



WINTER SURVIVAL SMARTS

Winter Survival Smarts

A Word From Alec

I appreciate you taking the time and downloading this. The Winter Survival Smarts manual is my way of kickstarting Christmas and saying "thank you for being a member of the Survivopedia community."

Please read it, understand it, and use it accordingly.

May this be the Merriest Christmas so far!

Alec Deacon

Survivopedia

P.S. Don't forget you can share this manual with friends and family.

So if you think this is useful information, please feel free to share it.

It's free and you can do it in a jiffy.

And it's Christmas after all.

Table of Contents

DISCLAIMER..... 5

WINTER ESSENTIAL 1: Control Your Heating Costs 6

 First, Let’s Do the Math 7

 Raw Numbers Are Useless Unless..... 8

 Control Your Heating Bills Before Somebody Else Does It..... 11

 Home Insulation 11

 Heat Conservation..... 13

 Consumption Control..... 14

 Smart Fuels..... 15

WINTER ESSENTIAL 2: Practice Your Survival Skills 19

 Clothing 19

 Staying Warm 20

 Surviving Isolation and Blackouts..... 21

 Home Preps..... 21

 Car Preps & Bugging Out..... 22

 Car Preps..... 22

 Bugging Out 23

 Hunting for Survival..... 27

Winter Survival Smarts

- WINTER ESSENTIAL 3: Make The Most Of What Winter Gives You..... 31**
 - Cold..... 31
 - Ice and Snow 32
 - Water for Drinking..... 32
 - Start a Fire Using Ice 34
 - Using Snow for Shelter 34
 - Ash 35
 - Tanning Hides 35
 - Natural Camouflage..... 36
 - Enriching the Soil and Protects Your Garden..... 36
 - Use Wood Ash to Do the Dishes..... 37
 - Give Your Chickens and Dogs a Spa Day..... 37
 - Wood Ash Makes a Beautiful Glaze 37
 - Make Soap with Wood Ash..... 37
 - Time 39
 - Declutter, Fix & Plan 39
 - Evaluate & Learn 40
 - Practice Your Hobbies & Get Crafty 40
- DIY Winter Projects..... 50**
 - Off-Grid Project: DIY Insulating Window Frames..... 50
 - Materials Required 50
 - Tools..... 51
 - How It Works 51

Winter Survival Smarts

Steps to Produce 1 Window Cover 52

DIY Fire Logs..... 59

 Materials Needed..... 59

 How to Make Fire Logs..... 60

 Air Drying the Newspaper Fire Logs..... 60

DIY Fire Bricks 61

 Materials and Tools..... 61

 How to Make Fire Bricks..... 61

DIY Candle Heater..... 63

 Tools and Parts 63

 How to Make the Candle Heater 65

 Operating the Candle Heater 66

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WINTER ESSENTIAL 1: Control Your Heating Costs

The future is not what it used to be. In case you didn't know, the summer of 2014 was one of the coolest on record, with temperatures under the 90 degree mark being the norm. To put it bluntly, the global warming proved to be actually a "marketing" myth.

The reality is that we're actually being confronted with a global cooling and after one of the coldest summers in recent years, we are now dealing with a tough winter.

Yes, dark, cold and miserable days are here folks. Along with the cold winter months, you're suffering from the winter blues too, courtesy of your energy bill (at least partially).

Unfortunately the price of energy/heating fuels is on the rise while the wages are stagnating and economic recovery sometimes feels like it's just another myth. But yet, there's no inflation, right?

Winter Survival Smarts

Hence, knowing how to calculate your heating needs for the winter in order to keep your heating bills under control is one thing to do, while putting up your winter survival plans.

One of the most important issues to be taken care of is choosing the right gear, i.e. the adequate furnace for your residence. It's not just a matter of personal preference or comfort; it will make a difference when it comes to paying your heating bill.

A good furnace will keep you very comfy during wintertime without burning too much fuel or sucking your wallet dry. More, you definitely start from your heating needs when choosing the right fuel for the cold months.

First, Let's Do the Math

There are several methods for you to determine how many BTUs (British measuring units) of heat you'll require this winter. As a general rule of thumb, the simplest way to calculate your heating needs and the adequate furnace for your residence is by using science, i.e. guidelines and rules based on two main things: your location (climate) and the square footage you live in.

Basically, you'll have to calculate thoroughly the square footage in your place of residence by measuring the rooms' dimensions. You may already know this from when you purchased your property. Typically, it's listed on your property assessment.

Depending on your location, if you're living in a relatively moderate climate (such as the Pacific Northwest) you'll need a mere 30 BTUs /square foot during the winter. If you're a resident of let's say Minnesota, you'll require about 45 (even 50) BTUs per square foot and you'll regret that you haven't moved to California yet when the bill comes!

Given the fact that a standard house in the US has about 2000 square feet of living space, the amount of heat required for the wintertime will measure anywhere between 60,000 and 90, 000 BTUs, depending on your location.

Translated into math, you should multiply the square footage that must be heated by the heating factor determined by your climate and the end result is the required output for your furnace. The BTU output will tell you the heating capacity of a given model of furnace.

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Remember, there can be only one furnace that fits your house perfectly: not too small, not too big, just the right size!

Now, when it comes to replacing and buying a furnace, with these figures in mind, you should choose one that is able to heat your living space in an efficient manner. You must check out the output BTUs of the respective furnace and see if it fits your needs.

A 100,000 BTU-rated furnace with an efficiency of 75% will have an effective output of 75,000 BTUs. Obviously, you can choose a high-tech furnace with a lower output/rating but a greater efficiency that is capable of delivering the same output for less energy consumed. Well, you got the general idea.

When it comes to calculating the square footage of your home, you should keep in mind that rooms are usually shaped as a triangle or rectangle. If your room has a weird shape, well, you can break it down into rectangles and triangles and calculate the square footage for each of them using the following formulas:

- For a rectangular room, the square footage is determined by multiplying its width with its length,
- For a triangular room the square footage is equal to length x width divided by 2 and for a circular room the square footage is equal to the radius (the distance from a wall to the center of the room) multiplied by itself multiplied by the number Pi (3.14).

With the final result in mind (don't forget to measure everything, including basements, attics and what not) you'll be able to determine the required heating capacity of your furnace (the respective capacity is given in BTUs /hour).

Raw Numbers Are Useless Unless...

... you connect them with the reality around you. Two main things must be taken into account: the climate you live in and the insulation of your home. Another factor is the windows size/placement (heat gets lost through these but it's very complicated to make a precise estimate so we'll leave it here), along with your square footage. The final factor is your way of

Winter Survival Smarts

life, but that can be remedied easily (we will talk about that in the next chapter). You can easily determine the type of climate you're in, then just remember: warm climate equals 30 BTUs/square foot, cold climate requires 60 BTUs of heat/square foot, that's about it.

AIR CONDITIONING SQUARE FOOTAGE RANGE BY CLIMATE ZONE

ZONE 1	ZONE 2	ZONE 3	ZONE 4	ZONE 5
600 - 900 sf	600 - 950 sf	600 - 1000 sf	700 - 1050 sf	700 - 1100 sf
901 - 1200 sf	951 - 1250 sf	1001 - 1300 sf	1051 - 1350 sf	1101 - 1400 sf
1201 - 1500 sf	1251 - 1550 sf	1301 - 1600 sf	1351 - 1600 sf	1401 - 1650 sf
1501 - 1800 sf	1501 - 1850 sf	1601 - 1900 sf	1601 - 2000 sf	1651 - 2100 sf
1801 - 2100 sf	1851 - 2150 sf	1901 - 2200 sf	2001 - 2250 sf	2101 - 2300 sf
2101 - 2400 sf	2151 - 2500 sf	2201 - 2600 sf	2251 - 2700 sf	2301 - 2700 sf
2401 - 3000 sf	2501 - 3100 sf	2601 - 3200 sf	2751 - 3300 sf	2701 - 3300 sf



<http://www.acdirect.com>

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Now, about the insulation: generally speaking, newer houses are better insulated than older ones (revision to housing codes changed drastically over the last several years). It goes without saying that a better insulated house requires less BTUs/square foot than an older or poorly isolated one.

When choosing the furnace, remember one thing: you're not actually buying the "marketing" but the real figure.

Manufacturers offer the amount of heat the furnace is **capable** of generating, not the real output, i.e.

the heat that actually reaches you. Hence, it would be advisable to choose a high tech, state of the art furnace with an efficiency rating of 85-90%.

Another thing to keep in mind when you're on the prowl for new appliances: you must choose the right sized furnace if you want to avoid future problems.

For example, an under-powered furnace will have to work very hard to keep your place warm and cozy during the winter. That translates into inefficiency and it will cause it to wear and tear prematurely. Worst case scenario, on extra-cold days your furnace will be incapable of providing your residence with enough BTUs and you'll freeze.

The same "inefficiency" story goes when you're choosing a furnace that's way too powerful for your house. In this case, another problem comes into play: the short cycling process. The short cycling thing happens when the furnace manages to heat your house very quickly due to its sheer power and it tends to shut itself on and off repeatedly during the day, causing premature failures of its components.

With all these things in mind, we hope that you'll be able to purchase the right sized furnace for your residence that will assure the perfect balance between cost efficiency and comfort.

"If you live in an area where you will experience mild temperatures or extreme cold weather, you can survive more efficiently in your home if you close off one room, creating a micro climate rather than trying to heat your whole home with a single wood burning stove, oil lamps and body heat."

WATCH VIDEO



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Just a hint: if you're not confident in your math or measuring skills or you just want to play safe, you should know that the vast majority of air conditioning contractors (professionals) will give you a free estimate if you wish to install an air conditioning system (you can even get an educated guess over the telephone and if it fits your own calculations, well...) thus you'll be able to get for free the recommended unit size for your residence!

Also, if your neighbor has the same size house as you do, the same type of furnace might work for you too.

Control Your Heating Bills Before Somebody Else Does It



You know how much heat you need during winter, but what can be done in order to lower your heating bill this winter?

Stick with me and I will show you four simple energy saving ways that will help get through the cold season.

Home Insulation

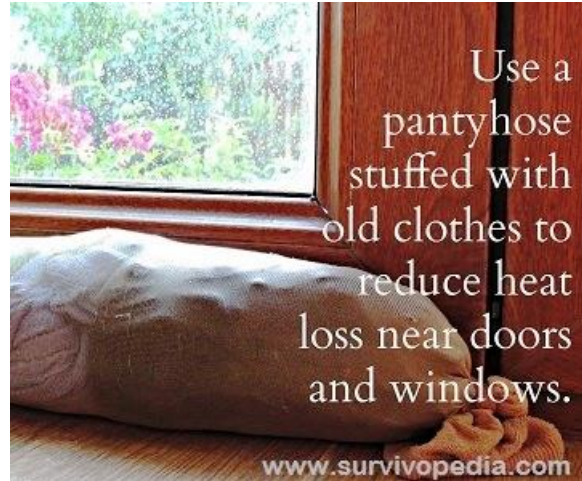
This should be an obvious answer for everyone and yet it's often disregarded (maybe because it requires some investments initially, but they're worth it in the long run). Having an efficient home insulation system is similar to wearing the proper clothing on a cold winter day. The principle is the same, conserving energy and preventing the loss of (body) heat.

So, the general idea is to make your home as snug as physically possible, meaning that both the walls and the attic should be properly insulated. Well-insulated walls, ceilings and attics will make a world of difference in cutting your energy bill.

Winter Survival Smarts

Insulating walls is not the easiest job in the world, nor the cheapest, but it's very effective long-term. The same principle applies to attic/ceiling/floor insulation. Just to get an idea, a well-insulated home will reduce heating costs by up to 50-60 percent and that's a lot in our book.

Along with wall and ceiling insulation, you should consider using high-efficiency windows (you should go for ENERGY STAR windows) and also properly seal leaky duct work and doors.



You should seal all drafts in window frames using foam sealant or silicone caulking and when it comes to switches and electrical outlets, you can use draft gaskets. On doors and windows, you should use weather stripping. Don't forget to take care of pet doors too, if any.

Without proper insulation, windows represent one of the biggest heat wasters in your home. In fact, leaving your windows bare for the winter is about as useful as leaving one window open in each room halfway.

Caulking windows and buying expensive pre-made insulator covers can be costly. Rather than go that route, you can try a caulk-free vinyl window solution that we have been using for decades. It can easily be adapted to accommodate different climates without much in the way of additional cost.

As an added bonus, this system can easily be assembled from scavenged materials before and after a crisis. Read the DIY section of this e-book in order to build your own insulating window frames.

All these things combined will help lower your energy bill during both wintertime and in the summer, because those AC systems use power too and if the heat can get out, the same goes for the cool air when it's 100 degrees outside.

Heat Conservation

Even in the winter, you should take advantage of the sun for heating your home since it's absolutely free of charge. This trick is called **passive solar heating** and it works like this: just open your drapes when the sun is shining during the day (the south/west facing windows) and after sunset, close them again (this helps with heat insulation during nighttime).

If you have a fireplace, keep the damper shut when it's not in use, thus preventing the heat from escaping through the chimney. If you're not using the fireplace at all, you should permanently block the chimney using special rigid insulation. You can re-arrange your furniture during winter so you'll not be sitting near external walls, too. They tend to be colder than other spots in the room.

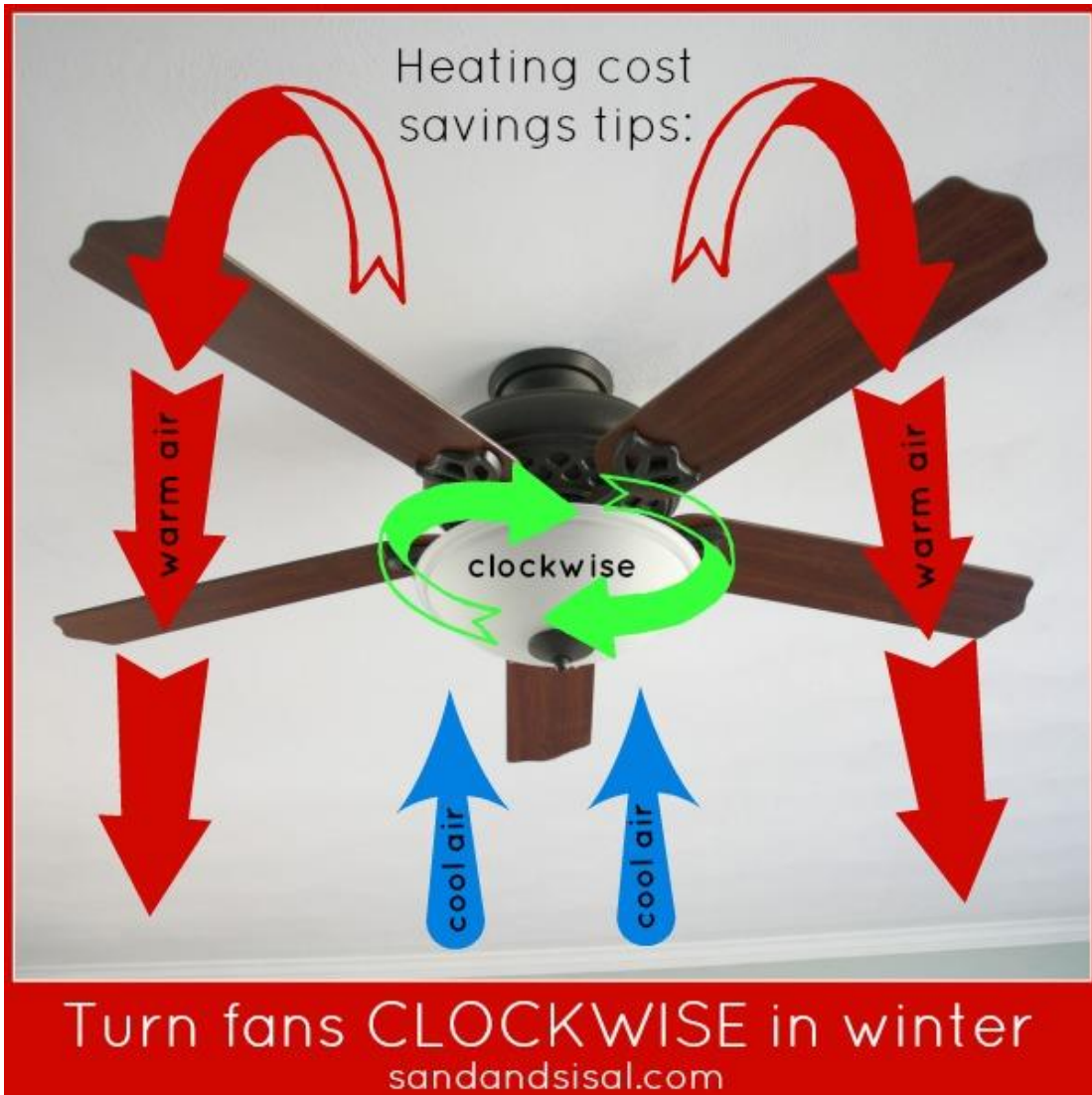
The same principle applies with drafty spots. You should avoid them like the plague and if it's at all possible, fix the draft ASAP because if cold air's getting in, warm air's getting out and wasting your energy.

Take care of your heating system. Maintain it regularly and keep it working with maximum efficiency. Heat tends to go up, hence reversing your ceiling fans, if any, is a nice trick that prevents dissipating the heat through the roof in the winter.

If you're using an old thermostat, you should consider upgrading it with a programmable unit that permits you to lower the temps while you're at work or sleeping. Also, keep the thermostat as low as possible (without causing discomfort) and the temperature in a nice steady range. If your living space is not vast, you should consider a space heater instead of using a central home heating unit.

Another nice trick for conserving energy during winter is to use heavy curtains or blankets over windows (except for when using the sun's heat obviously) and around the bed, thus conserving trapped body heat during the night. Dress properly for the cold season. If you're dressed in shorts and a tee shirt in January, your thermostat is way too high. Stay warm at night using comforters and blankets; don't be afraid to use an extra pair of socks or a blanket instead of turning up the heat.

Winter Survival Smarts



Consumption Control

Using less energy means leaving more money in your pocket at the end of the month.

Consumption control is the next logical step in our quest for lowering the heating bill during the winter.

Consumption control translates into eliminating wasted energy. That means turning off lights when they're not necessary (unoccupied rooms for example), taking shorter showers during the winter (thus saving tens of gallons of unnecessary hot water), unplugging unused electrical equipment (fans, refrigerators), using cold water for washing dishes and clothes (if possible),

Winter Survival Smarts

always doing full loads of everything, and using the sleep function on your TV/computer/monitor.

The easiest way to minimize electricity loss is to use Energy Star compatible electronics and appliances. Keep in mind that low flow faucets and showerheads will dramatically cut your hot water expenses.

Smart Fuels

Last but not least, choosing smart fuels can help with lowering your heating bill dramatically during harsh winters. What are smart fuels, you may ask? It is not likely that refined fuels will be available for winter heating in the aftermath of disaster. Keeping yourself, your family, indoor crops, and farm animals warm will be very complicated unless you improvise.

Determining How Much Fuel to Store

When it comes to figuring out how much fuel to store, you will find that each person's home and situation are slightly different. For example, one person may need to heat only a few square feet of space that is well insulated, while someone else may need to heat a larger, poorly insulated area. A person living in a warmer climate may also need to store less fuel than someone in a colder region.

Some calculators can be used to determine [how many BTUs you will need](#) per day on average to heat any given area. From there, you can use the next link to see how many BTUs you can expect from some of the fuels listed here.

<http://www.generatorjoe.net/html/energy.html>

<http://www.calculator.net/btu-calculator.html>

Gas

Approximately half of all American homes are using gas for heating and cooking during wintertime. Gas became hugely popular due to the breakthrough in the fracking technology in recent years, which made the prices drop. There are alternatives to that. We won't get into solar

Winter Survival Smarts

panels or anything the like, but the good old fashioned (and renewable) wood is still a viable option that's regaining popularity.

Wood

As we already discussed, a home heating system using wood is sometimes the best choice (and also very efficient) when it comes to achieving energy independence. It's way easier to gather wood and other combustible goods for heating than to be reliant upon electricity or gas from your utility company.

You can use a wood stove for heating/cooling and also use wood pellets, wood chips, coal, or whatever is available to you vs natural gas or electricity that you have to have piped in. Even if natural gas is generally thought of as being the most economical way for heating your residence, wood is very competitive also, even more affordable in certain places or situations.

The most important thing about using wood for heating your home is that it takes you off the grid completely. Also, it's cost-competitive, you'll have more price certainty (natural gas prices are fluctuating) and you can always stockpile wood when the price is "right" (yes, wood prices are fluctuating too, but they are generally way more stable).

You can use wood or wood pellets or any other inflammable material in ANY location, as opposed to natural gas, which is not available everywhere. There are many ways to heat your home using wood, ranging from the traditional wood stove to the latest high tech ultra-efficient furnaces that are using pellets (made of wood, wheat, corn, cardboard or whatever).

Aside from wood which may or may not be plentiful, there are other fuels available that can be used now as well as in a crisis. While you may need to create new devices for storing and using these fuels, it is well worth the effort.

Candles or Wickable Fuels

Wax, crayons, shortening and solid greases can all be turned into fuel simply by adding a wick. Aside from fabric based wicks commonly found in candles, you can roll up a sheet of paper, or even a toothpick to act as a wick.

Winter Survival Smarts

If you cannot buy candles or grease, fat from animals you hunt can be made into candles or grease pots. The average tea light will produce 250 BTU for about 4 hours. You can store candles and other wickable fuels in a cool, dry place where mice or other animals cannot eat them.

Best Use Tip: To get the most out of these fuels, make a [candle heater from clay pots](#). This will help increase the surface area heated by the fuel as well as help reduce the amount of soot that gets into the room.

Just be sure to clean the soot from the inner chambers on a regular basis so that heat spreads as much as possible.

Paper

Everything from newspapers to old bills can be used to heat your home in the winter.

Aside from simply burning crumpled up or rolled up paper logs, you can also make them into bricks mixed with sawdust and other flammable materials.

See the DIY section of this e-book to learn how to make your own fire bricks out of paper.

Best Use Tip: Line your stove with bricks that will increase heat radiation. Advanced preppers can also turn the stove into a boiler or place copper pipe behind the stove and run water through that into radiators.

You can also use a fan to blow hot air away from the stove and into the room. A ceiling fan set on low can also help push warm air back down to lower levels.

How to Make a Small Fire Brick Using Bread or Pound Cake Pans

- *Poke holes in a pound cake pan to make a sieve (make sure you poke holes from the inside of the pan outward so that paper does not snag on the metal later on).*
- *Tear paper into strips and let them soak in a bucket of water for 2 – 3 days.*
- *Take paper strips out of the water and place them into the sieve pound cake pan.*
- *Use a brick or some other heavy object to assist you when pushing downward to push out as much water as possible out of the sieve pan.*
- *Keep adding paper and pressing until the pan is full.*
- *Turn the sieve pan upside down and tap on the bottom of the sieve pan to release the paper brick.*
- *Let small bricks dry in the same way as paper logs and larger bricks.*

Winter Survival Smarts

Methane and Heat from Compost

As you may be aware, compost piles produce quite a good bit of heat, and they also release methane. Creating methane capture systems will make it possible to operate methane heaters, stoves, and other devices. Just be sure to store the methane in tanks that are designed for this purpose.

You can utilize the heat from compost piles by running black plastic pipe throughout the pile. You will need a pump to bring the water into the house and then circulate it through radiators designed to accommodate water flowing through them.

Best Use Tip: Heat up water and then run it through pipes in the room or house. Use a ceiling fan to help keep warm air in the center of the room instead of letting it escape through the roof.

Passive Solar Heat

As strange as it may sound, no discussion on alternative fuels for the winter would be complete without studying passive solar heat. Essentially, you can use tin cans painted black and housed in glass to build up heat and then push that heat into the house.

If you aren't comfortable with trying to vent hot air through a window or hole in the wall, then simply add a few coils of copper tubing to the external heater and then connect a pipe from that to hot water radiators located throughout the house.

Advanced preppers can also try "storing" some of the heat generated during the day by burying a water tank with copper tubing in it, and then pipe the water from underground into the house.

If you are planning to use wood to keep your home warm, you may find yourself looking for alternatives faster than expected. The five fuels listed here are largely untapped and also far easier to renew than wood.

Why not give them a try and see what you can do to lower your heating bill this winter and prepare for a crisis at the same time?



WINTER ESSENTIAL 2: Practice Your Survival Skills

Winter weather conditions can vary quite a bit depending on the region you live in, from constant rain and sleet to thick blankets of snow and black ice. Then, sometimes it just gets plain cold, with little rain or snow, but perhaps some wind chill to drop things down to below zero.

Winter can bring some harsh weather in its wake, but let's see the good part of it: extreme weather makes the perfect occasion to practice your outdoors skills, as a part of your preparation for disaster.

Surviving Extreme Cold

Clothing

Proper clothing is essential when you're preparing for winter weather. In a region where the temperature regularly drops to below zero, layers of clothing including long underwear, sweaters and insulated jackets are strongly recommended. For quick and easy access, each

Winter Survival Smarts

member of the family should have a complete set of warm winter clothes (including good shoes and a jacket, if possible) stored in a bag in a designated area.

Don't forget your head and feet, either; you lose a lot of body heat from the top of your head and the soles of your feet, so wear a warm hat and some comfortable, warm socks.

By contrast, if you live in an area that experiences cold but extremely rainy winters without much snow or ice, you'll need adequately waterproofed clothes, jackets and shoes particularly.

Staying Warm



Mulled Wine

1 bottle red wine,
1 sliced orange,
1/4 cup brandy,
1/4 cup honey or
sugar, 8 cloves,
2 cinnamon
sticks, 2 star
anise

Combine all
ingredients in a
saucepan. Bring
to a simmer,
then reduce
heat, and let
simmer for at
least 15
minutes.
Strain, and
serve warm.

A lot of people take central heating for granted, but if the power goes out or you find yourself stranded in the cold and away from home (say your car broke down), you'll need to stay warm.

Proper clothing will go a long way toward keeping you warm, especially if you dress in layers, but you can also carry instant heat pads (usually good for a few hours) or matches, a lighter, and/or a small fire steel or flint and striker for starting a fire.

When the power goes out at home, if your home has a fireplace, you can keep your family and home warm with a fire.

In a post-SHTF scenario, or if the power were to go down for an extended period of time, a fire can also allow you to heat beds, cook food, and heat water for bathing.

Traditionally, a bed warmer was a specially designed pan that would be filled with hot coals and inserted between the sheets or under the mattress in order to warm or dry out the bed, today you can use a hot water bottle or a rubber bladder for the same purpose.

Winter Survival Smarts

In some countries, hot potatoes were also placed inside the pockets of travelers to help keep them warm over long distances.

Surviving Isolation and Blackouts

Home Preps

It may not cross your mind at first, especially if you rent a home or an apartment, but winter-proofing your residence can help immensely. To prepare your home or apartment for winter, you can check the glass and seal up any drafts around windows or doors that will let cold air in.

Storm glass or double-paned windows can provide additional insulation from the cold, while some cultures will hang heavy tapestries, rugs or animal skins on their walls for added insulation.

A well-insulated or winter-proofed house can also save you money on your heating bill, as we've already described in our previous section about keeping heating cost under control.

Assuming you don't have a backup power source, be prepared for power outages during the winter by stocking up on plenty of batteries, candles, matches and lighters, as well as firewood if you have a fireplace.

A wood burning stove can be particularly useful if you have a power outage, since you can heat a substantial portion of your home while also cooking your meals or heating water for drinking and other uses.

Another good item to have on hand is a decent emergency radio, battery powered and tuned to the local weather station for updates and news.

Nature's Signs For Frosty Weather

- *The woolly worm, is a good predictor of how bad winter will be, depending on how narrow his brown middle stripe is: the narrower it is, the harsher the winter will be.*
- *If you notice that birds are migrating early, winter is coming early.*
- *If your pets are growing longer, thicker winter coats than usual or are getting extra chunky in the fall, the winter is going to be rough.*
- *Corn husks, onion skins and acorn shells will all be thicker if winter is going to be harsh.*
- *Also, evergreen trees will make more and bigger pine cones in an attempt to give their offspring better chances of making it through a rough winter.*

Winter Survival Smarts

If you have no method of cooking your food during a power outage, be sure to have a well-stocked supply of non-perishable foods. Think along the lines of energy bars, powdered milk, cereal, trail mix, dried fruits, nuts, juice mix, and dried meat like jerky.

Propane and charcoal can be used to cook outdoors, but should not be used inside as they are both fire hazards and potential sources of carbon monoxide, an odorless, deadly gas.

Pay attention to local weather reports during the winter, especially if you live in an area known to experience extreme winter weather. Meteorology may not be an exact science, but if a storm with a 200 mile radius is heading your way, it may be prudent to stock up and hunker down.

Keep your kitchen and pantry well-stocked during the winter months, so that when a heavy storm comes through you don't have to worry about getting things from the store.

Make sure you have plenty of food and other necessities for your pets, as well. You should also keep a stock of at least 2 weeks' worth of any medications that you or a family member needs.

Car Preps & Bugging Out

Car Preps

Keep your car prepared for winter by topping up oil, fuel, antifreeze and brake fluid levels. A good pair of winter tires is also highly advisable, especially in regions that are subject to snow or heavy rain.

In areas that experience heavy snow, keep chains for your tires stored in your car. Since a winter storm may strand you under a variety of conditions, you may also wish to keep a small quantity of cash stored in your vehicle for use in an emergency.

You can also keep a bag or two of cat litter or sand in the trunk of your car; if your vehicle gets snowed in or stuck, cat litter or sand can be poured around the tire to help it gain traction. Also, don't forget some rock salt or another suitable de-icing agent if ice is a known risk.

Avoid traveling during heavy storms whenever possible, but always keep emergency supplies stored in your vehicle.

Winter Survival Smarts

Such emergency supplies should include water, something to eat, suitable warm clothes including gloves, a small shovel, road flares, a blanket or emergency space blanket, and a small medical kit, preferably with some form of instant-heating pack.

Bugging Out

Honestly, bugging out during winter is a pretty bleak prospect under most conditions. Still, if you're faced with circumstances where you must bug out during winter, you can try to make the best of it.

To start with, don't attempt to bug out in the middle of a storm. You're better off hunkering down wherever you can in order to wait out the storm.

If you must travel during a storm, try to wait for clear periods and breaks in the weather. Keep a shovel on hand in your home, and preferably also in your vehicle, so that if you get snowed in you can dig your way out.


DOs and DON'Ts When Stuck in the Snow

As Clint Eastwood once said, "A man has got to know his limitations". You must be aware of the fact that some people are better drivers than others and when snow and ice are part of the everyday game, knowing your limitations can make the difference between life and death.

But that's not everything there is to know about driving in the winter. One of the probabilities if you're a regular "long range" traveler during the cold season is that someday you'll be faced with a reality check.

You might be forced to survive for a couple of days or more stuck in the snow, with no one else around to help you out. You may be all by yourself or worse – stranded in impassible snow or a blizzard with your family.

"For an adult, plan to carry no more than 20-25% of your body weight if you are in shape, much less for children, the elderly and overweight individuals. "

WATCH VIDEO 

Winter Survival Smarts



Snow Chain Alternative

You will need 10 mm nylon rope and matches or lighter. Seal the ends of the rope with the lighter.

Turn the wheels to the right, and start threading at the bottom of the wheel. Pass the rope through the first hole, rich in behind the wheel, grab the rope, bring it out and loop it in through the next hole.

Make sure to avoid the brake caliper and hose.

Once you've passed the rope through all the holes, tie it, tension the knot by pulling the remaining rope through the loops in a triangular pattern, then cut and seal the ends of the rope with a lighter.

Can you survive a three-day ordeal in the white Hell? Well, the short answer is yes, if you're prepared to do it. The best prepping strategy for surviving a blizzard, an ice storm or anything of the like is to avoid getting stuck in the snow in the first place.

We know it sounds obvious, but avoiding the mess by staying home during harsh weather is the best decision you could make if it's even remotely possible.

Just like in any other survival situation, the basics are the same: you must have enough food, water and proper shelter if you want to survive a blizzard stuck in the snow in your car. Since you're already inside a vehicle, you will benefit from some protection against the elements, in other words, you have some shelter.

Winter Survival Smarts

But that doesn't mean that you're protected from the cold itself. If you want to survive below-zero temperatures for days in a row, you'll need something extra. So, before taking long trips in the winter season, here's a short list of what you'll need inside of your car at all times and also a few tips and tricks:

- Any prepper knows that the fuel tank must be kept full at all times; you can imagine that running out of gas in an ice storm is no fun at all. Also, keeping a full tank in cold weather will help to prevent condensation inside the tank.
- If you get stuck in the snow, don't panic. Stay inside the car and don't rely on high tech devices or gadgets to survive. Survival is about skill, knowledge and temperament, not about high tech. However, if your cell phone works, you must use it immediately to call for help if you can. There's no need to waste a valuable resource by letting the battery go dead without trying to save yourself.
- You shouldn't leave the vehicle under any circumstances unless you're very familiar with the surroundings or as a last resort, i.e. you don't believe you'll survive inside and you must try to reach a safe place by walking. If you must leave the vehicle, try to wait for daylight if possible.
- Blankets (wool blankets are best) and sleeping bags are your best friends if you want to keep warm when stuck in the snow in your car for a long time; we're talking about old school means of preserving body heat. Make sure you have at least one blanket or sleeping bag per person INSIDE the car, not in the trunk (it may become inaccessible in a blizzard).
- Keep a container inside of the vehicle for collecting snow in case of SHTF; melted snow transforms into potable water which means that you'll stay hydrated at all times.
- Keep in mind that any open fire (like a candle) produces carbon monoxide, a toxic gas that's colorless and odorless and will kill you if you don't have a window partially opened in order to ventilate the poisonous gas from the vehicle.
- You should use hand warmers as a safe alternative to open flames inside of your vehicle.

Winter Survival Smarts

- The obvious solution for keeping warm inside the car is to keep the heater on, but there's a trick: always make sure that the exhaust pipe of the vehicle doesn't get clogged with snow. If it does, your vehicle will fill up quickly with carbon monoxide and guess what will happen to you...
- Don't use ALL the gas in the tank for heating; you may need some of it later when the weather clears up and you'll want to excavate your vehicle from the snow and get out of there.
- Stay inside the vehicle if you can't see a building or structure nearby, it's very easy to get disoriented in a snow storm and get lost and die of exposure.
- Turn the car's heater on for 10 minutes every 45 minutes, keeping a window cracked at all times.
- Keep the seat belt on yet try to exercise a little by stretching your legs and arms now and then. This will help you stay warm and alert.
- Keep some extra clothing inside of the vehicle, along with blankets and sleeping bags (Thinsulate™ is the best option): gloves, boots and even a hat.
- Keep a red or orange flag inside the car; if SHTF, you'll attach it to the antenna, thus making yourself more visible for the rescue teams.
- Stockpile flares, a flashlight + batteries, a GPS (Global Positioning System) and CB (Citizens Band) radio equipment if possible.
- You can signal your location by burning your spare tire; the smoke and fire will be visible for rescuers miles away.

Now, let's talk a little bit about food and water. You must know that is very easy to get dehydrated in the winter, hence drinking enough water (2 liters/day) under stressful conditions is crucial. Remember, you'll have to melt the snow and drink it. Avoid eating snow directly because it leads to hypothermia.

Storing food inside of a car is a tricky business, to say the least. Fortunately, during winter you can safely presume that the food will never spoil as long as it's outside. However, you should try to stockpile calorie dense foods with long shelf lives, such as canned foods (don't forget the can

Winter Survival Smarts

opener), peanut butter, crackers, granola bars, even dehydrated/freeze dried food rations if you can afford them.

As a general rule of thumb, you should have at least 6,000 calories worth of food for every person in the vehicle, which translates into a minimum three day supply of food (or more with rationing). Along with food and water, there's a list of items that you need to keep inside of the vehicle at all times during winter:

- A small tent
- Sleeping bags/blankets
- Means for making fire: matches (waterproof), flint, lighter fluid
- Candles, signal flares
- Tools : hunting knife, compass/GPS, flashlight/batteries, a hammer, screwdrivers, pliers, pry bar, a shovel
- A first aid kit which should contain alcohol wipes, medication, antibiotic cream, bandages, analgesics and gauze

Remember, being stuck in the snow during a blizzard can be a horrific experience, but you must try to remain calm and composed at all times. Keep a clear head and remember that fear is the mind killer. If you plan ahead and you have the supplies, the tools and the skills, you will be able to manage the situation and keep yourself and your loved ones alive and well until help arrives or until you can safely find your own way out.

Hunting for Survival

Winter is easily the most unforgiving of seasons across many parts of the world. Yet there are people who chose to live their lives in desolate stretches of backwoods terrain where winter is often the longest season of the year.

These individuals, equipped with the necessary skills to live in the wild, must fight for survival on a daily basis. Every part of their daily livelihood, from the fuel that heats their homes to the food they put on the table, is provided by nature and harnessed by their own determination.

Winter Survival Smarts

There are many things to be learned from these modern-day survivalists. Among them are the skills necessary to hunt for survival during the harsh winter months.

Granted hunting and gathering food are often the most difficult aspects of a survival scenario in any time of year, but sustaining your caloric intake during winter is critical to survival.



Unfortunately, the cold, wet, and windy conditions brought on by winter can make finding sources of food more difficult than during the warmer months. These same conditions take a critical toll on your body, making it all the more necessary to stay nutritionally sound. With that said, there are certain skills you should possess to help make winter survival hunting a more fruitful endeavor.

Let's take a look at a few DO's and DON'Ts to keep in mind hunting for winter survival.

DO learn some game-scouting techniques and study different animal's behavior during winter months. Bitter cold and heavy snowfall can cause a lot of animals to go into their own survival mode and force them to pick their own feeding and hunting opportunities carefully.

For instance, whitetail deer are often out in search of food during the midmorning and/or the last few minutes of daylight in winter months. To have the best chance of snagging a kill you must position yourself close to their feeding spots during those hours and wait for them to come into your line of fire.

In a survival situation nighttime hunting isn't much of an option, as you'd put yourself at risk to frostbite and hypothermia. You need to know which animals are out and when and where they feed in order to have a chance at a kill.

DON'T position yourself in single location and expect the game to come to you. While conventional hunting often sees the use of tree stands and blinds in areas with heavy animal

Winter Survival Smarts

traffic, different rules apply for winter survival hunting. Winter is the time when you have to be aggressive in order to get a kill that puts food on the table.

Use the wind to your advantage to close in on your game while feeding or in the open and use snow and ice covered terrain to deter their escape.

Old wooden trap for killing polar bears at Spitsbergen



DO hunt in sunny areas as opposed to shaded woods and valleys. Staying warm is as big of a goal for animals during the winter as it is for you, which is why you'll often find them on ridges and hills facing the sun.

Hunting downwind of a west-facing ridge, especially when close to a feeding area, can yield solid results in wintertime. On particularly cold or snowy days, many animals will seek shelter or forage for food near juniper, evergreen, and other heavily bowed trees where the snowfall is lighter. Put yourself in the same mindset of your prey and

think about where you would go for warmth, shelter, and food—that's where you'll be most likely to get a kill.

DON'T hunt the same spots every day. Don't even go after the same animal every day, especially if your life is on the line and food is an immediate necessity. Even the most experienced hunter can be fooled into thinking a location or tactic will continue to work if it yielded a successful result once. Mature animals often learn to recognize the threat of being hunted and know when, how, and where to move to avoid becoming your next meal. The less predictable you are, the more likely you are to come across choice game.

DO learn how to trap. In a true survival situation you may be without a proper weapon to hunt effectively. Trapping, especially during winter months, can be a much more efficient way to catch food than hunting. Granted the results are often much smaller game with fewer calories, the chances of success are relatively higher.

Winter Survival Smarts

Snares and wires should be part of any survival kit, as should the know-how to put them to use. For the best results you should set up traps at the beginning and end of each day and check them before and after the time you spend in the field hunting.

DON'T think that funnels and runs are guaranteed spots to set traps or wait for a shot. It's true that many animals use the same runs on a regular basis, but not necessarily day in and day out.

Accordingly, the larger and more mature game will often take a rough, unused route and leave the funnel for the young to use. You may choose to leave a snare or two on a heavily used run, but don't expect it to yield surefire results.

Keep in mind, surviving in a harsh winter environment can demand the most from your body. Getting a meal on the fire and into your belly is always going to be a priority, but never risk overexertion for the sake of food.

In a winter survival scenario, staying warm and hydrated should be your top priorities. Before attempting to set out in search of game, make sure you have a shelter, fire, and warm pot of water waiting for you when you return.



WINTER ESSENTIAL 3: Make The Most Of What Winter Gives You

Though cold, snow and mud is miserable, winter isn't all bad. As a matter of fact, there are several benefits that are available in winter that you just don't have in warmer weather.

Let's see a few of them.

Cold

Winter is a wonderful time to store meat because the meat can (and should) hang for a day or two before you butcher it. You do this so that the blood drains for the meat and natural enzymes start to break down the meat a bit, which makes it tender.

Also, rigor mortis doesn't go away till about 24 hours after the kill. If you butcher the meat prior to this, you may experience "shortening" or shrinkage of the muscles, aka meat. When it's cold

Winter Survival Smarts

outside, you basically have your own outdoor refrigerator so you don't have to worry about your meat going bad before you can get to it.

Ideally, you want the temperatures to be between 35-45 degrees F. If it gets any warmer than that, you're risking rot but if it's colder, your meat will freeze.

Whether you decide to smoke your meat, can it or dehydrate it, winter is a great time to do it. It's also when most gaming seasons are so it works out perfectly. In the fall is rough because that's when you're preserving your fruits and vegetables, so for several reasons, winter is the ideal time to preserve your meat.

Also, fresh cleaned and packaged game and fish can be frozen for safe storage during the late fall through the winter months. The temperature of the food must stay below 30 degrees at all times. Use fresh packed snow or ice cut from a nearby pond or a lake to build an ice house. Wrap the ice in sawdust or wool to slow down the melting process.

Ice and Snow

Water for Drinking

Just like in the summer, water is crucial in cold climates as well. We lose water from breathing and sweating and if we don't resupply our bodily fluids in a timely fashion, dehydration may ensue. And let us tell you something: dehydration is your number one enemy in a real life survival scenario, it will kill you surely and quickly. Even in the winter, you will require at least half a gallon of water per day to maintain efficiency.

Especially if you're in a cold environment, due to dehydration you will be prone to frostbite and hypothermia. Therefore, finding a safe source or method for your daily water supply is one of the most important things you can ever learn. The good thing about cold climates is that you have plenty of snow and ice available and guess what – snow and ice are made of water. All you have to do is to find a way to melt it and you're golden!

Winter Survival Smarts

First things first though, don't eat the yellow snow. Actually, don't eat snow at all; you may damage the inside of your mouth. Also your body temperature will drop, and that will actually dehydrate you faster so that's not a good idea at all.

Basically, you will have to find a clean source of ice or snow and you'll have to melt it in order to quench your thirst. Keep in mind that it will take some time and energy to procure water, so don't wait until the first symptoms of dehydration appear: start early, plan ahead.

First, you must be aware of the fact that snow and ice are as pure as the water from which they were born. Also, keep in mind that snow tends to retain all the impurities in the atmosphere; hence, you should avoid snow that looks contaminated with traces of dirt or other dubious debris.

Another thing to remember is that ice will give you more water than snow, all things being equal, because it has a much higher density than snow. So, basically, go for ice instead of snow, if possible.

Here's a method for melting/filtering snow using a T-Shirt or something similar.



But the easiest way to melt your ice or snow is to do so in a pan over fire.

If you can't make a fire (that's kind of bad for you in the long run), you can try melting some snow in a bottle between the inner /outer layers of your clothing. It should work, to some extent.

Put the ice/snow in a heat resistant container, melt it, boil it to eliminate pathogens and that's about it. You can store water for later in a bottle and keep it close to your body in order to prevent it from freezing again.

Winter Survival Smarts

Start a Fire Using Ice

Here's another nice trick for making fire using ice, by creating a lens out of ice. The ice must be crystal clear in order to make for an usable lens.

You will have to use clear ice from a lake or a pond, give it a roughly lens shape with a knife and afterwards you'll have to use the heat of your hands for the final touches, just like in the picture.



You should practice this technique at home and see how it works for you. Practice makes perfect and that's a cool idea after all.

Using Snow for Shelter

Aside from providing you with drinking water, snow can be used in a very different way in a survival situation. You can actually build yourself a storm shelter, a snow burrow, so to speak, or an Igloo, just like the Eskimo.

Realistically speaking, building yourself an Igloo is pretty hard work and you can succumb to hypothermia while you're at it, especially if you aren't physically fit or don't have the skills and the necessary tools. It's pretty hard work piling up a huge mound of snow, letting it settle and digging out your shelter in the interior. It will exhaust you quickly and that can be fatal in a survival situation.

The most efficient way to protect yourself from the cold outside is to bury yourself into a nice hole in the snow; it's relatively easy and works like a charm. We kid you not – wolves in the Arctic regions do this to protect themselves from the winter storms if they need to.

You will have to dig yourself a snow trench shelter, not too high and not too wide, so it will be heat up from what your body generates.

Winter Survival Smarts

"In case of hypothermia, avoid moisture, because moisture evaporates and it robs you of heat, so you must be dry. Avoid drinking alcohol in this case because it doesn't help: it leads to dilation, and when the body dilates, it loses heat."

WATCH VIDEO 

A large shelter is more difficult to heat up, naturally, so only make the space a little bigger than your body. Making a larger-than-necessary shelter can be a fatal error when it's very cold outside, because it will actually steal your body heat instead of conserving it.

You can use dead branches and sticks (even blocks of icy snow) as supports for the top of the shelter (you will have to put snow on the top, for insulation purposes) and also make sure you cover

the entrance as well (a plastic sheath will do the trick perfectly, or your back pack).

Don't forget to provide yourself with a ventilation hole and never sleep directly on the ground; use some insulation like pine boughs or grass. Then just slide in, cover your entrance, and get warm!

Ash

If you're going to be burning wood during winter, you're going to have a ton (maybe literally!) of ash by the end of the winter, so what on earth are you going to do with it all? Re-use it, that's what!

Wood ash is extremely alkaline and contains potassium (potash) and calcium, which makes it great for several different purposes around the farm. It also likely contains sulfur, phosphorus, sodium, zinc, manganese, iron, copper, cobalt, magnesium and molybdenum, all of which are great for your plants depending upon your type of soil. That's just the tip of the iceberg though. Let's talk ash!

Tanning Hides

If you've ventured into the land of tanning at all, you probably know that brains are a common method for naturally tanning the hide into water-resistant, durable leather. However, the brains

Winter Survival Smarts

take forever to get the job done if you don't break down the natural mucopolysaccharides, called ground substance, that protect the hide. The [Native Americans](#) had this method down, and guess what does the trick! Yup, wood ash and water. Just soak it for 2-4 days and you'll only have to brain-tan it once.

Natural Camouflage

This is kind of a no-brainer but there may come a time when you just don't want to be seen. You may be hunting or you may be waiting for human predators to invade your space. Whatever the reason, wood ash is a quick, natural camouflage.

On a similar note, sunburn can be lethal and if you don't have any sunscreen, rub wood ash on your skin to block the sun's rays. And don't imagine that sunburns are impossible during winter, because they are!

Enriching the Soil and Protecting Your Garden

Wood ash is great for certain types of soil, specifically soil that is overly acidic. This includes many of the sandier soils in places such as Florida. Almost without fail, alkaline-loving plants such as onions, garlic and leeks will flourish if you add a bit of wood ash to the soil around them.

The exception to this is if the pH of your soil is over 7. In that case, you may not want to use wood ash because it contains potassium and is very alkaline. It's great to mix in if your soil is acidic but if it's not, you'll make matters worse.

If you decide to use wood ash in your soil, don't apply it straight to your raw compost pile because it'll react with the nitrogen and turn it straight to ammonia. In other words, you'll lose that nitrogen that you're working so hard to get. If you're going to add ash to your compost in order to decrease the acidity (raise the pH), add it to mature, ready to use compost.

Also, spread wood ash around your gardens to protect it from certain bugs that are harmful to your plants. It serves as a barrier to slugs and snails and some say that it protects against some beetles, too.

Winter Survival Smarts

Use Wood Ash to Do the Dishes

Tossing a bit of wood ash into your dirty skillet will produce enough lye (and friction) to get your camp skillets good and clean. Some people even use it raw as soap.

Give Your Chickens and Dogs a Spa Day

Chickens naturally roll in dirt as a way to cleanse themselves. This protects them from insects and pests such as mites and lice. However, if your chickens can't roam, finding a nice dusty place to roll may be a challenge for them.

Mix wood ash and sand equally and place it in a litter pan or baby pool, or just dump it in a corner of their pen. The wood ash kills mites and lice and the sand keeps the ash from blowing away.

Also, nothing is more disgusting than the smell of a dog that's been skunked but if you have some extra wood ash, you're golden. Just rub the ash into his fur and it will neutralize the odor.

Wood Ash Makes a Beautiful Glaze

If you make your own pottery, wood ash placed on the outside makes a beautiful glaze. It's always a surprise because the resulting color comes from the minerals in the ash.

You can get anything from beautiful reds and browns to stunning greens and blues.

Make Soap with Wood Ash

Wood Ash mixed with water produces lye, which can then be mixed with animal fat to make soap. You simply have to add boiling soft water to your ash, allow it to sit for a few days, and drain the lye out of the mixture.

You know that it's alkaline enough to go forward with the soap-making process when an egg will float in it. Once you've extracted the lye, it's just a matter of cooking it down with rendered animal fat.

Winter Survival Smarts



DIY Pure Soap

Make a natural lye using 1 part white wood-ash to 6 parts water.

Boil for half an hour and allow to cool.

Place 2 kg coconut oil and 1 kg lye into a metal pot and place it on the stove. Stir well and boil for one hour.

Take the pot off the stove and skim off scum which has floated to the surface.

The clean liquid remaining is then poured into a pan and allowed to harden.

When cold and hard it is cut into blocks of convenient size.

Soft wood ash produces a soft soap and hardwood ash produces a firmer soap. Add salt to make it even firmer. A cord of wood can produce up to 50 pounds of ash so if you burn wood all winter and spring, you're going to have plenty of ash at your disposal!

There are still several other ways that you can use ash, too. Here are some more:

- Rub wood ash on pulleys to reduce friction. Just don't use it on anything aluminum because it will eat through it.
- Use it to clean the soot off the glass on your wood burner door. Just dip your cloth in some ash and rub the soot right off. It's great for cleaning metal, too.
- A bit of ash rubbed on a fish that you're trying to skin or clean will help with the slipperiness.

Winter Survival Smarts

- You can make glue by mixing wood ash and pine tree resin.
- Mixing wood ash with linseed oil will create a great waterproof preservative for wood.

Time

One of the benefits of winter is having enough time for everything, so this is the perfect occasion to get things done, and plan ahead for the next year.

Declutter, Fix & Plan

When it's cold outside, that's the best time to get "inside" work done. Clothing needs darned, the walls need painted and stairs need repaired. Take advantage of poor weather to accomplish those tasks that have lingered around until you had nothing better to do.

Go through everything – clothes, towels, curtains, sheets – and get rid of anything that you don't need, don't use, or is worn out. Donate it to charity, do a clothing or linen swap with friends, or use them to make something else. Quilts, scrapbooks, flags and doll clothing are all great ways to repurpose old material. That time is now!

Homesteads are never complete. Either you're dreaming of starting one or are living on one that needs another chicken coop, barn, bedroom or compost pile. Take the winter to see what happens to your property when it snows or is wet and windy to plan that building. Also, you have plenty of time, so not only do you get to see what affect winter has, you also have time to think about what you want and debate the pros and cons of your plans.

Winter exposes another good point that you should consider when making plans for your property. It shows you what is visible when there are no leaves on the trees.

If you plan to build a building such as a food storage facility that you don't want visible to just anyone, winter is a great time to walk your property and get

"If you find and repurpose the building materials for free and dig your own composite material to fill the bags, you could build this fortress, exactly as designed, for about \$300."

WATCH VIDEO 

Winter Survival Smarts

an idea of the places that are hidden even when there are no leaves to provide coverage, and to prepare further planting.

Clean your greenhouse, prune your bushes back, compost your soil, divide your perennials and plant new trees in the early winter. In late winter, start your plants inside so that you can get them in the ground as soon as it gets warm enough.

Evaluate & Learn

Jogging in the summer is a hot, miserable task and often one that people will give up on after a few sessions just because of the misery. Get in the habit of exercising in the winter and the task won't seem so horrible.

Also, you're stuck inside anyway, so you may as well get your workout in! We all know that survival when SHTF is going to be largely dependent on how fit you are when it happens. Get that way and stay that way.

What else do you have to do? Learn a skill. Learn 5. We can't express how much a Jack (or Jill) of all trades will be appreciated if SHTF. If there is something that you don't know how to do around the house, pick up some books or take some classes.

One of the first courses that pop in mind is the CPR/First Aid course. Often these are free or extremely inexpensive so learn skills now that may save your life later. Soap making and candle making skills pop to mind here, too.

Practice Your Hobbies & Get Crafty

Christmas is coming, and people have birthdays and anniversaries all year round. Take advantage of your time inside to get crafty. Whether you like to crochet or are super handy at wood-working, get ahead on your gift list. Then when a holiday rolls around, you're all set.

Make a few extras for those forgotten birthdays or unexpected occasions, or prepare all those homemade Christmas gifts that you were thinking of in the last months. This is a great opportunity for family time, too.

Winter Survival Smarts

Check the other Survivopedia's Christmas free report "*10 Easy DIY Christmas Presents*" to find the perfect crafting project for you and your family.

Top 10 Winter Hobbies for the Self-Reliant Woman

Without a doubt, it's harder to find things to do in the winter than it is when the weather is nice, but there are plenty of hobbies that a self-reliant woman can learn in order to fill her time.

In a post-SHTF life, you may have to learn to combine pleasure with utility; that is, what you do for fun may also need to serve a purpose.

In the true pioneer spirit, we've put together this list of fun but useful winter hobbies for the self-reliant woman.

Indoor Gardening

Just because there are 3 feet of snow on the ground doesn't mean that you can't enjoy fresh flowers and herbs.

Terrariums and herb gardens do well in the winter and if you have some windows that allow enough light, you can even grow some fresh vegetables such as tomatoes.

By saving your seeds from your summer garden, many flowers will even grow well indoors. We recommend purchasing some books on indoor gardening so that you have something to read and refer to as you start making winter delicious and flowery.

In preparation for your summer garden, you may want to get a head start by planting your seeds in February so that you can have young plants that are ready to go in the earth when the weather warms up.

Crocheting/Knitting

As anybody who crochets or knits will attest, you can burn up many hours making beautiful items for you or your family and pets with this hobby.

Scarves, mittens, caps, sweaters, afghans ... the list of what you can make is practically endless if you're good with a set of needles or hooks.

Winter Survival Smarts

Crocheted and knitted items make wonderful gifts that the recipient will keep for years, too. Who doesn't have an afghan that Great Aunt Sally made them? They're often timeless and almost always durable.

Make sure that you stockpile yarn or thread and that you have an heir and a spare set of needles or hooks.

Sewing

Why throw away that shirt just because it lost a button or was torn when the kids were climbing under the fence? Mend it instead; you'll save both money and resources.

If you become handy with a needle or a sewing machine, you can make everything that you'll need from clothing to blankets, too.

All you'll need is material and some time. Stockpiling some fabric and thread may not be a bad idea if you have the room.

The best thing about making your own clothes is that they'll be tailored to fit you in a way that no store-bought clothes could ever be.

They'll also be in colors and styles that you like, and if you don't have access to stores, you won't be wandering around in ripped up rags.



Winter Survival Smarts

Cooking

You worked hard all summer to can and preserve and now is the time to enjoy the fruits (and veggies!) of your labor.

There's nothing like a hearty bowl of stew or a mouthwateringly delicious apple pie to make your family smile.

Cooking is a great winter hobby for the self-reliant woman because it serves two purposes: it brings you pleasure and fills hungry bellies.

If you enjoy cooking, putting together your recipes and making perfect sauces, dishes and desserts is a great way to relax and get away from your worries for a while.

Since you're only limited by your supplies and your imagination, you can do pretty much whatever you want in the kitchen and your family will love the results.

Exercising

Maintaining your physical fitness is a great winter hobby for the self-reliant woman, or for any person for that matter. Especially in a survival situation, it's going to be imperative that you're as healthy as possible and exercising can be done right in the house whether you have a home gym or not.

There are many body weight exercises that will keep you lean and fit, and yoga is an excellent activity to soothe your mind as well as tone your body.

Writing

If you enjoy writing, it can serve several purposes. If you like to, do write a journal, you can document your experiences and the feelings that you have right at that moment. It's a great way to purge emotions and to take a good look at what you're feeling from a distance.

Writing is often a great way of working through emotions, and in a post-SHTF situation, that may be mentally invaluable.

Winter Survival Smarts

Writing fiction is a great way to escape for a while. You can step into another world where things are exactly as you create them.

Regardless of whether you prefer writing romance, horror, comedy, or another genre, it's a great way to get away from your worries for a bit.

Home Improvement Projects

Self-reliant women often enjoy being handy around the house, too.

Woodworking, home repair, and remodeling projects are all tasks that many women dig right in to, so if that cabinet is hanging or you flat-out hate the way that looks, fix them or replace them!

The advantages of enjoying home improvement projects are that you add both monetary and aesthetic value to your home, you keep it safe for all who enter, and you improve the function of your space.

Plus, it's often a physically exhausting hobby so you'll be ready to sleep well at night.

Candle or Soap Making

The great thing about making candles or soap is that in a survival situation, you're going to need them but it's also a way to exercise your creativity.

That's important, especially if, as a self-reliant woman, most of your day is filled with mundane, drag-your-feet tasks.



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Soap and candles can look and smell however you want them to and are only limited by your supplies and your imagination.

Family Board Games

It's tough to keep the kids occupied when it's cold out but family board games are a great way to entertain them while helping your family bond. There are so many games available that a few trips to yard sales will quickly have you all set for an entire winter's worth of game-playing fun.

Since games are often a great way to burn up a few hours, this may be a great hobby to adopt after dinner when it's dark outside and there's nothing else to do until bedtime. It also ends the day on a good note for everybody.

Top 12 Winter Hobbies for the Self-Reliant Man

Winter is a tough time, especially if you're used to being physically active. It's easy to get bored and stir-crazy so you need to plan for this time in advance.

If SHTF or even if you get a bad storm, you may not have electricity or other modern conveniences such as computer games, the internet, or video games, so be sure to have a mental list of hobbies and a stockpile of supplies to get you through.

The key to finding winter hobbies for a self-reliant man is to figure out what you enjoy doing, or what needs doing, then find a way to do it in the house.

Winter is a good time to catch up on all of those indoor tasks that you just didn't seem to get to in the busy summer months. It's also a great time to bond with your family or nearby friends.

Wood Working

Though electric tools are great, you don't need them to make things from wood. All you need are some saws, sandpaper, nails, a hammer and maybe some stain or paint and a drill.

Hand sanding is time-consuming but you'll gain two things from it: a tremendous sense of accomplishment and a great eye for not wasting product that you're just going to have to sand down. You'll learn to cut much better, we promise!

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Oh, and don't forget: you'll have a finished product that will be sturdy, reliable, and custom-made to meet your needs. Wood products make great gifts, too.

Be sure to stockpile plenty of dry, workable wood and some extra blades, nails and sandpaper or else you'll end up with a bunch of half-finished projects.

Gardening

A great winter hobby for the self-reliant man is gardening. There's no reason that your food should lack fresh herbs or, for that matter, some fresh tomatoes or peppers, because they can all be grown inside.

You'll also want to start your summer garden plants in early spring while it's still freezing so that the young plants will be ready to go in the ground when it warms up enough.

Models and Art from Scraps

You can make models or art from scraps that you have laying around the house. Metal, wood, or even paper Mache projects are all great ways to pass the time and make aesthetically pleasing works of art. You can whittle, machine or layer many different projects.

Ships are beautiful made from wood scraps.



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Model cars can be formed from either wood or scrap metal such as aluminum. For that matter, you can make windmills and outdoor ovens from that same scrap.

It all just depends on how creative you can be. These make great gifts, too.

Leather Crafting

Learning how to make things from leather may serve you very well if SHTF. For that matter, it's a great skill to have even if you just want to learn to be more self-reliant or if you want to make really cool gifts for your friends.

Leather products aren't cheap but if you know how to make them, you can create beautiful pieces for very little money, especially if you tan your own hides. Though it's labor-intensive, it's a useful skill to have. What may be a hobby today may keep you and your family from freezing to death tomorrow.

Making Beer or Wine

This is a great hobby for the winter, especially considering that many beers ferment better in cooler temperatures.

Plus, you'll be the most popular guy in the neighborhood when it's done!

Cooking

Cooking is a great winter hobby for the self-reliant man. There's nothing better than sitting down with your family to share a wonderful meal that you cooked for them, or for that matter, enjoying it by yourself.

If you're married or have a significant other, cooking is a great way to spend some quality time together.

Tapping the Trees to Gather Sap for Syrup

As winter starts to wind down, the time for tapping maple trees to gather sap for syrup is near. Sap typically starts running anywhere from mid-February to early March and you want to gather as much sap as possible if this is something that you enjoy.

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What you can do during the winter to prepare for this is to get your spiles (taps) all put together, clean your equipment, and make sure that everything is in working order.

If you're making your own spiles, be sure that they're all in working order and ready to go.

Exercising

Maintaining your physical fitness is important regardless of whether you're a stockbroker or a farmer and it's easy to lie around and get fat and sassy in the winter.

It's a bad idea though for both health and survival reasons, because you need to stay fit so you could act for your survival and defense.

"During hand-to-hand combat, remember that the knee is fairly strong from the front, but not from the side. It takes very little sideways force on the knee to break or dislocate it."

WATCH VIDEO 

You don't need a home gym to maintain your health and your marvelous physique; simple body weight exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, squats, lunges and burpees can keep you in top shape without the need for a weight bench.

If you have one, though, kudos and get to it – it's not just for hanging clothes.

Music

It doesn't matter if you're any good at singing if you enjoy it! Music brings people together and is a great winter hobby for men. Whether you enjoy singing, playing an instrument, or both, just do it! For that matter, use the winter months to LEARN how to play an instrument, even if it's only the spoons or the kettle. It's a good time that will bring lots of laughs.

Reading

Sometimes there's nothing better than escaping into the pages of a good book. Even if it's one that you've already read, if you liked it the first time, you'll most likely pick up on things that you missed on your second read through.

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If you like to learn while you read, stockpile some do-it-yourself books or books about your favorite topics. Winter is a great time to improve your skills or to learn new ones.

Board Games

Another great winter hobby for the self-reliant man is playing board games with friends or family.

Cards or poker would be included here, too. Sometimes there's nothing better than whiling away a few hours playing poker with your buddies. It's a great way to forget about the worries of surviving or of everyday life, and you may even earn yourself a few peanuts in the process!

Playing board games with your kids is a great way to spend some dad time with them. Don't just play; talk to them. It's great family bonding time.

Darts

Get the neighborhood guys together in the garage for some guy time and a little healthy competition. For that matter, bring out the older kids and the wife and involve them too, but don't be upset if you get beat by a girl.

Darts are not only fun; they're a great way to improve hand-eye coordination and to keep your aim in top shape. Since a single game can last for an hour depending upon how many are playing, it's a great way to unwind and burn up a few hours when you have nothing else to do.

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Winter time only seems like a time of solitude and rest. In reality, there are a ton of things that you can do both inside and out in order to keep your homestead going.

It's a great time to grow as a family, too. If it's just you, take some time to do something for an elderly or disabled neighbor. If you have kids, show them the value of doing something that doesn't involve a computer. If you're a couple, take time to enjoy each other.

You're only bored and irritated in the winter if you choose to be!

Either way, enjoy!



DIY Winter Projects

Off-Grid Project: DIY Insulating Window Frames

Materials Required

- Clear vinyl or plastic – costs about \$2.80 per yard in Wal-Mart's craft section for mid-weight vinyl. You can go with lighter, cheaper ones (for warmer climates), or the heaviest one available for colder climates and best durability.
- Wooden slats – for windows that don't get hit with much wind, just about any slat will do, including the 8 – 10 packs from Home Depot or Lowes. For areas where the wind is stronger, go with something a bit thicker, or simply double up on the slats during frame construction.
- Screws – have enough screws on hand to assemble slats and then mount frame to the window. Since you will likely need different sized screws, go with the multi-pack grab boxes.
- Newspaper, corrugated cardboard
- Duct tape – don't use the light weight cheap stuff, go with the stickiest, strongest duct tape you can find.
- Staples (optional)

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Tools

- Screwdriver – I prefer ratcheting screwdriver with multiple bits. You can get them for as low as \$5.00 these days.
- Hand or power drill – power drill preferred, but never hurts to practice with a hand drill for off-grid needs.
- Scissors
- Knife
- Tape measure
- Staple gun (optional)

How It Works

Basically, as long as you have some type of plastic or vinyl, you can always staple it to a window frame and then add some tape over it.

Unfortunately, this method will usually ruin the plastic or vinyl in 1 to 2 seasons, plus you will always be taping up leaks during the winter.

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On the other hand, a frame system allows you to use smaller pieces of plastic in the “panes” and also provides more stability for the plastic or vinyl. Since the vinyl edges won’t be taking the complete force from wind blowing, the frames and covering will last for years on end.

Steps to Produce 1 Window Cover

Part 1: Building the Frame:

Step 1: Measure window and determine where drafts are coming in from. You may need to cover the entire window frame if you don’t have caulk for the outside. After measuring the window, take note of curtain rod locations and how the frame will affect them.

Step 2: Select wooden slat material that will be strong enough to accommodate curtain rods or other fixtures once the frame is in place. Usually, you will have to remove old fixtures, and then put them back in place once the cold weather passes. While this can be annoying, it is also the best way to get the most heat retention out of each window cover.

Step 3: Drill pilot holes in the slats.



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Step 4: Screw together all slat intersections except for those that fall along the outer edge. Be sure to place either all horizontal or all vertical slats so that they are on top of each other. Creating an alternating pattern will produce an uneven surface between the frame and the window.



Part 2: Add the Vinyl



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Step 1: Measure and cut vinyl to fit over the frame. No extra border is needed, although you can create a double layer, or as many layers as needed. Simply fold the vinyl over the frame again, or add extra cut layers on the frame. If you are using a single piece of vinyl or plastic to cover the frame, do not sandwich the vinyl between slat levels.



Step 2: Screw slats together so that vinyl rests between the two slats. Always make sure that outer frame slats are even with each other and not irregular in relation to each other.



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Step 3: Create corner joints by adding a small piece of slat to screw two sides together. Use the side of the frame that you have been using to affix other slats. The opposite side should be perfectly flat all the way around, as this is where the frame will rest against the window.



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Part 3: Preparing the Frame for Mounting



Step 1: Use duct tape to secure vinyl to the frame. You may also want to use staples at this stage for added strength.

Step 2: Add additional layers of duct tape to fully secure vinyl to frame and also cut off any air pockets left behind.



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Staples may also be required at this stage if the duct tape isn't tacky enough or is too thin (once again – I strongly advocate buying the best and strongest duct tape you can find!).

Step 3: Cut cardboard layers into strips. The strips should be the same width as the slats.

Step 4: Create a double layer of cardboard slats by taping them together. Place layers on alternate sides so that the surface is smooth. This cardboard will act as a "gasket" between the window frame and the cover frame.

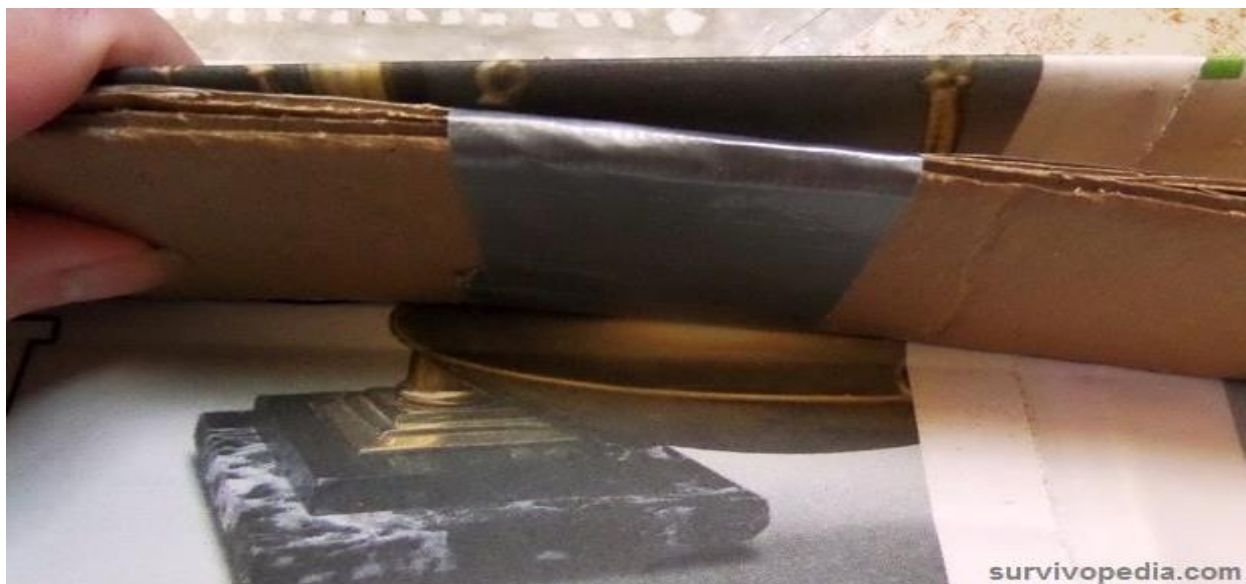
Step 5: Fold two layers of newspaper until they are approximately twice the width of the cardboard gasket. Remember, if the newspaper is not long enough for the window, simply fold up more newspaper, place it near the end of the first piece; and then cut down to size or simply push the newspaper together much as you would a telescopic rabbit ear antenna.

Step 6: Remove curtains, shades, and any hardware that will interfere with frame installation.

Part 4: Installing the Frame

Step 1: Drill pilot holes in the window frame and cover. Make sure they match up all the way around. Usually 3 holes per side will work well.

Step 2: Starting at the top of the window, fold cardboard gasket into the newspaper and place against the window frame.



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Tack in place with duct tape. Make sure that the opening in the paper faces to the inner part of the window.



The outer closed fold of the newspaper should face into the room so that drafts cannot get in.



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Step 3: Screw frame to window. Make sure the cover frame fits tightly against the window.

Optional: You can also use screws and plastic latches to hold the window cover in place.

Unfortunately, if you need to cover the window and the entire frame, these latches would wind up going into the wall and take up more space.

Step 4: Add an additional layer of duct tape over the frame to complete the air seal.

Step 5: Replace curtains and shades as needed.

Final Notes

As time goes by, the vinyl or plastic will stretch from wind pushing on it. Holes where screws go in will also weaken and eventually form tears. You can easily adjust the slats on the frame to make use of new areas, and also patch both slats and vinyl without having to build a whole new unit.

Even though there are many products on the market for insulating windows, they may not last for more than a few seasons. Since these covers are also fairly expensive, it does not make sense to store them for off-grid or post-crisis needs.

DIY Fire Logs

Right now, devices used to make fire bricks and logs are as close as your favorite hardware store; but in a time after a major crisis there will be no place to buy them.

Fortunately, you can use simple materials from around the house, the yard, or even a junk pile to make a fire log or fire brick maker.

Materials Needed

- 3/4" to 1" diameter dowel rod about 24" long
- Newspapers
- 5 gal bucket and water to soak the paper in.

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How to Make Fire Logs

For soaking the paper, place the newspaper in the buckets still folded into sections. Fill the buckets with water, and let soak 1 to 2 hours, then prepare for rolling the logs.

Standing at a sink or other water proof surface, take the first wet section of the newspaper out of the bucket.

Place the dowel rod about 1 inch down from the top of the wet paper and begin to roll the dowel rod down the newspaper.



Start the paper near one end of the dowel so that it is easier to push off once you are done rolling paper. As you roll the newspaper squeeze out excess water. After you have rolled up 2-3 inches of the wet paper, shape and compress the log with your hands to get more excess water out. Pull the dowel rod out of the freshly made paper fire log.

Air Drying the Newspaper Fire Logs

The completed fire logs must be completely dry before burning.

Store logs in a shed or other covered area where the temperature and breeze can air dry them.

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If you do not have a shed, stack the wet logs on a platform, old pallets, or anything else that will keep the wet logs off the ground.

Cover with a tarp to keep the logs from getting wet due to weather conditions.

It will take at least a week for the logs to dry.

DIY Fire Bricks



Materials and Tools

Three 5gal. Buckets. (One bucket will have holes cut or drilled into it to make a sieve, one to be cut down to make a press, and the last bucket to be used as the outer water holding bucket.

- 1 drill to cut the holes in the bucket.
- 1 hand saw to make the water press.
- 1 machete to cut up the large fire brick into smaller ones.
- Old mail, newspapers, dead leaves, dead brush, tree clippings, paper towels and old paper rollers, paper plates, napkins, beer boxes /soda boxes, egg cartons, wood chips/saw dust, or any other bio mass that can be burned.
- Two 2"x4"X 3' long for drainage boards (if you are planing to reuse the water).

How to Make Fire Bricks

Put the sieve 5 gal. bucket inside the other normal 5 gal. bucket. Fill these buckets 3/4 full of water. Rip or break up all of the fire brick materials into small pieces. Throw them in the water bucket to soak for about a day or until the paper is mushy.

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Pull the sieve bucket out of the water bucket. Put the two 2"x4"s over the water bucket and place the sieve bucket on top of the boards to drain (if you are planning to reuse some of the water). If not stand up the sieve bucket and just let it drain out.

To remove more water and to compress the contents of the sieve bucket put the bucket press in the sieve and stand on top of it. When as much water as possible has been pressed out of the sieve bucket, it is time to remove the fire brick from the sieve bucket.



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To remove the fire brick, turn the sieve bucket upside down and tap on the bottom. The fire brick will fall out.



Dry bricks the same way as paper logs. To speed up drying, cut the bricks into pizza wedge shapes with the machete.

DIY Candle Heater

No matter whether you are concerned about the heightened risk of social collapse or want to be free of big oil, a candle heater can reduce cost and improve your survival odds at the same time. You can use candle heaters safely for heating and cooking in the home, as well as when you are living outdoors.

The candle heater uses the metal bolts, nuts, and washer "fins" to transfer heat from the candle up into the clay pots. From there, the heat is absorbed by the pots, and radiated in a wider pattern than you would get from a bare candle flame. One votive candle can heat a small room for 6 – 8 hours. This project will cost you around 20\$ for the required parts.

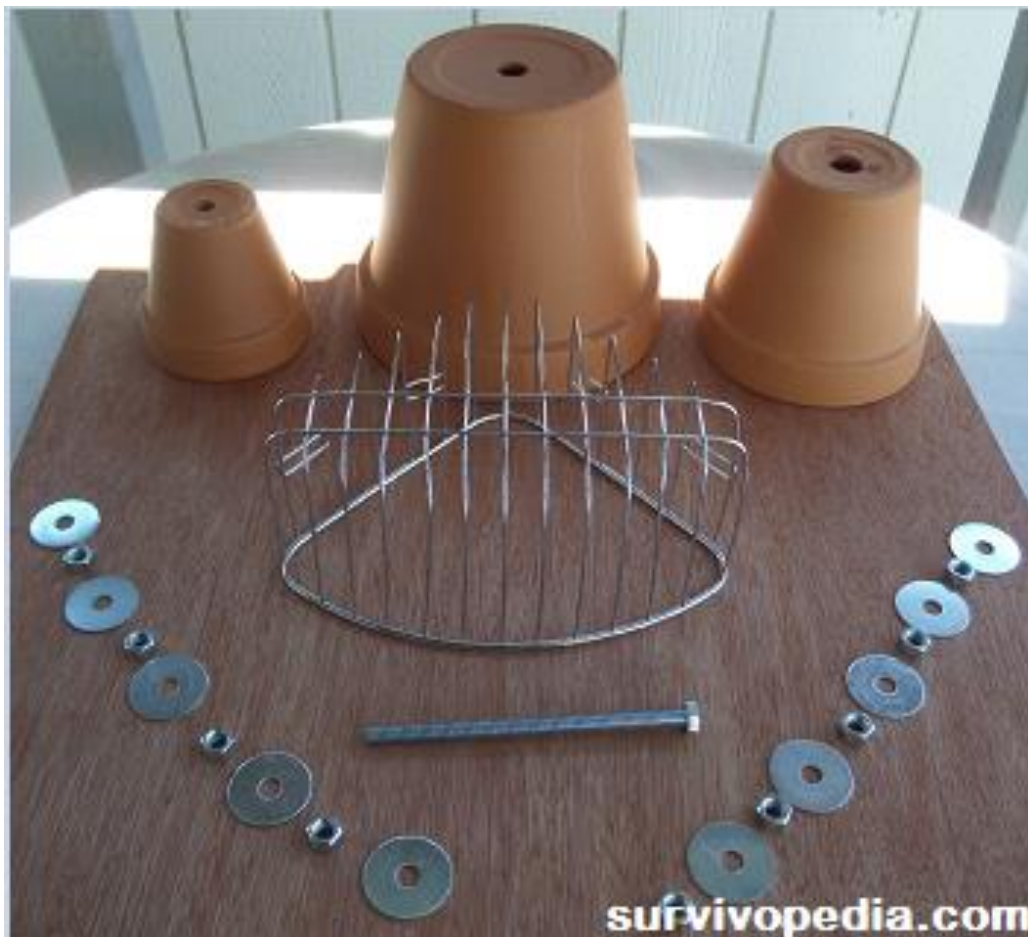
Tools and Parts

There are no specific tools required for the project, but you will need the following parts:

- 1 – 8" unglazed terra cotta flower pot (approx \$3.50)

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- 1 – 6" unglazed terra cotta flower pot (approx \$2.50)
- 1 – 4" unglazed terra cotta flower pot (approx \$1.50)
- 1 – 6"x 1/4" metal bolt (less than \$1.00 each – zinc free, as zinc can release toxins into the air when heated)
- 9 – 1/4" metal nuts (approx \$2.00 for all 9)
- 10 – 1 1/2" metal washers (less than \$3.00 for all 10).
- metal basket large enough and strong enough to support weight of the candle heater. (Note - you may be able to use a 1 gallon paint can or similar sized can in place of a metal basket. If you do, be sure to drill enough holes in it to allow sufficient air circulation for the candle. (I used a bare metal corner shower holder that cost \$4.50)
- 1 – votive candle (approx .50 cents each)
- 1 – fireproof tray for candle drippings (less than \$1.00 each).



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You can also make more use of the candle heater, using the optional parts below:

- terra cotta saucer large enough to fit 8" flower pot (approx \$1.50)
- 4 – 1/4" metal nuts (approx \$1.00 for all 4).

This assembly is only used if you want to use the candle heater for cooking. Once the candle heater is completed, simply place nuts 90 degrees apart on the bottom of the 8" planter and rest the terra cotta saucer upside down on top of them.

How to Make the Candle Heater

Place terra cotta pots in the oven on low heat for several hours until all moisture is removed from them. You will also need to dry them out on a weekly basis if you do not use them for heating purposes.

- Step 1: Place one washer on the bolt.
- Step 2: Place bolt through the 8" flower pot so that the washer sits on the outside of the pot.
- Step 3: Turn planter upside down and put one washer on the bolt at the bottom of the pot.
- Step 4: Secure the washers with 1 nut. The nut should be tight enough to keep the bolt in place, but not so tight that the clay pot will crack when it expands during heating.
- Step 5: Place second nut on the bolt. Take 6" pot and place in the 8" planter so that bolt goes through the hole. Adjust second nut so that rim of 6" pot is even with the 8" pot.
- Step 6: Remove 6" pot and place washer on top of second nut.
- Step 7: Place 6" pot on top of washer
- Step 8: Place another washer on bolt inside 6" pot
- Step 9: Secure washers for 6" pot with nut. Once again, the nut should be tight enough to keep the pot in place, but not so tight that the clay pot would crack upon heating.
- Step 10 – 13: Repeat steps 5 – 9, only use 4" pot inside of the 6" pot.
- Step 14: Place another washer on top of the nut securing the 4" pot.

Step 15: Place a nut on top of the next washer.

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Repeat Steps 14 and 15 to finish building the radiator assembly. You should have 4 washer "fins" and approximately 3/4 inch of bolt left bare.



Operating the Candle Heater

First of all, find a place where the candle heater will not be disturbed by pets, children, or anyone else that might knock it over. Set basket or can on a fireproof surface and well away from anything else that might catch fire. Put candle on drip tray and place both inside the bottom of the basket. The candle should be just enough below the rim of the basket so that air can reach the flame from all sides.

Light the candle, and turn the candle heater upside down and place on top of the basket. The bolt should be as close as possible to the candle flame so that a maximal amount of heat transfers from the candle to the bolt and fins.

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Important Note: If you must move the candle heater for any reason, do so with caution. The outer pot can reach well over 150 degrees in temperature and should not be handled with bare hands until completely cool. The metal bolt and fins can also stay hot for longer than you might expect.

Once you make your first candle heater, you will never want to go back to open fires for camping, let alone put up with high winter heating bills again. So let's get to work!