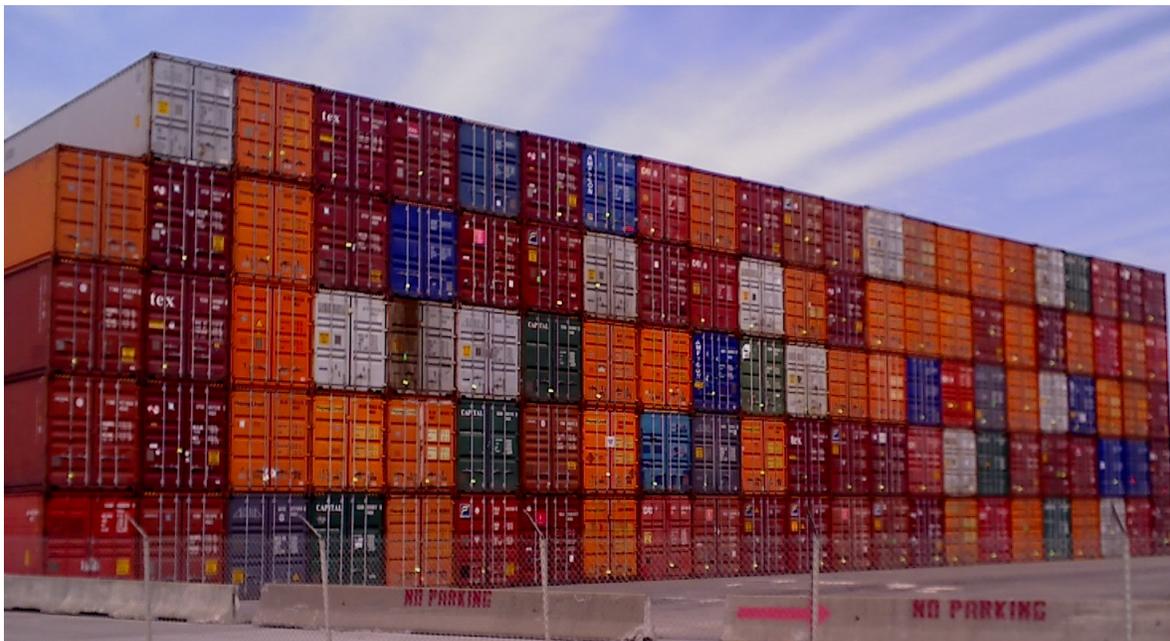


A Long-Term Survival Guide - Container Cabins:

(A Quick Guide to Shipping Container Shelters)



Thousands of cargo containers arrive by ship every day, and many are available for sale.



Every imported product arrives in containers like these. They are cheap, sturdy, and stackable.

Acquiring a survival retreat can be a real financial and logistical challenge in today's economic climate. Even with the recent (and on-going) declines in real estate values, most homes are still way over-priced.

Traditional home designs are also unsuitable for many survival purposes. The average American home is very vulnerable to many of the dangers that us survival-minded types tend to worry about, such as fires, storm damage, loss of utilities, and criminal activity. One solution to some of these problems is to build a cheap home or cabin from one or more steel shipping containers, also known as cargo containers.



Converting Shipping Containers: a cheap and clever way to make a small cabin, or survival shelter.

Used shipping containers can be found for sale almost everywhere. They are almost always eight feet wide and eight feet high, and come in three standard lengths; twenty feet long, twenty-eight feet long, and forty feet long. These steel boxes have been used as storage sheds for years, but converting them into shelters is now becoming very popular as well. There are many ways to use one or more containers to make a small cabin or survival shelter, so here are a few examples, to give you the general idea.



One 20-foot cargo container can be used to make a tiny 8x20 container cabin.



A simple steel awning greatly improves the appearance and utility of this small container cabin.

For small cabins made from one cargo container, the basic decisions are where to add the doors and windows (and how many, and how large), how to divide up and furnish the interior, and what kind of utilities to add to the cabin. I prefer the simple and secure approach, using small windows, steel shutters, and burglar-resistant metal bars and screens over the windows, but many design options are available. For people who prefer their retreats to blend in as much as possible, container shelters can be disguised to look like hunting cabins, guest houses, or mobile homes, while still retaining most of the advantages of the steel frame and exterior, and they are cheaper than almost any other prefabricated structure.



This container has been converted to look very similar to a single-wide mobile home.



Some container cabins have been made with large glass doors, which make for poor security.



Large glass doors and windows make cabins very vulnerable. Think small and fortified instead.



This excellent design uses glass doors set back inside the container a few feet, allowing the original doors to be swung open for light and access, or locked closed like giant steel shutters, if necessary. Using small windows and the steel doors as security shutters make this cabin difficult to break into.



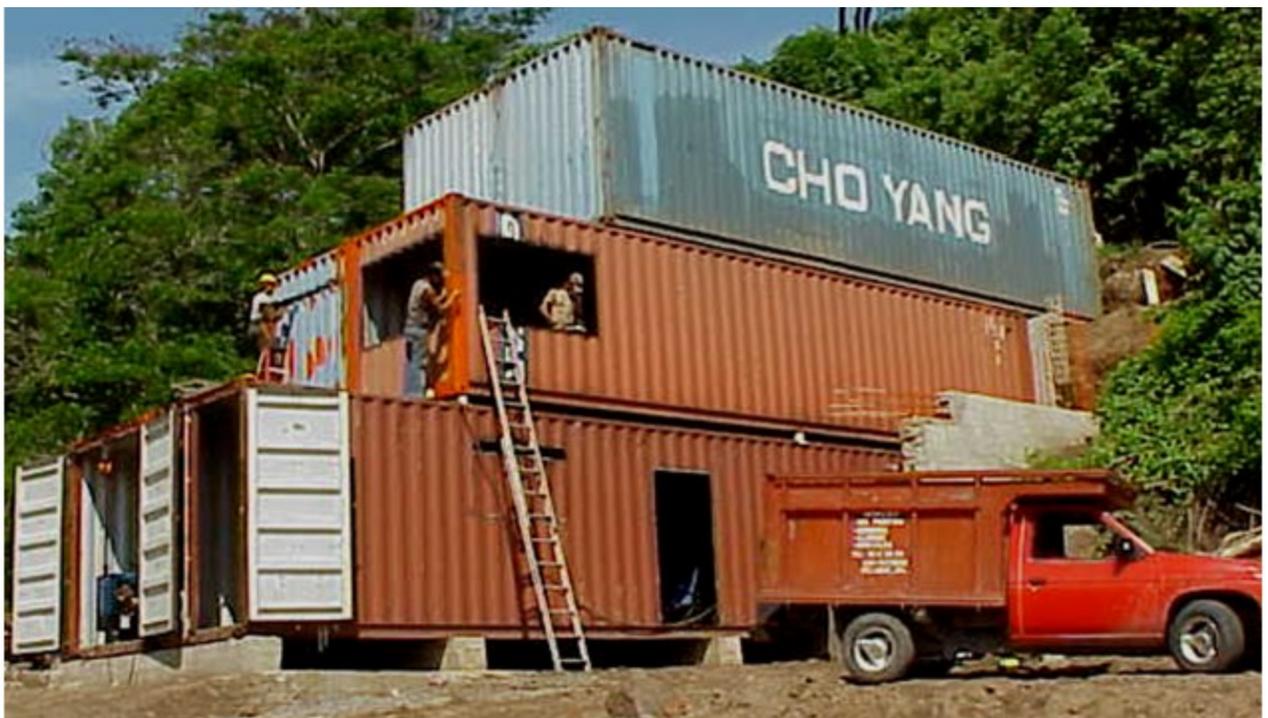
The first step in converting a container into a cabin is to pick a design, and cut out the openings.



Once the doors and windows are cut, the openings can be framed, and then finished.

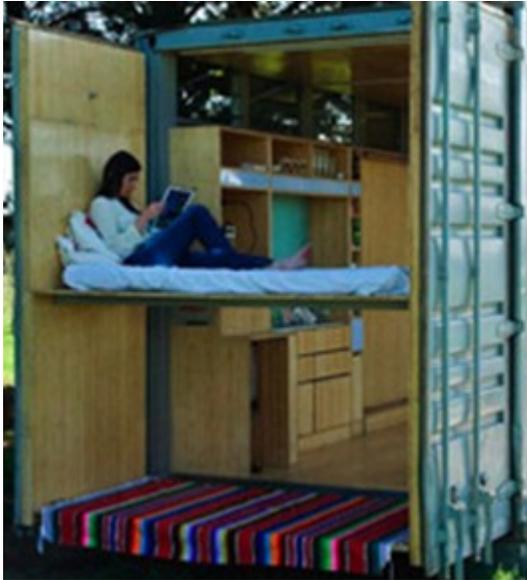


Cargo containers are designed to stack, so making a two-story cabin from two containers is easy.



This three-story design uses six cargo containers of different lengths. The staggered placement of the two upper levels creates two natural elevated areas, which can be used as balconies, by adding railings. Like a castle, security can be increased by using small windows and the minimum number of doors on the lowest level, with burglar bars and screens. The upper levels can then have larger windows and sliding glass patio doors, for more light, and better views.

To increase self-sufficiency, the upper level could even be converted into an elevated greenhouse, by replacing the wall panels with fiberglass greenhouse panels, and adding large skylights to the roof. For survival use, the balconies can be made into elevated firing platforms, by adding some sandbags.



One of the fun aspects of shipping containers is the ease of access to the outdoors, just by opening the large doors on the end. This makes it possible to add unique features to your cabin, such as the elevated outdoor bunk shown on the left here, which can be moved back inside with just a few moment's effort.

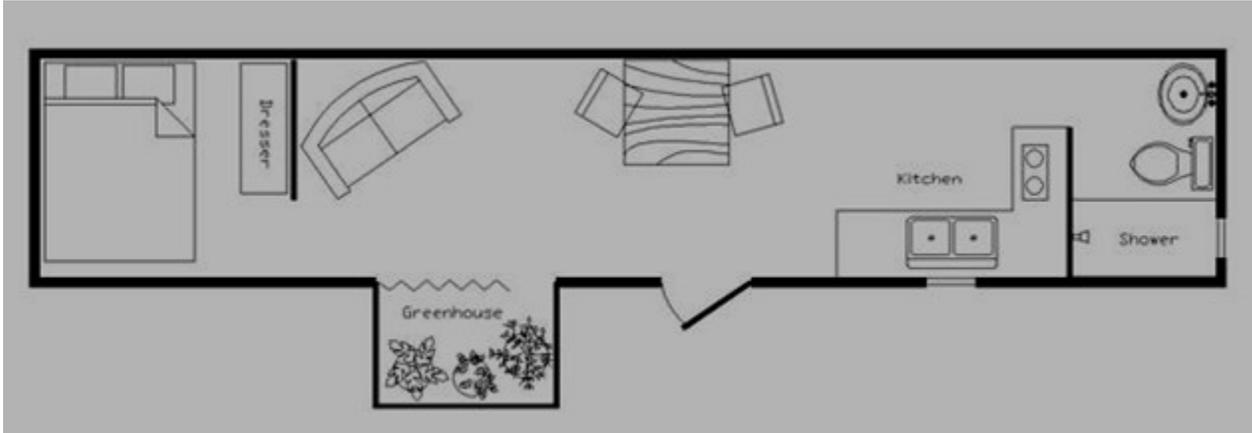


Cabin interiors can be as simple or as well-finished as desired. Due to the 8 x 8 space limitation, many traditional space-saving designs, such as the wall bed shown here, work very well in these tiny shelters. Stacked bunk beds are a good choice, for guest rooms and children's bedrooms, and shelves and cabinets are always handy for storage. The interiors of motor homes and travel trailers can be studied, to find features that you may want to incorporate into your container cabin.

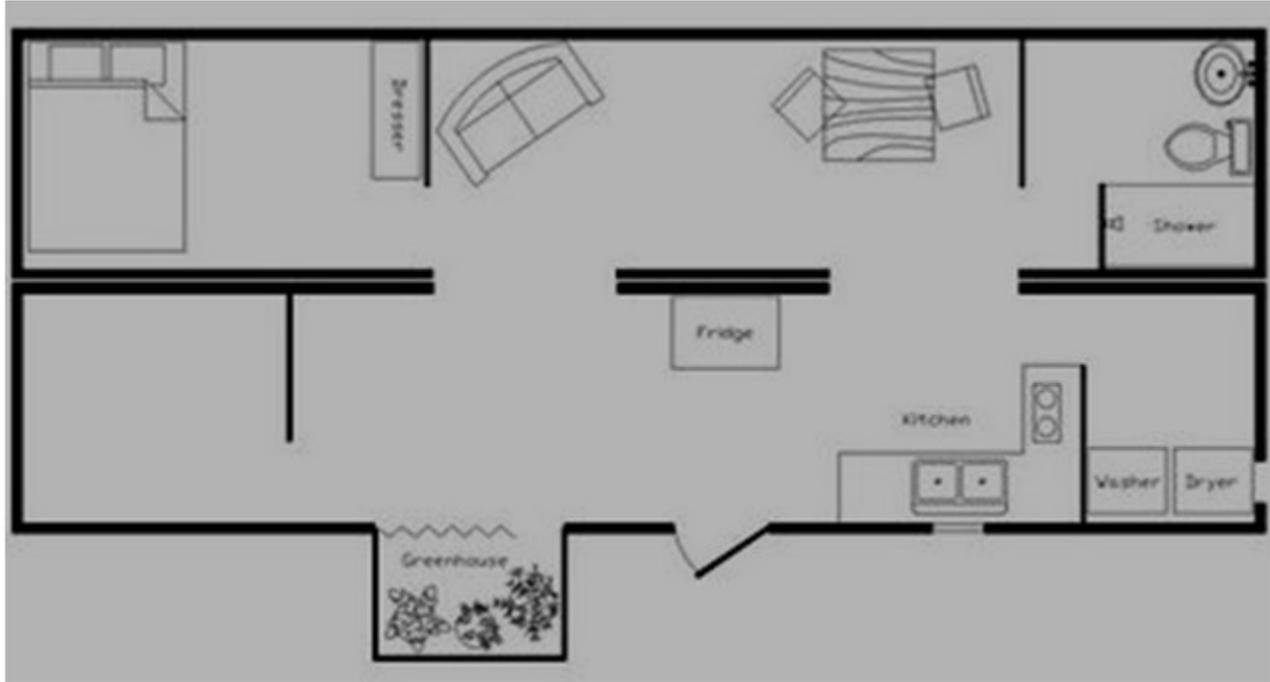
Utilities can be a simple kerosene lamp, bottled water, a camp sink and a porta-potty, or you can have all of the modern conveniences; running water, electricity and high-speed internet access, if you prefer.



Most interiors tend to end up being arranged like RVs or mobile homes, due to space limitations.



Here is a typical interior layout, for a cabin made from one 40 foot shipping container.



Using two 40 foot shipping containers gives you more space, and possible interior arrangements.

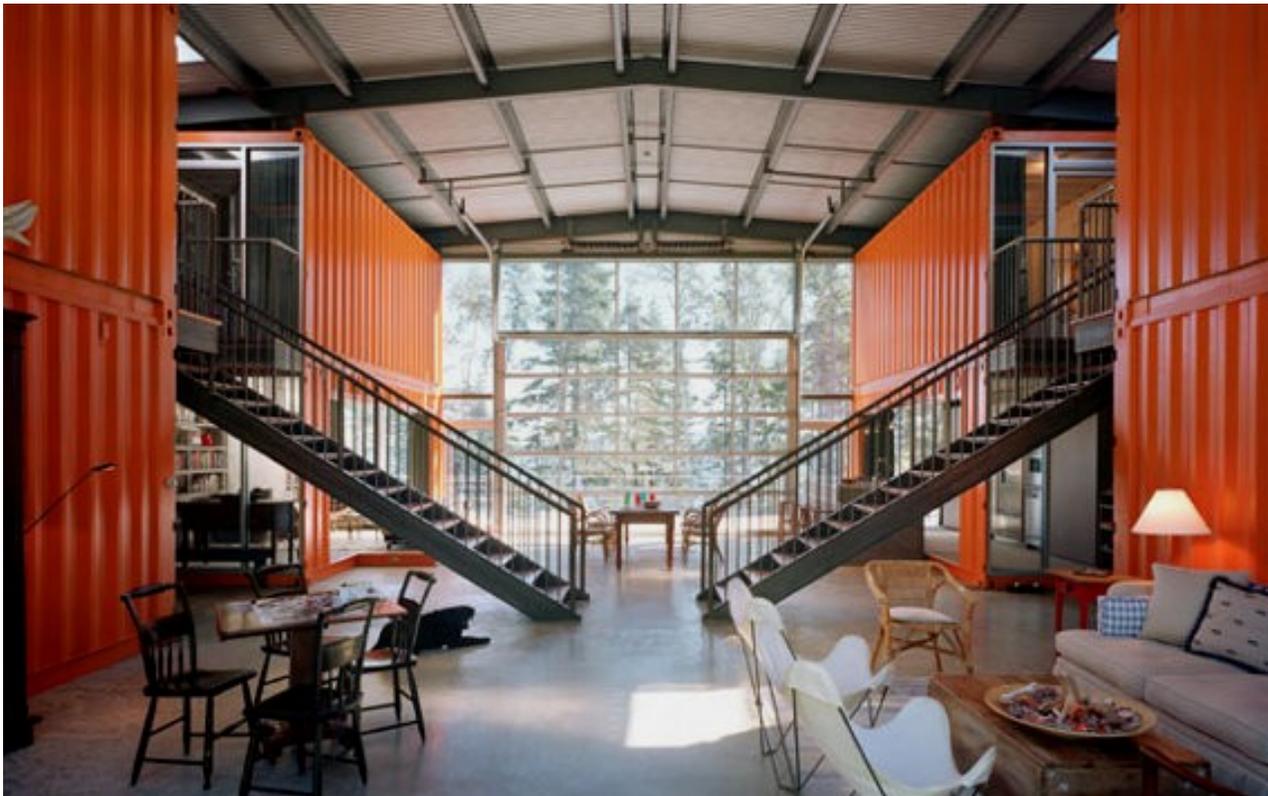


Here is a two-story cabin, created from four shipping containers. This shelter has had an overhanging roof added, and a porch roof is being constructed on the right side.

Once you have the basic shelter in place, adding extra features can be done at your leisure. A pitched roof, carport, covered porch, awning, patio, sun room, attached greenhouse, or any other desired improvement can be added to the basic shipping container shelter, to improve its functional utility.



I like this open shelter design, from the Steve Lee “I Like Guns” video, made from two containers with a wooden deck between them, and covered by a large steel roof that bridges over the two cargo containers.



Here is a more complex version of the same idea. Eight containers have been stacked two levels high, to form the side walls of a large, open shelter with a steel roof. The containers are the rooms of this cabin.

So as you can see, shipping containers can be used to make a variety of sizes and styles of cabins and shelters. This is only a fraction of the possible arrangements that could be modified for use as a retreat.