

GREEN TECH THE SERIES COLUMN FOR APRIL 6, 2016

HEADLINE: THE SMALL HOME EVOLUTION IS HERE TO STAY

Recently, we ventured to the nation's capital to take in the Ottawa Home and Garden Show. I had been to the show a couple of years ago and, admittedly, was disappointed in, not only the size, but the quality of the show's presentation. The show managers must have heard similar comments as this year's show was light years ahead of the previous show, not only in size, but in quality of entrants and displays, including a stunning garden section. My main reason for attending was to see two "mini-homes" that were on display. Bonneville Homes are a Canadian based, family owned modular home manufacturer, located in Montreal. This third generation company has a solid reputation for modular homes. They have ventured into the smaller home market with a number of tiny homes. The other small home on display was manufactured by Woodland Park Inc., located in Middlebury, Indiana. They are represented by GO-VR, in Shefford Quebec. Woodland Park was founded by Ernie and Edna Yoder in 1983 and, today, manufacturer one of the most reputable lines of "Park Model" style RV's in the industry.

Bonneville Homes had their "Zen" micro home on display and the advanced styling is certainly striking. This model is 14'6" wide by 36 feet long and the floor layout is very functional, based upon this 522 square foot floor plan. The entrance has a closet immediately in front for coats. To the right is the bathroom, with shower and stackable washer/dryer combination unit. Using pocket doors for space considerations, you then enter the bedroom, which has a full closet on the right. As you leave the bedroom, you walk through a galley kitchen that has full sized appliances. This flows through to an open living/dining room, with ample floor to ceiling glass walls that form the corner of the home. Bonneville has developed their own building system. They call it the R3000 method. With attention to detail they use metal studding for the interior walls and a respectable interior finish, quality kitchen cabinets and bathroom fixtures. Built on a modular home assembly line, like all modular builders, they are able to control the environment and standardize their assembly methods. The Zen appeared to be respectably well built and fit and finish was certainly professional. For more information go to "www.maisonsbonneville.com"

My next stop was to the Woodland Park Inc. model It was located in the garden area of the show. Not unlike the Zen home, the exterior has a modern look to it.

What caught my eye was the blending of exterior color and the more balanced location of the windows and doors, making the overall interior space brighter. This home is 14 foot wide by 39 feet long. At 546 square feet, is not a whole lot larger than the Bonneville model. This floor plan is far more functional, in my opinion, in part because Woodland was able to get a small second bedroom into their floor plan. In the bathroom they offered a small tub, my preference over a shower stall and a good sized vanity and toilet space. The bathroom was accessible off the hallway. The hallway gave more privacy to the bedrooms and the second bedroom could easily be converted to an office. The open concept kitchen/dining room and living room are in keeping with today's lifestyle; the open concept family atmosphere. Comparing the two kitchens, the Woodland Park unit was significantly more functional and the quality of the cabinetry was noticeably better.

I have been aware of Woodland Park for many years, having seen a number of their Park Model RV's. I contacted them for this column and had the opportunity to talk to Jerry Miller in their office. Jerry was well versed on this new unit; they call it the "Essence." He made comment that they had worked closely with Nathalie Ouellet at GO-VR in Quebec to develop it. This micro home is new. In fact, Jerry said this display home was barely 8 months old. He described the assembly and you would think it was a conventional home. 2x6 walls, truss roof assembly with R34 ceiling insulation and a fully insulated floor were some of the features he mentioned. He went on to say that they built this unit for the Canadian market as a higher end, quality micro home that has the full sized home feel to it, in the smaller footprint. He felt that the Essence would take some time to catch on, but the interest they had received to date was very positive. Woodland Park felt that a quality home on a park model frame with a sound four season assembly has a place in the micro home marketplace. I feel that the folks at Woodland Park have set a standard for this size of home. Special thanks to Jerry Miller for taking the time to speak with me. Their web site is currently being updated to offer more information on the Essence. Go to www.woodland-park.com

I have written a number of columns on the "Tiny Home's" popularity. While I can see their place, I've questioned the overall size as a functional, long term home with footprints under 500 square feet. Any manner of entertaining year round, lacking as it does, conveniences like a washer and dryer and some personal separation for a bit of privacy is practically nonexistent in such a home. There is a market for the size of home that Bonneville and Woodland Park have designed

and assembled. These homes make sense and I can see the popularity of a home between 5-600 square feet fitting a small family, as well as a couple or a single person. They are priced respectably for what you are buying and they offer a permanent alternative, where attention to your footprint on Mother Earth is as important as the size of home.

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