



handsOn

A Newsletter of the
Boston Building Materials Co-op and
the Building Materials Resource Center

spring/summer 2002

Massachusetts Homeowners: Everything You Need to Know About Building Permits

By David Johnson & Matthew St. Onge

Almost without exception, building permits are required in Massachusetts for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of new and existing buildings. A permit ensures that the design and construction of a project meet guidelines set forth by Massachusetts State Building Code (6th edition). When a building permit is issued, it sets into motion a process by which a project is monitored, inspected, and checked for code compliance from Day 1 until that last nail is sent home.

Building permits *are* required to "construct, re-construct, alter, repair, remove, or demolish a building or structure; or to change the use or occupancy of a building or structure; or to install or alter any equipment for which provision is made or the installation of which is regulated by the Massachusetts State Building Code." This includes things like 1) the cutting away of any wall, partition or portion thereof, the removal or cutting of any structural beam, column or other load bearing support or 2) the removal or change of any required means of egress or rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting egress.

Building permits are generally *not* required for 1) one-story, detached buildings used for storage sheds, playhouses, etc., provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet, 2) fences 6' in height or less, 3) some retaining walls, and 4) ordinary repairs defined as "any maintenance which does NOT affect the structure, egress, fire protection systems, fire ratings, energy conservation provisions, plumbing, sanitary,

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Gardens, Art, and Re-used Building Materials

By Carolina Abolio

In 2001, the Building Materials Resource Center was privileged to participate in the creation of GardenArt, a project that brought Massachusetts College of Art (MassArt) students and faculty together with Mission Hill residents and businesses to transform a vacant lot from garbage heap to beautiful garden.

Mindy Nierenberg, Director of Service Learning and Community Outreach at MassArt, says the idea for GardenArt began with three objectives: 1) to create a garden in and for the Mission Hill neighborhood; 2) to involve Mission Hill residents and businesses in the creation of the garden; and 3) to use found, recycled, and re-usable



objects from the neighborhood that tell a story about the place and people who live there.

Mindy first learned about the BMRC last spring when she attended our annual Women's

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What Our Customers Are Saying



“ I Didn’t Know the Co-op Carried That!”

By Don Malloy

Occasionally a Co-op member comes into the store and says, “I didn’t know you carried that!” While we can’t list all of the products we carry in this newsletter, here is a short list of some new and interesting items that the Co-op either stocks or can order quickly. Note: Prices given are for members. Non-member prices are slightly higher.

Water Saving Products:

- **Toto low-flow toilets.** We stock each of the three common rough sizes, 10”, 12”, and 14”, all in white. Prices range from \$100 to \$199

- The **“Touch Flow” Faucet Aerator** allows you to temporarily halt the flow of water without readjusting the temperature. It’s easy to install and easy to use. Just \$2.45.

- Made from recycled plastic food containers (pickle barrels mostly), the Co-op’s own **Rainbarrel** collects up to 55 gallons of rainwater from your storm drain. At just \$42.00, the rainbarrel easily connects to your downspout and comes with an upgraded, all brass drain system and optional overflow fitting. Check out our working demonstration barrel anytime!

Exterior Maintenance:

- **Sandvik Paint Scrapers** are great for exterior paint jobs. The scrapers use a long-lasting carbide blade and come in a number of shapes to reach difficult places. These scrapers cost a little more — \$11.75 and \$18.50 — and they’re worth it!

- **Minwax Wood Hardener (\$7.50/can) and Two-Part Epoxy System (\$8.35/ea)**, great for filling big holes or spots where wood is rotten.

- We don’t carry paint, but we do carry a wide selection of **Paintbrushes, Patching Materials, Caulking, Poly Drop Cloths, and Blue Masking Tape.** Prices vary.

- **Safety Glasses.** For just \$2.90/pair, these are probably the most comfortable pair you’ll ever own.

The staff at the Co-op takes pride in stocking only those items that will help our customers do the job right the first time around. Our prices are competitive and our staff is knowledgeable. Come see what we have to offer!

SHOP NEWS

Repair your own windows and screens. The Window & Screen Repair Shop at the Co-op continues to be a popular place, especially on the first and third Saturdays of the month, from 9:00 to 10:00am. This is when customers may bring their broken windows and screens in to repair in the comfort of our fully equipped Shop. You don’t have to know a thing about repairing a window or screen to use the shop. Our friendly shop person, Rafael Quezada, is always willing to lend a hand and enjoys sharing his knowledge and tricks of the trade. Novice shop users quickly learn the best methods to replace broken glass or ripped screens.

Learn a new skill, save money. The best part of doing your own repair work, besides learning a new skill, is saving money. Did you know that if we fix your broken screen, it would cost around \$13.50? Compare that with the \$3.50 you will pay to repair that same screen yourself! (You pay for materials only.) Similar savings may be realized when replacing broken glass in either wood or storm window sashes.

Come in and check out our new heat gun — a real timesaver when getting out old putty.

Rent shop space for your larger projects. The Co-op’s Window Repair Shop is also available for your larger cutting, drilling, and shaping projects. We provide the tools and expertise; you provide the design and materials. Shop rental fees are just \$40.00/hour. Call Don Malloy at 617.442.2262 to discuss your project and/or to schedule shop time.

Free Firewood and Woodchips!

Arborway Tree Care in Jamaica Plain has free green, unsplit firewood for anyone who would like it. Delivery is free or it can be picked up at

their yard. Free woodchips for mulching are also available. For more information, call Arborway Tree Care at 617.522.6071.

What Our Customers Are Saying. . .

“Buying my new kitchen cabinets at the [Boston Building Materials] Co-op was one of the most pleasant major-purchase experiences I’ve ever had. I can’t say enough about Linda [Lesyna, the Co-op’s Kitchen Specialist]. She took the time to find out the particular ways I used my kitchen and encouraged me to make my product selections accordingly. I love my kitchen! The Co-op’s high level of customer service combined with great products were just what I needed.”

— Cassandra Goldwater, Happy Co-op Kitchen Customer

I Learned to Repair My Own Windows — and Saved \$10,000!

By Muriel Peters

Last February, I attended the Old House Fair held at the Cyclorama in the South End. There I met the owner of windowrepair.com and made an appointment to get an estimate for the cost of restoring the windows (there are 36 in total) in my two-family home in Dorchester. While I knew I would not be able to do all of them at once, I figured I would probably have them restored in a three or four-stage project.

When the man from windowrepair.com came to my house, he told me my windows were in good shape and good candidates for restoration. He also told me I might want to consider restoring them myself and mentioned he would soon be teaching a class on window restoration

at the Co-op. He told me he would send me the estimate but that I should seriously consider doing it myself.

Well, after I got the estimate — more than \$10,000 — I realized I was a perfect candidate for his class! So I attended the class held later in the spring and found out I could comprehend the mechanics of a window and restore my own windows. A couple of weeks later, I took apart a window and brought the sashes to the Co-op’s Saturday morning Window Repair Clinic. (*Note: The Window Repair Clinics are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month from 9:00 to 10:00am.*) Rafael, the general overseer for all who came, was great at helping me and several other people repair various types of window sashes and

screens. He showed us how to remove the broken panes and old putty, clean up the frame, and reset the new glass with fresh glazing compound. It was really quite doable! Needless to say, I was very excited and motivated.

Now that it’s warm, I am ready to begin repairing more windows. After stripping and cleaning them, I will bring my screens and sashes in to the Co-op to repair them. With a lot of elbow grease and a little cash (very little compared to having someone else do it for me), I plan to restore a good part of my home’s windows for the coming winter!

I am thankful for the many useful and cost-saving classes offered at the Co-op. I am very happy to be a member.

Gardens, Art, and Reused Building Materials

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Night. It was then that she realized that MassArt and the BMRC had some common goals: “To improve the environment through re-use and recycling and to create ties between communities and their institutions as a means of improving the quality of life there.”

When Mindy asked the BMRC to participate in the GardenArt project, mostly by donating materials, we were enthusiastic. In the end, the BMRC contributed moldings for small fences, lumber for seats, sinks for bird baths, and more.

MassArt will return to the GardenArt project in September with a new crop of students, to make repairs and improvements. If you would like to get involved, call Ms. Nierenberg, 617.879.7701 or email her at mnierenberg@massart.edu

GardenArt is located at the intersection of Parker and Hillside Streets on Mission Hill. It’s a lovely place to eat lunch, read the paper, or relax with a friend.

Linbeck/Kennedy & Rossi Donates Van to BMRC

John Kennedy, Owner of Linbeck/Kennedy & Rossi, must be a mind-reader.

Our handsome new (2001) truck was not enough to handle the enormous volume of building materials coming into and going out of the Center. The writing was on the wall: We needed a second vehicle.

That's when John Kennedy of Linbeck/Kennedy & Rossi called. His company had a van to donate. It was used but in good condition. We jumped at the chance.

With the van now on the road, we are able to offer an affordable delivery service to those customers who purchase larger items but don't have a larger vehicle to transport them. It

also enables us to collect donations on short notice, without impacting on the truck's busy pick-up schedule, and to simply handle the ever increasing volume of donated goods that are offered to the Center each and every day.

All of us at the Building Materials Resource Center extend our heartfelt thanks to John and to Linbeck/Kennedy & Rossi for their generous donation.



(Note: Our first truck, now retired, was also donated by Kennedy & Rossi.)

BMRC News

BMRC Offers Evening Hours

In response to popular demand, the BMRC is now open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 7:00pm. We are also open earlier on Mondays, at 10:30am.

Our thanks go out to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for supporting this initial phase of the BMRC's extended scheduled.

The BMRC's hours of operation are now:

Mon	10:30am – 4:30pm
Tue	9:00am – 7:00pm
Wed	9:00am – 4:30pm
Thu	9:00am – 7:00pm
Fri	9:00am – 4:30pm
Sat	9:00am – 3:00pm
Sun	CLOSED

Goodbye and Hello

The Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center bid farewell to **Ian Johnson** this spring. Ian began working at the Co-op and BMRC in 1996 and did everything from window repair and general maintenance to teaching window and screen repair, helping with sales, and doing pick-ups. We wish Ian the best of luck in his future endeavours.

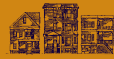
The BMRC is pleased to welcome **Mario Ruiz** and **Eduardo Escobar**. Mario and Eddie help in the truck, picking up and delivering donated building materials. They also help out in the warehouse organizing materials and helping customers. Please take a moment to meet Mario and Eddie the next time you are in.

2001 Appeal A Big Success!

A hearty thanks to all who participated in the BMRC's 2001 appeal! We thought you'd like to know that your generous contributions added up to nearly \$30,000 — a lot for a small organization like the BMRC. Income from the appeal is an essential element of our budget. Thank you!

We can help you turn your house into a home.

Building Materials for People, Not Profit



Building Materials Resource Center

100 Terrace Street Roxbury, MA 02120 www.bostonbmrc.org

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This advertisement paid for by the Mission Hill/Fenway Neighborhood Trust.

Low, low prices on . . .

- kitchen cabinets
- bathroom fixtures
- windows
- doors
- flooring
- light fixtures
- and a whole lot more

Support the BMRC With a Gift of Stock

For the past few years, a handful of individuals have supported the BMRC with gifts of stock — instead of cash. This manner of giving enabled them to give more because stock donations allowed them to legally avoid the Capital Gains Tax.

Because the BMRC is a tax exempt organization under the IRS code, all contributions

— stock, cash, materials — are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The BMRC has an account in place for gifts of stock. Call or email Matthew St. Onge,

Executive Director (phone: 617.442.8917 x226; email: matthew@bbmc.com) for more information on how to make a gift of stock.

Annual Meeting is Well Attended

The Mission Hill School was the scene of this year's Annual Meeting for the Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center, held on Friday, May 17. About 75 people gathered for dinner, incredible jazz music by Kona Khasu Jazz Band, an entertaining speaker in the person of Veronica Eady from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, and an update on the financial health and future plans of the Co-op and BMRC. The evening was a success as measured by the ensuing conversation and smiles that continued well after the break up of the meeting at 8:00pm.

BMRC Diverts More Materials from Landfills, Helps More Homeowners, Reaches 80% Self-Sufficiency

The chart below gives a snapshot of the BMRC's tremendous growth during the past eight years.

	Diverted from Landfills(*)	Materials Donors (**)	Income-Eligible Customers (***)	Self-Sufficiency
1995	\$200,000	125	135	20%
1999	\$1.2 million	389	494	55%
2000	\$1.3 million	599	568	75%
2001	\$1.5 million	785	824	80%

* estimated fair market value

** combined total for individuals and companies

*** combined total for individuals and nonprofits

gas, electrical or other utilities." An example is painting the interior or exterior of your home. *Note: Because the State code allows individual municipalities to enact stricter codes, you should call your local building department to make sure you know the laws.*

To obtain a building permit, the owner or authorized representative must go to the Inspectional Services Division of your town's Building Department. If the owner sends their builder or contractor, they must also send a letter authorizing that person to sign the application on her or his behalf. *Note: We recommend having your contractor do this, provided s/he is a Registered Home Improvement Contractor. See box at right for more on Home Improvement Contractors.*

There are two types of building permits: the *Short Form Permit* is for minor repairs. This permit does not allow for any structural work or changes to use, occupancy, or egress. The Short Form Permit *does not* require drawings. Fee: \$10.00 per \$1,000 of stated cost of project plus \$7.00 primary fee. The second type is the *Long Form Permit*, for new buildings or additions, structural repairs and alterations, changes in use and/or occupancy, and increasing capacity. The Long

Form Permit *does* require drawings. Fee: \$7.00 per \$1,000 of first \$100,000, \$10.00 per \$1,000 for anything over \$100,000.

You may not begin work until you have the Building Permit Card, which must be posted at the job site. *If work begins before the Building Permit is issued, you will be charged a fee and may be required to appear in court.*

Building permits are good for six months after they are issued, meaning that work must begin within six months of issuance and continue without interruptions until the job is finished. (There is no limit to how long a project may go on.) In some instances, the permit may be renewed — by the Building Commissioner — for up to 180-days. After that, if you have not started work within the six-month time-frame, your permit will be considered abandoned and you will have to re-apply. Work hours are Monday - Friday, 7:00am to 6:00pm.

For more information on any of the above, you may call Boston Inspectional Services, 617.635.5300; David Johnson at D.A. Johnson Construction Consultants, 617.438.8838; or Matthew St. Onge at the Boston Building Materials Co-op, 617.442.2262.

A Primer on Building Licenses

☛ **Construction Supervisor.** Often referred to as Licensed Builder, a Licensed Construction Supervisor is "any individual directly supervising persons engaged in construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, removal or demolition involving any activity regulated by the Massachusetts State Building Code." To obtain this license, one must demonstrate to the State Board of Building Regulations and Standards, in writing and in person, that s/he has good technical construction knowledge and a minimum of three years' experience in the field of construction and/or design.

Licensed Construction Supervisors are required for any job that requires a permit, with a few exceptions: 1) Roofing, 2) Siding, 3) Installation of rooftop solar collectors, 4) Construction of swimming pools, 5) Erection of signs, and 6) Installation of replacement windows not involving structural modifications.

☛ **Homeowner as Construction Supervisor.** A homeowner may act as Construction Supervisor for work being done to her or his own one-to-two family dwelling. Homeowners who go this route are reminded that 1) they are subject to all of the standard inspections and permit-related requirements throughout the life of the project, 2) any sub-contractors hired for the job must possess the proper licenses, and 3) they are not protected by the Home Improvement Contractor Law.

☛ **Home Improvement Contractor.** The Massachusetts Home Improvement Contractor Law was enacted in 1992 to protect consumers and regulate the practices of Home Improvement Contractors. It 1) established a contractor registration requirement, 2) created a program for resolving disputes between homeowners and registered contractors, and, 3) set up a Guarantee Fund, from contractor registration fees, to compensate consumers up to \$10,000 for unpaid judgments against Registered Home Improvement Contractors. For more information about the Home Improvement Contractor Law, call 617.727.8598.

☛ **Construction Consultant.** Construction Consultants oversee projects to prevent poor workmanship, contractors not completing projects on time or at all, poor contractor communication skills, and unapproved change orders (providing additional work without notice or additional cost). To retain a Construction Consultant, make sure s/he is bonded and insured.

While the Boston Building Materials Co-op and the Building Materials Resource Center collaborate in many ways, the two organizations are legally and financially independent from each other.



What's the Dif?

What is the difference between the Boston Building Materials Co-op (the Co-op) and the Building Materials Resource Center (BMRC)?

The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a 22-year-old retailer of new materials — kitchen cabinets and countertops, windows and doors, weather-

ization materials, and “green” products such as rainbarrels, composters, energy saving light bulbs, and more. The Co-op also offers homeowner support services: educational workshops, Tradesperson Referral File, in-home consults, and bi-weekly window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op — but you may want to become one. Members get special discounts on materials, workshops, and other services. Co-op membership is \$25.00/year.

The Building Materials Resource Center is a nonprofit spin-off of the Co-op. The

BMRC distributes donated building materials to income-eligible homeowners and nonprofits plus offers many of the same homeowner support services as the Co-op — workshops, consults, and window and screen repair classes. BMRC customers must demonstrate income-eligibility (a recent tax return) and nonprofits must bring in a copy of their nonprofit designation letter. There is no joining fee. Because the BMRC is a nonprofit, materials and financial donors are eligible for charitable tax deductions for their gifts.

Who receives this newsletter and the workshop schedules?

If you receive this newsletter and thrice yearly workshop schedules, you are one or more of the following: 1) a member of the Co-op; 2) a BMRC customer; and/or 3) a BMRC materials and/or financial donor.

If I donate materials or money to the BMRC, may I sign up to become a member of the Co-op?

Absolutely! In fact, we encourage it! For just \$25.00/year, your membership will entitle you to product and workshop discounts, access

to our Tradesperson Referral File, free use of our window and screen repair shop, and much more.

If I am a materials or financial supporter of the BMRC and want to sign up for a home improvement workshop, which fee do I pay?

If you are not a member of the Co-op, you pay the non-member price — \$45.00 for most classes. If you are a member of the Co-op, the price drops to \$25.00.

If I am a BMRC customer, am I eligible for Co-op discounts?

Yes and no. For product discounts and access to the Tradesperson Referral File, BMRC customers must first join the Co-op. (The joining fee for BMRC customers is \$15.00/year.) BMRC customers do not need to join the Co-op to receive discounts on home improvement workshops (\$15.00/class) and in-home consults (\$15.00/hour).

If you have questions that were not answered, give us a call (617.442.2262 or 617.442.8917) or send us an email (info@bbmc.com).

What Our Customers Are Saying. . .

“Amie and I are thrilled with both the level of service and quality kitchen cabinetry we got through the Boston Building Materials Co-op. As an architect, I can be a bit fussy about these things. After comparing the quality and prices at several area stores, it became clear that the Co-op offered the best value in kitchen cabinetry. What's more, Linda was very helpful in planning a kitchen layout that met our needs; not many places offer the kind of friendly and personalized service we got at the Boston Building Materials Co-op.”

— Paul Dawson, Happy Co-op Kitchen Customer



handsOn

HandsOn is the semi-annual newsletter of the Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center.

The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a member-controlled not-for-profit building materials retailer and technical assistance provider. Founded in 1978, we specialize in cabinets, counters, windows, and doors. We offer a range of affordable homeowner support services, including in-home consults, educational workshops, a Tradesperson Referral File, a lending library, and a Saturday morning window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op, though members get product discounts and other benefits. *If you are not sure of your membership status, give us a call to check!*

Contact the BBMC at:

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120
phone 617.442.2262 • **fax** 617.427.2491
email info@bbmc.com • **web** www.bbmc.com

The Building Materials Resource Center is the nonprofit spin-off of the Boston Building Materials Co-op. Founded in 1993, the BMRC is a building materials re-use project. We accept donations of good quality used and surplus building materials and distribute them, for a very modest fee, to income-eligible homeowners and nonprofits. Many of the homeowner support services of the Co-op — in-home consults, workshops, window shop — are available to BMRC customers for a reduced price. *To find out if you are eligible to shop at the BMRC, call us at the number below.*

Contact the BMRC at:

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120
phone 617.442.8917 • **fax** 617.427.2491
email info@bbmc.com
web www.bostonbmrc.org

The Building Materials Resource Center is a nonprofit building materials re-use project. Your tax deductible gift will help us divert perfectly good building materials from landfills and deliver them into the hands of needy homeowners and nonprofits.

Yes, I would like to make a contribution to the Building Materials Resource Center. Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of:

\$200 \$150 \$100 \$75 \$50 \$35

Name _____

Address _____

Please mail your check to: Building Materials Resource Center
100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120

Thank you!

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