

Andrew Morrison's Advanced Straw Bale Strategies - Day 4

Creating Round Walls



Round buildings have long been a part of the construction world. Creating round details in conventional homes has been a hassle for just about as long. Straw bale walls, on the other hand, lend themselves nicely to the creation of round shapes. The pliability of the bales enables them to be bent to the right shape while still retaining their structural strength. The hardest part about building round walls in straw bale construction is still the conventional part: the framing.

The key is to get as close to the shape as possible with the rigid materials of wood and steel and then use the pliable bales and plaster to smooth out the differences. You will find that certain radiuses become too much for even a bale wall to handle. The larger the radius, the easier the round wall is to create.

When windows are added to the equation, it gets harder. Once again you are dealing with a rigid building material and trying to conform it to a bend. In general, the same rules apply as those outlined above; however, you will have to create extra sill protection to stop the walls from taking on water. This happens because the center of the windows will be recessed into the bales by the simple fact that they are straight and the walls are curved. With proper attention to flashing details, and the creation of a sill, this does not present a problem and can actually enhance the look of the building.

Round walls are a great application for using load bearing construction. Although load bearing straw bale construction is outside of the scope of this course, it is important to note that curved walls are significantly easier with load bearing detailing. As mentioned above, the hardest part of building round walls with in-fill construction is the rigid framing members. If the framing is removed, the only other difficulty is in the window buck design. The same solutions available for in-fill construction can be utilized for load bearing bucks as well.

Happy Baling,



Andrew Morrison
Professional Straw Bale Contractor

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