

James Hamblin - Living Simply In A Dumpster



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theatlantic.com. September 2014. Tucked behind the women's residence halls in a back corner of Huston-Tillotson University's campus in Austin, Texas, sits a green dumpster. Were it not for the sliding pitched roof and weather station perched on top, a reasonable person might dismiss the box as "just another dumpster"—providing this person did not encounter the dean of the University College Jeff Wilson living inside.

Professor Wilson went to the dumpster not just because he wished to live deliberately, and not just to teach his students about the environmental impacts of day-to-day life, and not just to gradually transform the dumpster into "the most thoughtfully-designed, tiniest home ever constructed." Wilson's reasons are a tapestry of these things.

Until this summer, the green dumpster was even less descript than it is now. There was no sliding roof; Wilson kept the rain out with a tarp. He slept on cardboard mats on the floor. It was essentially, as he called it, "dumpster camping." The goal was to establish a baseline experience of the dumpster without any accoutrements, before adding them incrementally.

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