

Protecting an Outdoor Kiln from Weather

by Arnold Howard

Photos Courtesy of Arnold Howard

I often see kilns in backyard sheds and under covered porches. Some of the kilns are rusted and dusty, while others still look new. If you keep a kiln outside, a backyard storage shed is ideal for protecting your kiln.



This is a typical backyard pottery or glass studio, about 16'x 20'. They can be seen all over Texas, including on remote ranches.



This is a university studio where the kilns are protected by walls from three sides with one side open. Because the kilns are protected from crosswinds, they remain in excellent condition.



This backyard studio is attached to the house. It has a roof and three walls, so the kiln is fully protected from the weather.



I worked on a kiln recently that was on a small back porch. The kiln was close to the edge of the roof overhang, so it was unprotected from the weather and badly rusted. The ceramic fiber was damp enough to carry a mild electric current when the elements were turned on. If you protect a kiln like this one with a sheet of plastic, air the kiln out often to prevent moisture from building up inside the plastic.

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Backyard Storage Sheds

I see storage sheds all over Texas, from two-story barns to small studios. The shed is ideal because it has four walls and a roof, so the kiln is protected from rain, wind, and excessive condensation.

The floor should be concrete. Do not place the kiln directly on the floor. Use the stand that came with it or an equivalent substitute. The stand must allow air to circulate under the kiln, and it must separate the kiln by a safe distance from the floor. The stand must be rock-steady to prevent delicate glass designs from shifting.

Porches and Carports

The next step down from a backyard shed is a covered porch or carport protected with three walls. The fourth side is open, but the walls prevent wind from blowing across the kiln. Some universities fire their kilns in this type of building. Those kilns look as good as kilns that are kept in a fully enclosed studio.

Covered porches or carports that have open sides offer less protection from weather than the ones with three walls, because the wind blows across the kilns carrying dust and moisture. The dust is difficult to remove, because it embeds into the paint.

Dust also deteriorates the switch boxes, because it acts as an insulator on the wires and components, causing everything to get hotter. The moisture in the wind rusts the kiln, and the doors of front-loading kilns become difficult to open. An open carport or porch may offer more protection, however, if the walled side is toward the prevailing winds.

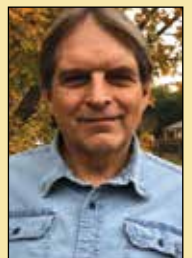
Additional Protection for Outdoor Kilns

If your kiln is on a covered porch or under an open carport, try to protect the kiln by adding another wall. If that's not feasible, move the kiln inward from the edge of the roof. A kiln that is near the edge of a porch or patio becomes rusted on the side that faces outward. Though the kiln will seem protected from the weather, wind can blow mist onto it.



This kiln is protected by a large roof but the studio is open on three sides. That makes it possible for the wind to blow freely across the kiln. The dust is embedded into the paint and difficult to clean off. If you have a studio like this one, clean off the dust every week with a moist rag.

While Arnold worked at Paragon Industries, he saw kiln controls evolve from switches to touch screen displays, tested early glass kilns, and wrote instruction manuals. In September 2019, Arnold started Howard Kilns, LLC, a repair and preventive maintenance business, to serve the Dallas-San Antonio, Texas, area and works on all brands of kilns. Feel free to contact him at arnoldhoward@gmail.com or call/text 972-333-1437.



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