



General advice We want you to have a better look or build a period presentation. The first thing you need to do when designing your booth or guild yard is to get your head out of the 20th Century. Take a few hours to do an online search or go to your favorite video store and get movies based on 900s through the 1700s. Your booth or guild yard is your set and it should reflect not only whom you are representing, but also why you are there. We are not suggesting you mimic or copy every single group or booth out there, not everyone is doing a period presentation, or even doing it right. Also, we feel very strongly that variety is essential in any creative endeavor. However, seeing how other people have solved their booth/tent/guild yard design problems can really help when making your creative decisions and plans.

Some of the nicest tent displays and merchant booths I have seen have been in the latest group of period movies and TV shows to come out. Movies like the Lord of the Rings, Chronicles of Narnia, and even the Pirates of the Caribbean, all had booths and tents and lean-tos that really had a nice period look and edge to them. Whether or not you are viewing a medieval lean-to or a Restoration-era snake oil salesman's shade booth, designs did not change that much in your average English market place or village.

Color Always use color when possible. Strong hues such as bright yellows, golds, oranges, reds, maroons, indigo blues, greens, and brown are all colors that could be obtained easily in the Renaissance era. If in doubt of a period shade, or if you feel your materials makes your booth look too brightly garish, simply use a commercially available product to dull your material down to a flatter color. Colors to avoid completely are neon, denim, anything that reminds you of the 80's or 90's home décor, or dark colors that will fade easily (unless that is the look you want).

Back walls and side yards At the Mancos Renaissance Faire, we encourage everyone to always bring a few extra yards of material to hang between you and your neighbor. It not only helps to close off your back booth space, but also prevents eyes from seeing private items and non-period camping equipment. Further, it prevents theft of personal items and makes it that much easier to keep an eye on your possessions.

Signs and product merchandising Always keep in mind to design your booth to complement your wares. Many people in period who were not formally educated could not read beyond their name, or just a few simple phrases and instructions. Furthermore, it was a tradition to design not only a large pictorial sign that proclaimed your wares, but to make sure your building decorations represented what you were selling. Sweets-colored wood bits on a candy makers' house, a barber's bloody pole outside the surgeon's booth and a large shoe last hanging from the front eaves of a shoemaker's abode all advertised their wares for the average person.

Materials Please remember, when purchasing cloth and support material that they should be of planet Earth – i.e. natural fabrics and materials. Even if you are covering a frame, you should remove any nylon material and replace it with a well-made natural looking fabric.

Go to your lumber store and look through your garden, outdoor supplies, and timber. Wooden poles and rough-cut timber and burlap used for ground cover will look great. Another nice look is to create a walkway or a small fence to make a yard or garden for your tables and wares. With a cloth back wall to enclose your space, you will have achieved a unique look as well as an inviting place for patrons to come into and browse. You can find a vineyard for some grape stakes to put together a fence, and old fencing works very well, with the added bonus that it is easily affordable.

When selecting wood for your booth, always keep in mind that lumber would have been hand cut. Round poles were expensive and had to be hand turned, usually by a craftsman. Furthermore, when you select rope, remember that hemp and twine were period and cotton is a natural fabric.

Burlap, canvas, cotton, wool, horsehair, even llama will work for your roof, shade canopy or to cover your whole booth. Furthermore, if you're handy with needle and thread you could sew on layers to create a design of the period of time or to show your wares.

Open-air booths We feel that some of the most beautiful booths and guild yards are open to the public. Not only are they simpler in looks (thus enhancing your wares or equipment), but also they are easier to setup and tear down. Booths that are open have no defined entrance and exit, but are more in the style of a garden area that one enters to browse and shop. Shade is achieved by using umbrellas or half buildings. Fences (cloth or wood) are used to define the sides and the back. Products are displayed on covered tables or on shelves that line the fence. Some good examples of open booths are shown below.

This popular vendor has used a fence and shelves to display their wares. To get this look on a temporary site, one could use folding wood shelves and hang inexpensive burlap or tapestry along their back edges to achieve the same effect.



This vendor has chosen to use cloth-covered tables and market umbrellas to display their wares and provide shade.



The next vendor uses ribbon-decorated umbrellas to not only advertise their services, but to shade their temporary tables. To achieve this look at an event that does not allow straw bales, one would bring benches and use flat wooden boards to make the temporary tables. We do allow straw/hay bales at our faire.



This vendor has erected a small shade structure to display their wares, and covered it with an open and airy fabric. To conform to fire standards in this county, they were required to use nylon netting. To use this look at MRF, one would use canvas, burlap, or thin cloth.



In addition to the small shade structure, this vendor has a counter arrangement at the back of their booth yard. This allows for a lot of open room for patrons and browsers.



Popup: (not allowed for guilds or entertainers) We are always looking for merchants that vend with a period display. This includes canvas and wood tents, wood wagons, wood handcarts, and small period merchant's lean-to. However, we feel a **well disguised** popup tent can, and often does, look good enough to pass as a period makeshift booth. Especially since there was no uniform "tent" or "booth" in the Middle Ages or Renaissance, and studying contemporary woodcuts, paintings and written accounts reflect a hodgepodge of makeshift shelters from which many traveling merchants vended their wares.

Further, we understand and recognize that many merchants may not be physically able to erect a full-blown canvas and wood structure. Having a popup will not automatically disqualify an application, but **prospective merchants need to understand that in order for their booth to be accepted or welcomed back to the Mancos Renaissance Faire, it cannot appear as the instantly recognizable and uniform-like "craft fair pop-up". Booth owners will need to invest their creativity, some money, and some time into making it appear as historically plausible a shelter as possible.**

Some hard and fast rules for proposed popup users to live by

- If possible, attach something to raise the peak of your low-rise popup a few feet so it no longer looks like a ... pop-up.
- Avoid the brands that have outward slanted legs.
- Paint the metal framing a dark color or a shade that complements the fabric you will be covering them with (in case it slips).
- If you cannot replace the cover, at the very least, cover the top cloth with a natural fabric.
- Consider decorating the outside edge with tassels and fringes.
- Fly colorful pennants from your peak.
- The best-disguised pop-ups have the nylon cover completely replaced with period materials complete with decorative fringes and tassels.
- Cover all the inside metal framing with something. The inside framing at the top is garish and out of period. At the very least make a false roof, but better looking setups cover just the framing and leave the peak open for that vaulted ceiling look.
- Cover your corner poles or replace them with wood.
- Consider attaching a piece of thin wood to the upright poles and wrapping it with hemp rope or twine to make it look like it's a wood frame. Pennant flagpoles look nice.
- If using fabric to cover your poles, do not cover the poles tightly. If you wrap your material too tight, it'll just look like you covered the same uniform sized poles and it'll look even more like a pop-up. Remember wood would have been rough-hewn and not perfectly straight on all four sides. Loosely draping the fabric around your poles will disguise their size and shape.
- Seriously consider attaching a façade to the front of your booth. Several guilds and merchants have successfully recreated the look of an Elizabethan timber framed house front with only painted canvas and wood. I have seen some very nice thin-layered plywood looks that I thought were really wooden buildings at first.

Some successful examples and ways to disguise a modern pop-up or pvc/metal pole sunshade can be seen below:



A well wrapped pole using different pieces of colorful cloth and twine covering a metal frame car shade

A well dressed table and decorated tent pole.

