

A Little House in my Backyard.

By Simon Pelletier

My home is as follows: 1200 sqft of living space plus 600 sqft of unfinished basement. Two and a half bedrooms upstairs. A full bath on the second floor and a half bath on the main. A small front porch that is fully closed in. A small deck in the backyard and a little bit of grass and parking for two vehicles. A pretty typical place in the Westend.

I live in this place with Bobby and Becca. A couple who share a bedroom. I have my own bedroom as well. The spare bedroom is used for an extra living area and also is a guest bedroom on occasion. The home is small and you definitely are always aware of the people in it. There's no getting away from each other. This is where my idea comes along.

My plan is to build a very small space in the backyard. I've been calling it the *Garden Studio*.

The city allows one to build a small shed, no larger than 100 sqft, without a permit. The height limit on the place allows me to build tall enough to accommodate a loft sleeping area. And so the idea is to build a small space with a loft, insulate it and run electricity to it. Put in a small wood stove and have some basic cabinets for a kitchenette or workshop counter. A *Garden Studio* that doubles as a cute guest house or a place for one of us in the house to spend the day by ourselves reading, painting, thinking or stretching.

A few problems I see going forward.

One is that running electricity to it is not allowed. I shall just run it in a way that I can pull it if I really need to. The other is the cost of building this space. And finally the impact to the backyard. The studio will take up thirty percent of the backyard. I had plans to grow a garden, put up a fence, and make the back feel like more of a sanctuary. It's currently just straight utility as a parking spot for two.

The pros are that inviting guests and having longer visits from friends is much more sustainable. It has been hard, at times, having additional guests with three of us already here. It might also contribute to the residents well being as there will be a place for someone to retreat to on a hard day.

Building a permitted garage might be a better plan. I could build a much larger space and

just plan on insulating it. Do all the same things I would do with the shed size. The down side is that it might be a much more expensive project.

I'm a little uncertain if it will be used as much as I imagine it will. This is probably the biggest unknown.

Or do I just spend my energy else where? More painting, more adventures in Manitoba...