

Running

If you're bringing electricity to
is probably the

BY JOSEPH TRUINI

Drive through any neighborhood, and it's hard not to notice the proliferation of storage sheds and other backyard buildings. What's not obvious is that only a few of these buildings are wired for electricity. That's surprising because the addition of lights and outlets greatly increases the utility and versatility of an outbuilding, and adding a new electrical circuit isn't difficult or expensive.

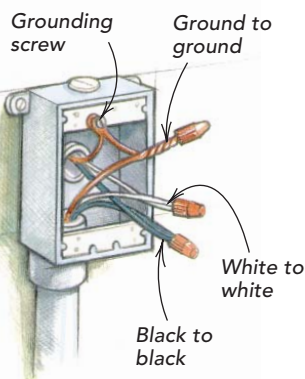
On the project featured here, my crew and I added a 120v, 20-amp circuit to a storage shed—just enough juice to power a light or two and a couple of outlets (anything more would require higher amperage and a deeper trench). In most cases, these details apply as long as your shed is no more than 100 ft. from the house. But make sure to check local building-code requirements, apply for a permit, and have your work inspected.



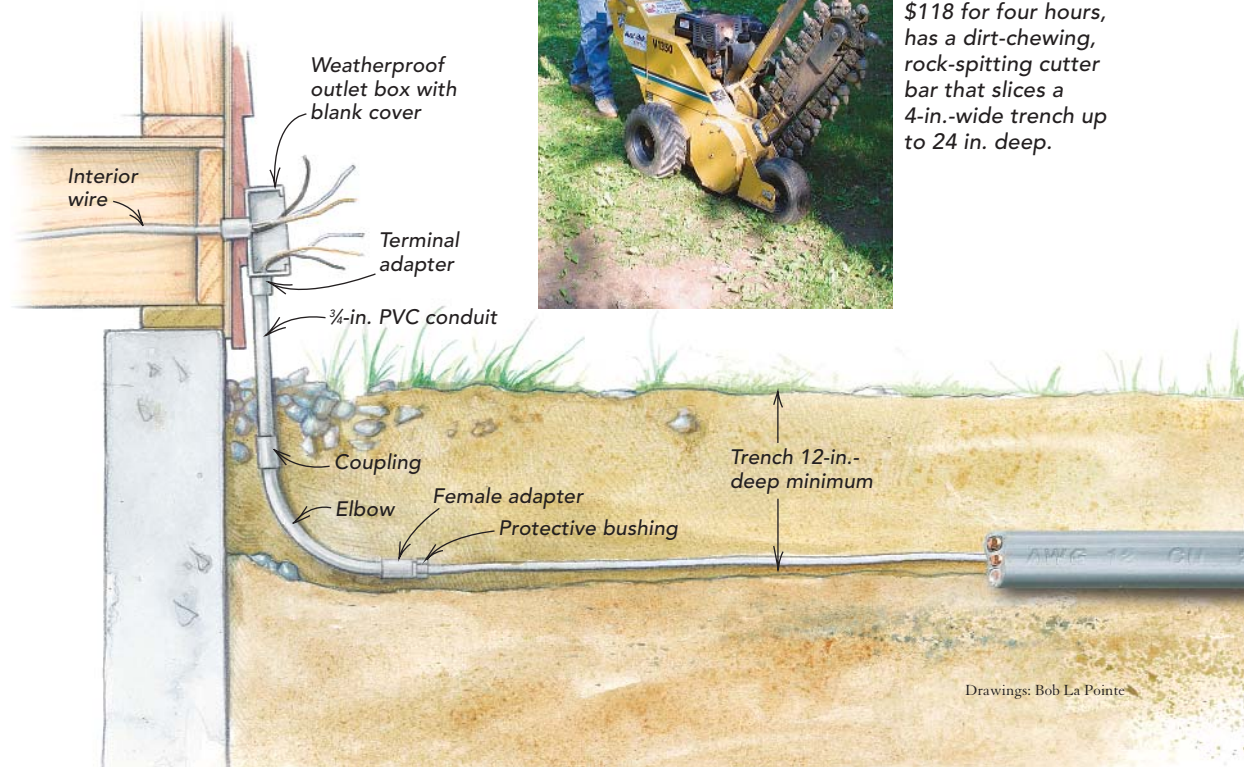
CABLE FROM THE HOUSE ...



A trencher saves time. Your back also will benefit when you rent a ditch-digging machine. This gas-powered model, which cost \$118 for four hours, has a dirt-chewing, rock-spitting cutter bar that slices a 4-in.-wide trench up to 24 in. deep.



Connections inside the weatherproof box



Power Outside

an outbuilding, digging the trench
toughest part of the job

Start by digging a trench between the house and the shed. Next, lay 12/2 underground-feed nonmetallic cable in the trench. Drill through the house at the rim joist, and fasten a weatherproof box to the exterior. Use PVC conduit and couplings to bring the cable from the trench to the box. Here, your underground cable joins a 12/2 cable that extends to a new GFCI circuit breaker that is located at the main electrical panel. At the shed, install conduit and cable as shown in the drawing below. If you're uncomfortable completing the wiring, hire a licensed electrician to finish the work. □

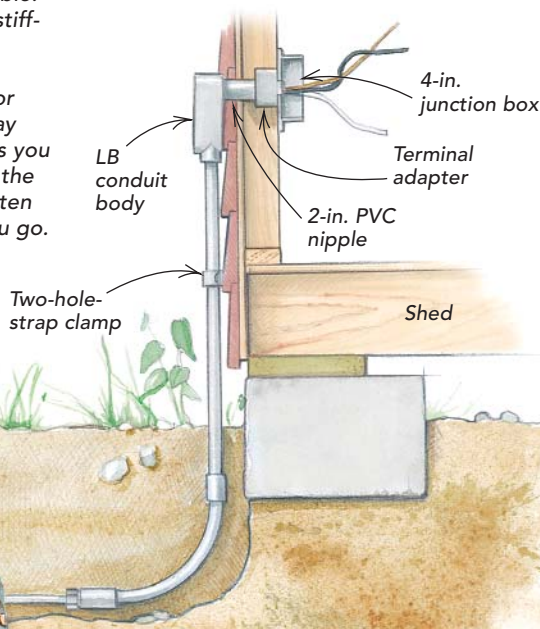
Joseph Truini is the author of *Building a Shed* (The Taunton Press, 2002). Photos by Chris Green; technical assistance by Peter Eng of Electrical Enterprises in New Milford, Conn.



Flatten the cable as you go. When bringing power to an outbuilding, be sure to use underground-feed cable. To unwind the stiff-jacketed cable neatly, without causing twists or kinks, simply pay out the cable as you walk alongside the trench, and flatten the cable as you go.



... BRINGS POWER TO THE OUTBUILDING



12/2 nonmetallic underground-feed cable



Lay in the cable. The National Electrical Code requires that only clean soil be used as backfill. Be sure to remove rocks, sticks, or stones because they might damage the cable.