

'Shedding' for the future!

Stix and Stones, Colchester

Stix and Stones is a shed and fencing company with a vision! Paul Neal, the owner, had spotted the increasing trend for people to use their garden sheds for more than just storing their garden and DIY tools and was looking to capitalise on this.

The advantage of the typical garden shed is that it doesn't need planning permission and many creative homeowners have exploited this fact to use their gardens (and sheds) more effectively. While the English garden shed has long been a treasured symbol of eccentricity, the uses to which it is now being put are numerous, with customers interested in using their sheds for garden games rooms, mini-gyms and even pottery glazing studios!

In addition, the increasing interest in work life balance and the growth of flexible working has resulted in many homeowners seeking additional working space and the 'luxury garden office' is becoming a popular option.

Although planning permission is not required for the typical garden shed (rules do apply to larger structures) local authorities are

taking an interest in this new trend and are increasingly insisting that sheds, especially those used for work purposes, should meet building regulations, particularly in relation to fire safety.

As a result of increased customer interest and demand for 'luxury' sheds, Paul was keen to find a product that would allow him to build high quality sheds that would meet building regulations but also maintain the unique character and aesthetic of the traditional garden shed.

That product was James Hardie's **HardiePlank™** siding.

Paul explains, "**HardiePlank™** siding has the look of wood but enjoys the huge advantage of being non-combustible and fire resistant. This product, used in combination with Rockwool and Thermocell, allows us to build sheds that are both well insulated and highly resistant to fire. **HardiePlank™** siding allows us to create traditional looking sheds that enjoy the benefits of one of our most modern building materials."



Paul was very impressed by the durability of **HardiePlank™** siding. He said, "**HardiePlank™** siding comes coated with ColorPlus® Technology which means that it requires no further treatment for at least 10 years. Wood can be treated and painted but it's a process that needs to be repeated on a regular basis or else things start to go wrong. However **HardiePlank™** siding is water, weather and insect resistant and requires little or no maintenance."

Paul also highlighted the construction benefits of **HardiePlank™** siding.

"I was really surprised about how easy it was to use. We built a 'test' shed onsite in order to compare the process to constructing a traditional shed and found that **HardiePlank™** siding was

no harder to use than timber and required minimal training. We discovered that you could build a typical timber shed frame and then attach **HardiePlank™** siding as easily as wood. It takes no more skill or time to construct than a traditional wooden shed and James Hardie has been very helpful and provided us with all the technical advice and support we could need."

Paul concluded, "We like to think big at Stix and Stones and we are already getting substantial interest in our 'luxury' sheds. Customers are often surprised when we show them the **HardiePlank™** siding shed and tell them it's not wood but are quick to see the benefits particularly its low maintenance features. While we have started with sheds we are very keen to explore the possibilities in relation to both beach huts and caravan parks. We believe the use of **HardiePlank™** siding will open up new markets for us."



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