Review of Kitset cedar shed: Heartlands “Logan”

In 2009 we bought a cedar shed from *Heartlands* (www.heartlands.co.nz) to store our tools and garden implements. The “Logan” model was chosen because it was a good fit on the section.
Finished size is 2.7m x 1.9m.

Cedar sheds are not the cheapest option around but this matched the style of the house well. We also took the shingle roof option which is a bit pricier than the metal roof. Heartlands were doing a 10% discount at the time, so we were happy to take up their offer. The shed with shingle roof, floor kit, peg down kit and delivery of $125 including discount totalled about NZ$3600.

The floor kit comprises treated bearers and floorboards for placement on a lawn surface. Some buyers place the shed directly onto concrete and do not buy the floor kit. The optional peg down kit provides 600mm stakes for concreting into the ground in areas of high wind.

Design:

The shed is based around 900mm wide wall modules which have 50mm studs. In this case the shed was 3 modules long and 2 modules wide. All modules come pre-built complete with lining paper. One ‘wall’ module is actually the door. Another ‘wall’ module has an Aluminum-framed window already built-in. Modules are 1.9m high; the door opening is 1.7m by 850mm. End gables are included and there are 6 cedar shingle roof panels in this version. Also included are corner trims, inter-unit beads plus a one-piece metal roof capping.

The kitset:

The whole kit was delivered all shrink-wrapped a few days after ordering. On unwrapping the same day we did notice mould on several studs indicating that moisture had been trapped inside the shrink wrap in storage. The kit included all nails, screws and tubes of sealant. There was not enough sealant and we had to go and buy more for the job even though I would say we had not been that liberal. Our kit was also missing timber stiffeners and the door spacer floor strip. Of course one doesn’t know this until assembly so I suggest kit buyers either do a partial trial assembly like I did or carefully go through the instructions identifying each part. It must be said that the helpline people were very good and couriered missing bits without question. I have heard others say their kits had been missing key parts as well, although not the same as ours, so this is an area where the suppliers could tighten up the process.

The assembly instructions:

A 6-page assembly guide is provided. Most of this is clear, but I didn’t understand all of it at first. I consider myself to be a handy DIY-er but I am not a builder. Of course, now having built one, it all makes complete sense. First of all, the instructions do not identify each individual part with either dimensioned sketches or photographs. The photographs that are there do help but some do not illustrate the point that was referenced in the text. I did a trial assembly of one corner in my garage so I could understand

the various beads and trim pieces. One thing I couldn't get my head around was that the cedar weatherboards extend beyond the studs on each panel module by 3-4mm each side. So, although the weatherboards were exactly 900mm long, the outer stud to stud distance was 892mm give or take a little, meaning that studs on adjacent panels do not screw hard up against each other. I eventually checked this with the very knowledgeable man on the helpline and he assured me this is the case. This is so the cedar beads between panels are clamped tightly to the line of the weatherboards. Also be aware that this is a garden shed and not precision joinery. There are variations and some of my studs even had bows and twists. One instruction shows the door lintel being screwed in 30mm from bottom edge. This is not possible from the window panel. In my view, the instructions need to include a short glossary of terms, descriptions improved a little to avoid assuming you know building terminology and to include dimensioned isometric drawings of individual parts.

Assembly:

The floor base didn't take long to assemble and the process was easy although care needs to be taken to get it square. I pre-stained the three wall modules going at the 'back' because it was going to be close to an existing fence. This also made it necessary to fix the three back panels together and one side panel for support before shuffling the lot into position along the edge of the floorline. It wasn't too hard to do this but be aware that the cedar weatherboards do extend below the bottom plates so weatherboards can easily be split at this point. In fact, the same is even more true for the fragile top edges and we managed to split two weatherboards at the top simply by handling and positioning.

We took 3 part days to assemble the shed, but given good weather, it could be done in a single day quite readily. In our case, we committed to start each morning only to find a serious Wellington gale arriving by afternoon so had to brace off the partially assembled shell. The roof was the slightly tricky bit. The first two panels which screw to the gable end were fine but the middle ones had to be held in place while screwing them to the first set. In our case, one panel went for a short flight due to the wind and suffered minor damage, but easily repaired. Two people a definite advantage for the middle roof panels. The other thing that I think would help is to temporarily tie the two opposite side walls together at the top centre with a bit of timber at least until the roof panels are screwed on because the walls tend to splay apart. This makes the shed width greater at the top. In my case it is 20mm wider at the top. It's not a big drama because the roof panels extend way out past the sides anyway, but it would be nice to have things correct.

The door was next. It is solid and heavy. While it was a bit awkward to position, a couple of blocks held it at the proper height until the hinges were screwed. In fact, the door fitted perfectly first time. A locking handle is provided, which makes a nice touch. Finally the trim pieces are nailed on and a well earned cup of tea.

After assembly, we stained the cedar boards and the roof. Heavy rain during the few weeks since the shed was finished revealed some small leakage, mainly at some panel joins and bottom corners plus some wicking up into the floorboards from the floor joists due to water splashing off the concrete. It's not serious but I will apply some more sealant around the offending corners. You can't use too much of

the stuff. Some 75mm flashing tape along the front and back floor joists has solved the wicking problem. Thankfully, the roof itself seems not to leak at all, which I thought might be a problem because the joints between roof panels are covered only by a series of metal shims hammered up under the shingles.

The finished product not only looks fantastic, it does exactly what we wanted. I put in a bench and some shelving and couldn't wish for more. The solid structure makes it easy to attach shelves. The shed integrates so well with the property that it looks like it was built as part of the original house.

The scorecard:

I'm told one should do this, even though one doesn't have much to compare against….

Design:	9/10
Kitset:	7.5/10
Pricing:	7/10
Instructions:	6/10
Helpline:	10/10
TOTAL:	8.5/10