

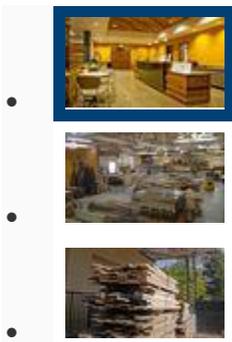
# Business turns old wood into re-useful products

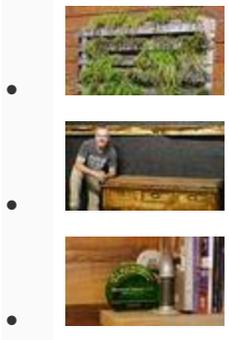
Beth Casper, Special to the Statesman 7:16 a.m. PDT October 19, 2015



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*(Photo: Photos Special to the Statesman Journal)*

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Bruce Wadleigh is in the business of preserving history.

He uses wood from old barns and other buildings to make new structures — everything from wall panels in restaurants and shops to floors in houses and office spaces.

Barnwood Naturals, in downtown Salem, got its start in 2006 when Wadleigh's friend asked for his help to dismantle an old barn. One look at the beautiful old wood planks and Wadleigh knew he had to leave his mortgage banking and development career.

Almost 10 years later, Barnwood Naturals has completed projects across the country, been featured on national television and reclaimed more than 1 million board feet of old growth.

Its practices have earned it EarthWISE certification through Marion County — showcasing its efforts to conserve precious resources and tread lightly on the environment.

“There is a lot of great material that we can use that uses a lot less energy and emits a lot less carbon,” Wadleigh said. “We like to design and build projects with what we have so that we are not taking down more trees and we are buying no plastic.”

Clients choose Barnwood Naturals partly because the wood is recycled and holds history, but also because the wood looks so much better than wood purchased now.

“The coloring is much different than new wood,” Wadleigh said. “Doug fir at the big box stores looks nothing like the old growth. There is a lot of character in this older wood.”

The Gath family barn in Turner is Wadleigh's favorite reclamation project. Built in 1912 with mortise-and-tenon construction, the barn was so well-made that it took Wadleigh four months to dismantle it. Mortise-and-tenon construction is a way of joining two pieces of wood where one piece of wood has a hole in it (the mortise), and the other piece has a “tongue” (the tenon) to fill the hole exactly. The joint can be glued, wedged or pinned to keep it in place.

The wood planks and beams from the Gath barn ended up in projects all over the country: an art gallery at Pier 39 in San Francisco, the remodeled Miami Dolphins stadium, a restaurant in Canada, and one of the Nike offices in Beaverton.

About 80 percent of the wood in Wadleigh's 20,000-square-foot warehouse was reclaimed in the Pacific Northwest. The rest was found in barns and buildings back east. In turn, 80 percent of Wadleigh's design projects end up on the East Coast.

“Half of what I come up with is by accident,” Wadleigh said, laughing. “It is not like I am some great planner and designer. Sometimes my mistakes are the coolest things we've done.”

The reclaimed boards and finished projects cross the country on trucks, but Wadleigh ensures that he is filling trucks that would be making the trip anyway — in other words, his projects make sure that trucks don't cross the country empty.

"It's much better than bringing in cedar from China," he said. "We are employing people locally and these trucks are going back and forth anyway. We are not cutting any trees, and we are not going through any kind of processing plant with this material. We don't have a smokestack."

The only by-product of Wadleigh's process is sawdust, a product that he gives away for free to animal farmers for bedding and blueberry farmers for mulch. In fact, there is too much demand for his supply.

"We recycle everything," Wadleigh said of his business and the 5 employees who work there. "If we do have trash — about once every 3 to 4 months — we will take a load to transfer station."

The special finishes and paints for particular projects are made with low- or no-toxic products. All of the pallets used for shipping are reused.

In the last several years, Wadleigh has expanded his reclamation business to include all kinds of materials such as planter boxes, metal, and billboards. He sees a future in reclaiming all things.

Metal is used to fabricate frames for sliding barn doors, for example, and billboards are being used to create a shed to keep wood dry when it rains.

"The future is really exciting," he said. "There is so much still that has not been done with reclaimed materials. There is a great opportunity for artists and others who think out of the box to reuse materials for products that people need."

For more information about the EarthWISE program, go to [www.mcEarthWISE.net](http://www.mcEarthWISE.net) or call (503) 365-3188.