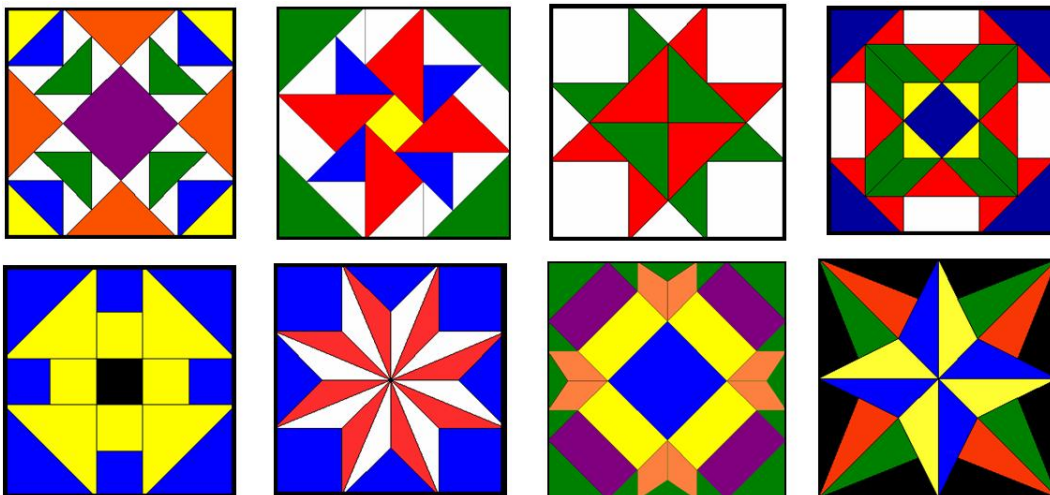




Barn Quilt Instructions

*Directions for designing, painting,
constructing and installing barn quilts*

Adapted from instructions developed by the Barn Quilt Committee
in Sac County, Iowa
based on their project experience in 2005 and 2006



Designing a Barn Quilt

The Columbia County, Wisconsin barn quilts are generally designed with traditional quilt patterns. Volunteers select the patterns, with assistance from a barn quilt volunteer if requested, and typically choose a pattern that reflects the history of the farm building or family. Choose a pattern that you like from quilt books or web sites. You may want to use your favorite computer search engine to look for quilt patterns on-line. There are many sites with free quilt patterns. In order to make it easier to paint we suggest that people choose patterns with straight lines. It is much more challenging to paint the curved lines in patterns accurately. After choosing a pattern, design the barn quilt with primary and secondary colors. Choose colors that make the design stand out and look good with your property. Columbia County suggests using bold colors to draw the tourist's eye to your quilt. The colors are bright enough to be easily seen when driving past at the speed limit. Columbia County also recommends using a border on each barn quilt. The border gives the quilt block a framed appearance.

In some locations, barn quilts have been painted directly on the barns. However, one of the project goals in Columbia County, Wisconsin is to involve youth in painting barn quilts. Not wanting to place young people on scaffolding or ladders, we recommend that project leaders use plywood for the quilt blocks and paint at ground level. Since a sheet of plywood is 4' x 8', the Columbia County barn quilts are primarily 8 feet square, which is a nice size for most barns.

For an 8-foot barn quilt, volunteers design a 3-inch border around the outside edge of the quilt. This leaves 7.5 feet for the quilt pattern itself. Volunteers print out or create a line drawing of the quilt pattern 7.5 inches square. You can use one of several different methods to transfer your pattern to the larger size. Local quilters can advise you on this process if you need help. With a scale of one inch=one foot, it is fairly simple to transfer the paper pattern to plywood. Most of the patterns are symmetrical. If you fold the line drawing in half, each half is a mirror image. Since volunteers transfer the pattern onto two sheets of plywood, they usually determine how to draw half of the pattern on the first sheet of plywood and then replicate the pattern on the second sheet. Borders are not mandatory; you can choose to do a barn quilt without a border.

The quilt pattern is drawn on plywood that has already been primed with exterior latex paint. (See *Painting a Barn Quilt*.) Volunteers first draw the 3-inch border on the ends and one long side of each piece of plywood. (Placing the two unmarked sides together results in an 8-foot square block, with a 3-inch border around the outside edge.) Then they mark the pattern on one piece of plywood, using yardsticks or other straight-edged tools. The patterns are marked with light pencil lines. With one half of the block pattern finished, draw the pattern on the second half. People have learned from experience that it is a good idea to put the two pieces of plywood together after drawing the pattern to make sure that all the lines match at the center.

The final step in designing the barn quilt is to mark colors for painting. Volunteers use a color diagram of the quilt block design to show how the segments should be painted. Color markings are done lightly with pencil, to minimize the bleed-through of the pencil lines after painting.

Suggestions for Painting a Barn Quilt

The Columbia County, Wisconsin barn quilts are generally painted by volunteers; some of them are school-age youth. Project leaders with the barn quilt project in Iowa consulted with a

reputable paint company representative about plans for the barn quilt project and subsequently offered the following advice regarding paint choices.

High quality latex exterior paint was chosen, both for priming and top coats. The top coats of paint had a semi-gloss finish. Volunteers rolled two-four coats (recommended) of primer onto plywood, with drying time between the coats. The edges, which are most susceptible to moisture, were painted four times. After priming, the plywood was marked with the quilt pattern. All painting was done on two separate sheets of plywood. Columbia County volunteers found it was much easier to paint the two parts of the quilt block separately, rather than putting them together and trying to paint it as a whole.

After marking, volunteers used frog tape to outline the segments of the same color for painting. Taping the design took quite a bit of time, but the results were worth it. Professional painters may be able to paint straight lines without taping, but most volunteers cannot. When using the frog tape, use a wallpaper roller or a similar tool to press the tape edges down firmly. Otherwise, paint will tend to seep underneath the edge and some touch-up will be required after the painting is finished. The pieces of tape can be used at least twice when you have to move them to paint another color. The frog tape is really good about not pulling up paint when you remove the tape. Columbia County volunteers used it on freshly painted areas that had only dried a few hours with good results. They also found good results when the tape was left on for a longer period of time. In our opinion, the higher quality tape was worth the extra expense.

Plan to paint the lightest colors first. Columbia County volunteers discovered they could paint some lighter sections without taping first, because the pencil lines showed through and they could see where to tape for the next sections. The darker colors will cover spots of the lighter paint, but the lighter colors won't cover the darker spots easily. Painting can be done either with brushes or short rollers. The inexpensive 3-inch foam rollers worked really well and were easily cleaned and reused. Thinner coats of paint work better. (Most colors needed at least two coats of paint, with drying time between coats. Some colors required four or more coats. If there doesn't seem to be a solid block of color in the segments being painted, give them another coat or two. If you have white in your design, and you are using semi-gloss paint for the color coats, be sure to apply a white semi-gloss paint in the appropriate parts of the quilt pattern. The semi-gloss enamel looks different in the design than the flat primer.)

When painting the border, be sure to paint all the edges again. The edges are most susceptible to moisture so you need to give them extra protection with several coats of paint. When the painting is completed, you may find you need to do a bit of touch-up work. Minor drips of paint, seepage, or mismatched lines will not show up when the block is mounted on the peak of a barn. If you decide you need to do a bit of touch-up anyway, a fine artist brush works well. DO NOT stack the two parts of the barn quilt on top of each other. Even though the paint is dry to the touch, it still needs time for curing and the paint will stick when pieces are stacked. Do not use any sealant on top of the paint. The paint company representative advised against it, since sealants would yellow over time and would have to be stripped off when repainting became necessary. With four or more coats of paint on the plywood, it was found that the protection against weathering was sufficient. The lumber for the barn quilt frame also needs to be primed with two coats of paint on all sides and ends.

Suggestions for Constructing and Installing a Barn Quilt

Once the barn quilt is painted, the two parts need to be combined and placed on a frame for mounting. Columbia County, WI volunteers learned that transporting the quilt blocks to the barn site was much easier to do before the plywood pieces were mounted on the frame. As they fine-tuned the construction process, volunteers hauled the two painted pieces of plywood, the primed lumber for the frame, and all hardware to the barn site. Then they constructed the frame, mounted the plywood on the frame, and installed the quilt on the barn.

The following is a supply list used in Columbia County, WI to construct one 8-foot barn quilt.

- 2-4' x 8' sheets of ¾" plywood (AA or AC with exterior glue)
- 3-2" x 4" x 8' lumber
- 3-2" x 4" x 85 ½" lumber
- 2-4" or 5" eye bolts, long enough to go through a 2" x 4" on edge
- 6-1" x 4" connector plates (small metal plates with sharp teeth for driving into wood; used to hold the 2" x 4" lumber together until the plywood is attached)
- 2" screws to hold plywood to 2" x 4" frame (plated so they won't rust)
- 4-5 large contractor screws, 4" - 5" long (holds mounting 2" x 4" to barn)
- 2-3 large contractor screws, 5" - 6" long (holds top of quilt to barn)

The following steps are the assembly instructions used in Columbia County, WI.

1. Drill holes and insert eye bolts in 8' 2" x 4" lumber. The only function of the eye bolts is to provide an easy way to lift the assembled barn quilt with a boom truck. The finished barn quilt and frame weigh about 150 pounds. (See figure 1 on drawing.)
2. Lay out the frame on a flat surface. (See figure 1 for placement of 2" x 4" lumber.)
3. Drive connector plates into corners, keeping the edges flush.
4. Turn frame completely over, with connector plates on the bottom.
5. Lay plywood pieces on the frame. Keep plywood flush with top and sides of the frame. Plywood should extend beyond the bottom of the frame by 3 ½".
6. Make sure frame and plywood are square.
7. Use 2" screws to fasten the two sheets of plywood to the frame. Keeping the inside edges tight against each other, screw each inside corner onto the frame. Be sure to place those screws first, or the two sheets will tend to spread at the center. Then space remaining screws about 18" apart along outside and center edges of each sheet of plywood.
8. Fasten the remaining 8' 2" x 4" to the barn, using 4" or 5" screws. This board should be centered and placed exactly where you want the bottom of the barn quilt to be. It holds all the weight of the barn quilt, so try to hit good solid structural wood and keep the board level. (See figure 2.)
9. Hoist barn quilt into position, setting it on the 2" x 4" already mounted on the barn. Put enough 2" screws through the bottom of the plywood to hold it to the 2" x 4". Put 2 or 3 long screws (5" - 6") through the top of the quilt to secure it to the barn.
10. Admire your barn quilt. Take photographs and be sure to contact the media and let them know about your new rural art. Be prepared to explain to others what's on your barn and the name of the quilt pattern. Enjoy having people pause in your driveway or lane to admire your new barn quilt.

*One option that some people use is to add a 3 3/4-inch wide and 8-foot tin strip to cover the top ledge – Attach this metal fascia slanted on the top to protect your Barn Quilt from bird droppings.