

Mary Spires - smallhouselifestyle.wordpress.com

Basic Stats:

- What is your name? **Mary**
- How many people do you/will be living in your tiny house? **One**
- What part of the country do you live in? **Missouri/Kansas**
- How many square feet will your house be? **320-360**
- When did you start your project? **I started downsizing in early 2012 and moved into a 600 sf house. I bought land in November and moved a portable cabin onto it in February. I don't live in the house yet, so I go out and work on it when I have time. No interior work has been completed yet.**
- Is your house complete? **No**
- Have you been documenting your tiny house build and if so, where can people find that information? **Yes, smallhouselifestyle.wordpress.com**

Background:

- Why did you decide to build? **I'm not really building, at least not yet. I wanted to live in a smaller house for several years... my dream for a smaller house was probably born about a year after I moved into the "big" house and realized how much time I was spending on it and how much money was being poured into space I didn't even use, much less want.**
- What was your life like before your tiny house? Were you fairly active, have you always had 'projects' going on? Were you fairly sedentary and looking for a change? Did you tend to work too much? (This question is an effort at trying to figure out WHO gravitates to the tiny house lifestyle) **Mom would say, "it's the challenge of it." I like small houses because they are affordable and fit my lifestyle. They are easy to clean, prevent over-accumulation of "stuff", and involve personal creativity and action. I remodeled two repos before getting this small cabin, and will probably eventually build. In the mean time, I will try the 320 sf on for size. As far as personality, I am not a type A. I take things as they come and like to see works in progress. I'm one who always has several projects going on. I'm more into outdoor space than indoor space. When I'm inside I'm probably either eating or sleeping... and that's why small houses make sense to me. Neither eating nor sleeping takes more than 500 sf of space, and probably takes a whole lot less.**
- How did you come to hear about the movement, figure out it was right for you and get started? **I was interested in small houses before I ever heard of the small house movement. My first interest began when I decided I wanted to build but wanted to stay within a certain budget. I heard about the small house movement about three years ago and was hooked. Now, with plans of moving to Missouri, it just seemed like the right time to start the project.**
- What is/was your design inspiration? **Practicality and cost are probably my main "inspirations." I am a great visualizer and ideas-person, so solutions for everything that hasn't worked in other houses has influenced my design plans. So has the idea that this will be the land I grow old on—the cabin will be home for at least 2-3 years, and the house I build after that will be home for at least a decade, more than likely. Dad used to dream of building, and I learned basic drafting almost the same time as I learned to read. And years of visiting different houses for sale with him has given me a huge number of ideas to work with and hone to what I want.**

Technical:

- How do/did you find the time to work on your house with a job, kid(s), relationships, AND building a house? Did you do anything special to keep the balance? **That's why this project is slow. I don't have the balance problems some do, because I can only visit the cabin a few weekends a year right now. This year I will "vacation" to my**

- cabin for two weeks' of work on it, and hopefully I'll move there in August or September. Relationships have always developed around my interest in remodeling and building. I don't expect that to change. And a couple hours here and there is enough for me, I probably need to carve out more time to work, but there's too much living to do and I love the 'work in progress' concept too much to push quickly to a finished project. Besides, having a work in progress helps me visualize best use of space. For instance, when I design the kitchen, I'll probably order base cabinets and shove them around a few weeks til I get them right where I want them. Same with other house elements. The only thing that has to be exactly where I put it the first time is the toilet.
- Have you run into any problems with your local codes? How did you solve them? **No. There is no planning and zoning in the county I will live in. I don't live in city limits, so there are no city codes to deal with either. As long as I have a septic system or approved alternative and the fire marshal signs off on fire safety, I'm fine.**
 - Where did you get the tools that you use? Were they yours, borrowed, rented etc.? **I own most of the tools I will use from my former remodel projects. Anything else I can borrow or rent.**
 - How long did (are you expecting) construction to take? **The cabin will take a couple years, I expect. The house, if I eventually build, probably won't take quite that long because I'll have it built for me and just add some simple things at the end.**
 - What is/was the most limiting factor for your build? **The fact that I don't live on the land yet.**
 - Is your house on a trailer? **No.**
 - Do you have accessory houses/dwellings that you use to supplement storage/working/living? **Yes, a "garage" that is in very poor repair (but makes decent storage and will have some good scrap at some point) and probably soon a barn style shed that will double as a garage.**
 - Where did you get your plans? **I created my plans from scratch.**
 - Have you consulted any 'professionals'? (structural, mechanical, plumbing, design etc.)? **Definitely. For foundation work, and at some point for plumbing and maybe solar. Also to hook the electrical up (the cabin was already wired.)**
 - Are you insuring your house? With who? **Yes, Shelter Insurance. We aren't sure it will be insured as a house or a "structure" yet. But the house won't cost more than \$15000 once it's completely finished. I'm more concerned about contents and liability insurance.**
 - Have you been using any sponsorships to help fund your house? **No**

Specifics

- What sort of items do you have for cooking? **Toaster oven, microwave maybe, crock pot, electric skillet. I might get a two burner stove, but I doubt it.**
- Are you tied to the power grid or are you off grid? **Not yet. There is water, septic, and electrical on the property. Whether I have the electrical turned on is still up for debate, but I will have the underground to it installed just in case.**
- Are you going to have a washer and/or dryer? **Hopefully**
- Where does your water come from? **County water, rain collection**
- What kind of toilet are you going to have? **Standard, low water flow**
- What do you use for a heat source if anything? **Space heater, window style heating unit. I am still debating this and will probably know more after I'm there a few cold days.**
- What are some of the space savings tricks you used? **I'll have deeper under-bed storage, storage under the couch, and shelves in the kitchen. I will also use the space generally hidden between wall studs, by leaving one side of the interior stud walls open and putting shelves in them. This will work in the bathroom for storage space and in the kitchen. It isn't the greatest for soundproofing, but that 3" of lost space has always bugged me!**

- The best “trick” I’ve used in the 600 sf is just not to have so much stuff. I essentially have two very small closets. It works for me.**
- What do you have for insulation? **The cabin was already insulated with blown in insulation.**
 - Where are you planning to park your tiny house? **My own land.**
 - How much will/did your tiny house cost? **\$15,000 for the cabin itself, no more than \$50,000 for it and the land and all improvements.**
 - What is/was the most expensive part of your house? **The land it sits on. Next most expensive will be the bathroom and kitchen counters, sinks, and the shower.●**
 - ‘Best’ injury story (worst injury)? **None yet on this house. Worst in my remodeling days was getting my fingers caught as I laid the last piece of very tight fitting subfloor in place. That was some major pain, but didn’t require ER thankfully.**
 - What has been your biggest accomplishment with your tiny house? **Getting the land and the materials as cheaply as I have, and the way different people came together to tear down an old fire-gutted house on the property and recycle different parts of it.**
 - What is/will be the biggest benefit to living in a tiny house? **Only one?!?! Cheap utilities. Cheap property taxes. Cozy house. I suppose best of all so far is that I got rid of over 2000 pounds (a full ton) of stuff and decluttered my life. The benefits of that have been wonderful not only in that I can find things and have less stress, but also that I spend much less on purchases now and yet feel so much richer than I ever did when I bought whatever I wanted.**
 - Is there anything you’ll miss about living in a standard house? What will you miss the most? **Nothing, really. I miss my yard right now because I’m in a rental with very little yard space. And there are a few times I’ve missed the bathtub. I love not having a stove/oven or full sized fridge, don’t really miss the washer/dryer, and haven’t missed the extra space at all.**
 - What has been the scariest part about building your own house? **When the cabin was moved to the property it wasn’t set right. Knowing it could be damaged structurally before I get it set properly has really bothered me. Also trusting people I don’t know to help with things, and worrying when I’m not there that something might be damaged or stolen.**
 - If you could change one thing about your house what would it be? **I’d be living in it.:) I’d rather have a square house than a rectangular one. But that’s how this one came.**
 - Have friends and family been skeptical or supportive of your ideas? **Most people are excited for me, and maybe even a bit jealous. My parents are skeptical, Dad outright and Mom more quietly.**