

BUILDING POWER

Buyers of unserviced property often make a mistake: buying a cheap generator to build their home. After the building is complete, they look into an alternative energy system, but by that time the generator is dead and they've wasted a great deal of money on fuel. And that screaming loud generator has them thinking twice about alternative energy.

Buying the alternative energy system you'll eventually use first has a distinct advantage, according to Kevin Pegg, owner of Victoria, BC's Energy Alternatives: it's there to help you build.

Energy Alternatives now offers custom built power sheds. Four feet by six feet is an ideal footprint to hold batteries, inverters and a small generator, and options include siding, and roofing material. Over-sized cedar skids allow the unit to be skidded into place. Solar panels can be installed on the roof of the shed, on the ground nearby, or pole-mounted.

Modern inverters are much more practical than a generator for a construction crew, whose power usage is generally low, with large bursts of

power that happen only for a few seconds to make a cut with a table saw, skil saw, etc. "With a 2.4 kW inverter, a crew of two or three can operate without interruption. A 1.5 kW inverter is fine for a one person crew," Pegg says.

A generator has 100% of its power available all the time, whether you need it or not. Some generators have an automatic throttle feature to save fuel, but that means a lag in power when you use your saw while the generator speeds up. A battery/inverter system delivers the exact amount of power required for a given job, and larger inverters, such as a 4 kW model, will always outperform much larger generators due to their surge capacity.

What equipment goes into the shed is up to you. As with all alternative energy systems it can be tailored to your needs. For more information, call Energy Alternatives at 1-800-265-8898 or www.EnergyAlternatives.ca. — Ed.

KEVIN PEGG PHOTO



Several outdoor plugs will allow this Salt Spring Island couple to connect power to the trailers they currently use for their home and office. After the home is built, a permanent electrical connection will be hooked up.

IN ROADS

Give 'Em Enough Rope

entertaining kids with a "single rope" swing

Once you find the right branch, the rest is easy. After tramping through the forest that borders the back of our Pender Island, BC property, we found just what we were looking for: a strong lofty tree. The trunk arched over gracefully and about six metres from ground level, with a secondary limb continuing straight upward. This junction created the perfect crotch to support a single-rope swing.

Without detracting from the site's natural appeal, we cleared away the underbrush and some scrub trees. What opened up was a private little spot spacious enough for freestyle swinging. Best of all, the surrounding canopy of tall trees provides shelter on hot sunny days.

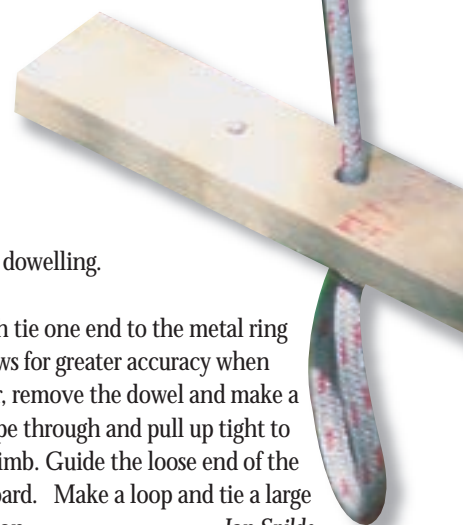
MATERIALS & CONSTRUCTION:

- One piece of 2x4 measuring 20 inches (50 cm). Drill a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch hole in the centre.
- $\frac{5}{8}$ inch yacht braid, about eight metres long (depends on how high the overhead bough is).
- A heavy metal ring or piece of wood dowelling.

To get the rope up and over the branch tie one end to the metal ring or dowelling. (The added weight allows for greater accuracy when throwing the rope.) Toss the rope over, remove the dowel and make a slipknot. Slide the other end of the rope through and pull up tight to secure the loop around the overhead limb. Guide the loose end of the rope through the centre hole of the board. Make a loop and tie a large

knot the desired height for the board to rest on.

— Jan Spilde



JAN SPILDE PHOTOS

There's nothing like a swing to help keep the kids entertained. This one was designed, constructed, and ready to go in under an hour.