

# HOW TO MAKE A BARN QUILT: MDO Plywood and Exterior Latex Paint

The most common and least expensive method of making a barn quilt uses a MDO plywood panel and exterior latex paint with UV coating. A final clear coat is not recommended, as it will cause yellowing over time and also restricts the paint's ability to expand and contract due to temperature changes.

Here are some tips and guidelines to follow in order to have your barn quilt last as long as possible. Please understand that there can be unexpected compatibility breakdowns or failures even when the right materials are used, but some material choices will not provide good or lasting results due to exposure to the elements. These tips are based on experience in this climate and product manufacturer recommendations.

**BUDGET:** To plan your budget,

1. Consider the barn quilt location on the property and how it will be mounted on the property
2. Choose the most appropriate size
3. Decide on the design

Once you know these you can get a rough estimate of the cost to produce the barn quilt. Decide which materials align with your thoughts about maintenance. An aluminum barn quilt will last 10 years with minimal maintenance, while a MDO plywood sign may require occasional touch ups and, depending on exposure, possible replacement every 2-5 years. Take note of the amount of sun and wind the location receives over a period of a day to get a good idea of the amount of exposure. A facing-south location may get a lot of sun, but may not get as much exposure if a nearby stand of trees blocks wind and sun.

**MOUNTING ON PROPERTY:** Before you start, consider the ability to bolt the barn quilt to the property and determine if any support modifications need to be made in advance of the hanging. Allow for bolt heads to show on the border. The bolt heads can be painted. The back of the barn quilt needs bolts attaching to the supports. The support will be used to bolt onto the property. Consider the length of the hardware requirements depending upon the thickness of the panel.

**MOUNTING SUPPORT BOARDS:** Use 1" x 4" boards to 'frame' the back of the boards for mounting purposes and also to connect the two halves of the panels for 6' x 6' and larger barn quilts. The boards need to be primed with 4 coats on every side (front, back and edges) – Porter Paints brand is recommended. Do not attach the mounting support boards until after all the painting is done on the panels.

**HANGING:** The Monroe County Electric Co-Op will assist in the hanging process with their high lift truck. Give them plenty of notice to accommodate your request.

**BARN QUILT SIZE:** You'll want to measure up the right size for your barn quilt. Use a photo of the property to help decide on best size and placement. Scale by sight using known dimensions, such as a 4' barn door, 8' high door, etc.

The finished size of the boards should be a square. The most common sizes are 4' x 4', 6' x 6' or 8' x 8'. A 6' x 6' barn quilt uses two 4' x 8' sheets cut to 3' x 6' each. The 8' x 8' barn quilts need two 4' x 8' sheets. They can be hung on the diagonal.

**BARN QUILT DESIGN:** There are numerous quilt books you can reference or go online and google the barn quilt design you're looking for. Many of the designs have a name and mean something specific. Consult the Friends In Stitches Quilt Guild's Barn Quilt committee – they can supply you with answers, ideas and patterns. Once the design is decided, it is very important to draw it out onto a sheet of grid paper. Include the border (4" for 4' x 4' and 6-8" wide for 6' x 6' or 8' x 8'). Set the scale and make note of it. Setting the scale for the grid square to be 3"x3" or 4"x4" works well as both numbers work easily into a foot. Please note: One of the reasons we would like an application turned in prior to creating your barn quilt is so that we can advise you if the image you plan to use is already in use. You may want your own unique design, and of course one appeal of the Trail is to see a wide variety of designs. There are literally thousands of quilt patterns to choose from.

## MDO PLYWOOD PANEL:

- **Medium density overlay** panel, or MDO panel, is a paintable surface made of plywood with a weather-resistant resin overlay bonded to the wood by heat and pressure. The overlay, which has at least 27% resin content, resists water, weather, wear and degradation.
- Originally developed for sign painting, paint finishes on MDO are up to three times more durable than the same finish applied to ordinary plywood. Ordinary plywood should not be used.
- Make sure the MDO panel is cut smooth on one side – the smooth side is the side on which to paint the design. Mark it so you know which side it is, because after all the coats of primer it may not be very obvious.
- MDO panels are produced in 4' x 8' sheets from 3/8" to over an inch in thickness, but for barn quilts 1/2" is okay for 4' x 4' panels. If your barn quilt will be larger than that size, we recommend 3/4" thickness. Many local lumberyards, including Waterloo Lumber and RP Lumber, can order or stock this and will cut it if necessary.
- Use sawhorses to stabilize the panels so they are horizontal for painting. This will keep paint from dripping.

**PANEL SEAM:** Plan for a vertical seam between two panels. This will help moisture drain off better than if the seam is horizontal. Prime all edges and paint the seam sides by extending the design onto the edge so the seam is less noticeable.

**PRIMING - PAINTING:** Use the recommended primer and paint – exterior latex with UV coating, Porter Paints brand. Try to do all priming and painting in a well-ventilated area within the manufacturer’s temperature and humidity guidelines. Allow enough dry time between coats. Keep track of how many coats you’ve put on – it’s easy to lose track.

**PRIMER:** It is recommended to put 4 coats of Porter Paint Exterior Latex Primer on all surfaces, including the edges. Try to brush on a smooth painted coat of primer rather than using a roller. A roller leaves a pebbly surface that does not allow Frog Tape to adhere very well. The tape is used to mask off areas of the design and for painting straight lines. If the tape does not adhere well, some bleeding may occur as the paint seeps under the tape. If the paint does bleed, use Kilz as a cover up before continuing to paint over it or to recoat the base.

**BASE COAT:** Put at least 2 coats of base color on all sides (including edges) of the barn quilt if using a light color and 3-4 coats if using a dark base. After the base coat is on you can draw your design onto the panels.

**DESIGN ONTO PANELS:** Using your gridded layout as a template, mark the panels with the lines of the design. A wax crayon pencil works well. A pencil on primed boards will leave an indentation in the primer and base coat paint. Don’t forget to consider that your pencil/crayon lines take up space too, so you’ll need to allow for that.

Use a t-square and rulers and calculators on your measurements. This part takes quite a bit of time, but it pays to be accurate. If you are doing a barn quilt that uses 2 panels, try to set them side-by-side to make sure the design matches up and do any touch-ups before they are mounted. Recheck after support boards are attached to make sure the pattern is aligned.

**TAPE** – Use Frog Tape for painting to help mask straight lines. Other brands of tape don’t yield as good of results as Frog Tape. You may have to work in phases where an area has to be painted first and then re-taped. Make sure the paint has dried well before putting tape on top of a painted surface.

**DESIGN PAINT COLORS:** Porter Paint Exterior Latex Paint with UV Coating is recommended. This paint is designed to stand up to the elements longer before fading or oxidizing. It comes in a variety of colors and can be color matched. You will need a quart of each color you plan to use, so having a quilt with many colors can be quite costly. Mixing latex paint colors yourself does not always give the result you hoped for, unlike watercolor or acrylic paint. Use 4 coats of each color.

**BORDER COLORS & WHAT THEY MEAN TO VIEWERS:** To have the border color codes work for you, they need to be visible. We suggest using a 4” border on 6’ x 6’ panels or a 6” border on 8’ x 8’ panels. The borders are painted a color that indicates to viewers the property owner’s stance on visitors on their property.

NEUTRAL colors mean “Private – Enjoy from the Road.” Black, brown, tan, gray, white are all good neutral colors to use.

WARM colors (red, orange, yellow, pink) indicate “Visit as Posted.” The property owner would then place a small sign on or next to the 2’ x 2’ sign to indicate when they are open for visitors.

COOL colors (blue, purple, green) indicate “Visit during set business hours.”

**EDGES:** It is important to seal the edges with primer and paint. Adding edge cap or waterproof caulk to all the edges will further help prevent water separation.

#### **WHEN IT’S ALL DONE & UP:**

Congratulations! You’ve made history! Please notify the Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail Committee to let us know you’ve installed a barn quilt on your property. Send us a photo of it on the property and a close up of the barn quilt so we can share the news! We will notify the local press and add it to the facebook site. If you have already applied to be on the MCBQT, then they will be in touch about the 2’ x 2’ sign. If not, please do so if you want to be included. Applications are located on the [www.pen2paper.org](http://www.pen2paper.org) website.

Please ‘LIKE’ our new **Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail** Facebook page! 

#### **Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail Committee Members:**

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# Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail - Overview & FAQs

Thanks for your interest in this project! Please 'LIKE' our new **Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail** Facebook page!



## OVERVIEW:

Phase 1: 20 Barn Quilts installed by end of 2013

Phase 2: 30 additional Barn Quilts installed by end of 2016 – for Monroe County's 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Barn Quilts will be located on a mixture of private and business properties. The idea of the "trail" is one of tourism that includes points of interest and places where visitors can stop to shop or dine. As important as it is to have the trail support tourism, it is equally important that the trail support the privacy of the participants involved. For this reason, the documentation associated with promoting the MCBQT (signs, maps, brochures) will clearly state if a property is Private.

We are looking for barns or other historical property over 50 years old for this project. For the balance of Phase I we are pursuing funding avenues to offset the costs of the individual barn quilts, but to do so we need commitment from property owners in the form of an application. Phase 2 will involve some youth groups painting barn quilts with artist supervision.

## 1. What properties qualify for the MCBQT?

While anyone can install a barn quilt on their property, the MCBQT will recognize those individuals/properties which have:

- committed to maintain their barn quilt per the application
- produced the barn quilt using one of the recommended methods and sizes
- installed it on a property of historical significance that is 50 yrs old or older

The barn quilt also needs to be visible from the road, unless you don't mind having visitors on your property. A barn quilt border color system was designed for the Monroe County Barn Quilt Trail to help preserve property owner's privacy. See #5.

## 2. Who designs the quilt block for the barn quilt?

The property owner chooses the design they wish to use. Usually they will base it on an image that means something to them personally such as family tradition or values, careers, property use, interests or hobbies, etc. The color scheme is also the property owner's choice; however, artists through pen2paper are available to help give color guidance at no charge. The Friends In Stitches Quilt Guild has set up a committee available for consultation about quilt block designs.

## 3. Who produces the barn quilt?

The property owners can make the barn quilt themselves or hire out all or part of the production. These make a wonderful family project where everyone can get involved in the creative process. If creating it doesn't excite you, there are artists associated with pen2paper who will do as much or as little as you want. They can quote a price once they see the quilt block pattern and color scheme and understand how much or little you want them to do and what materials you wish to use.

## 4. How do you make a barn quilt?

There are 4 basic methods with the main difference being that the longer they will last and the larger they are, the more expensive they are to make. They all have the same 3 elements: 1)Primer and paint – or – vinyl application, 2) Panels, 3) Support and/or mounting boards. MDO will last 2-5 yrs, while a digitally printed aluminum sign can last 10yrs or more. Exposure to the elements (sun, wind, precipitation) will have the greatest impact on how long the sign lasts.

### The 4 Methods to Produce a Barn Quilt:

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|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. MDO Plywood & Exterior Latex Paint | } | These methods need to be done by an artist or sign company. Pen2paper art has artists who can use sign paint on MDO or aluminum. Action Graphics can output digital signs on aluminum. |
| 2. MDO Plywood & Sign Paint           |   |  |
| 3. Aluminum Sign & Sign Paint         |   |  |
| 4. Aluminum Sign & Digital Print      |   |  |

## 6. Who maintains the barn quilt?

The property owner maintains the barn quilt.

## 7. What is the 2' x 2' informational sign, where does it go and who pays for it?

The 2' x 2' aluminum sign is intended to be posted at the entrance to the property to alert viewers of the privacy requested or approval to come onto the property to view the barn quilt closer. This sign will feature the barn quilt and have a few sentences about the quilt design and the property. The cost of these is approximately \$125 and can be purchased through the MCBQT. Properties on the MCBQT need to have this identification sign posted at the property entrance. We hope to have funding or sponsorships to offset the cost of these to the property owner, but they should last 10 years.

## Committee Members:

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