quality material will have longer and better warranties from the manufacturer. Ask about the material manufacturer's warranty. Even better, ask if documentation for the warranty is available. Manufacturer material warranties are most often available for the most critical components of the building: the subfloor, the siding and the roof. Likewise, when it comes to the quality of workmanship that goes into a building, the warranty is a good place to start. When it comes down to it, the warranty reflects how willing the manufacturer is to stand behind the workmanship.

Workmanship: Another quick and easy check on the quality of workmanship in a building is the 'no light' test: walk into a building and shut the door. Do you see light coming through where it shouldn't? Though not a critical aspect of short term building performance, the amount of light coming in through cracks can indicate poor workmanship and may affect long term performance of the building.

Quality Control: Finally, mistakes can happen in any manufacturing process. Manufacturers committed to delivering the best product to their customers will have a formal inspection process and should be able to provide quality control documentation for the building you are interested in purchasing.

3. Floor Construction

Termite, Mold and Mildew Resistance: Check that the floor structure uses treated lumber for any parts of the floor that contact the ground. The treatment should be rated for ground contact and resistant to mold, mildew and termites, especially here in Arizona. Treated lumber is most often green in color but be sure to ask your sales rep if you can't determine from a visual inspection. Sometimes the floor structure may be painted – this is not the same as treatment! Treated lumber can be painted over, but a painted non-treated floor structure will deteriorate over time. A properly treated floor structure is the foundation for the building and reduces the lifetime cost of owning the building.

Floors: The subfloor – the material that you walk on and use inside the building – is also an important consideration. The subfloor should be at least ¾” thick and the joints should be tongue and groove: the ‘tongue’ from one piece of material slides into the ‘groove’ on the adjoining material. This type of joint significantly increases the strength of the floor significantly and maintains a flat plane between the floor joists.

4. Wall Construction

Fasteners: If you are looking at buildings at a retail location, ask which buildings are the oldest, and then ask how old the buildings are. Inspecting how well a building stands up against a year of harsh Arizona elements is a good indicator of the quality of the building in general. Look at the trim on the building. Is it starting to swell and come apart? Is the top layer of the trim peeling back from the rest of the trim? Look at the fasteners on the siding and the trim, are there rust stains or are the nails beginning to show? Rust stains will be indicated as dark coloring or streaking around the nail or staple and indicates non-galvanized fasteners. Nails or staples that are not tight against the siding or trim indicate ‘smooth’ fasteners with less holding power and tend to ‘back out’ of the lumber as the material contracts and expands with temperature change. Opting for these fastener types can reduce costs for the manufacturer and are easily overlooked by customers unless they know what to look for.

Wall framing methods and the type of lumber and number of pieces used in framing can vary considerably. Conventional framing methods require double top plates (the horizontal lumber used at the top of the wall for increased strength), headers across all openings (the horizontal lumber that supports everything above the opening), jack and king studs (the vertical lumber that is used to support the header) and corner studs (the vertical lumber in a wall). Cost of construction can be reduced significantly by taking 'short-cuts': leaving lumber out and/or not using engineered headers. Sometimes this cost savings is passed onto the customer, but often it is used to increase margins. Becoming familiar with conventional framing methods is time well spent if being able to identify missing material is important to your purchase decision.

Door and Windows: While checking to see if any shortcuts have been taken in the wall framing, check for signs of leakage around the corners of the windows and the doors, are there dark edged water stains indicating water getting into the building?



5. Doors

Shed Doors: Inspect the shed door, both the function of the door and the materials used in construction. Most manufacturers will use tension hardware to compensate for door frame warping and twist. This looks like a rod or wire that is stretched across the corners diagonally. Higher grade shed doors will use a manufactured material, such as Laminated Strand Lumber (LSL). Though more expensive, a door constructed with LSL will provide years of worry free operation.

Threshold: Another thing to check on the shed door is the presence of a threshold. The threshold covers the floor across the door opening and protects from wear and tear and catching dirt and debris. A proper threshold will wrap around the leading edge of the door opening and be visible when the door is closed. Quality thresholds are constructed from rust-free aluminum. In general, thicker aluminum is an indicator of a higher quality threshold.

Walk-in Doors: Check the function and locking mechanism of the walk-in doors. If security is a concern, be sure that the door includes a deadbolt. The doors should swing freely and latch when closed. (For doors to function properly, they need to be sitting on a level pad.) If the door has glass, check to ensure that it is tempered.



6. Roof Construction

Overhangs: Examining the roof construction can be a challenge without a ladder. One thing to notice is whether the building has overhangs on all sides. All though it is often considered an aesthetic component of the shed, overhangs serve a functional purpose as well, providing additional weather protection for the building finish and protection against leaks for some ventilation systems and the doors and windows.

Underlayment: A critical component of the roof construction is the underlayment. Underlayment is a material barrier installed below the shingles or metal, so you will have to ask the manufacturer if underlayment is used. The underlayment serves as extra protection in extreme weather events and as a safeguard against improper roof material installation. Warranties on roof material may also require underlayment.



7. Adequate Ventilation

Ask how the building is ventilated. Well ventilated units will allow hot air to escape from the top of the building, pulling cooler air in from the bottom. This helps not only with maintaining the temperature in the building, but adequate ventilation is a requirement for most roofing materials. Even better than passive ventilation is an active ventilation system, for example solar or battery powered ventilation.

That about sums it up!

Though not exhaustive, these suggestions will provide some guidance as you navigate the various building styles, options and price points from different manufacturers. High value is always associated with high quality and as they say
– You get what you pay for!

And if you have some time, feel free to check out how our buildings stack up against our criteria! Visit our website for contact information and retail locations or to design your own shed in 3D:

www.Urbanshedconcepts.com

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