

# Shanghai Organic Farm Made From 78 Recycled Shipping Containers

Source: [earthtechling.com](http://earthtechling.com)

Published: January 9, 2013

By [Randy Woods](#)

Another day, another shipping container reuse, right? That's how it seems sometimes with a lot of architecture firms that want to play with these modular boxes like they were pieces of Lego. While using containers cuts down on building materials, the results tend to look like a cross between a nicely painted port facility and an artfully designed highway wreck.

One structure, however, that is turning heads for its good looks as well as its green building chops is the visitor's center at Tony's Farm, a large organic farming operation near Shanghai, China. The low-slung, two-story structure, designed by the Swiss firm [Playze](#), is made out of [78 recycled shipping containers](#), but you'd hardly know it at first glance.



Image by Bartosz Kolonko via Playze

Instead of the usual ribbed metal walls, the first thing you notice are the floor-to-ceiling windows that flood the space with natural light. On the ends of the 40-foot containers, the familiar doors are transformed into sun shades with artful perforations that filter sunlight and produce a sun-dappled pattern on the floor. In between the stacked containers, the design includes several open-air plazas and walkways covered with the roofs of containers.



View of the open interiors. Image by Bartosz Kolonko via Playze.

Inside, nearly all traces of the original containers are lost as the modular spaces are tied together to form large continuous spaces. The container walls have been reconditioned with thick insulation to prevent the loss of heat, most of which is provided by a [geothermal heat pump](#). Other energy-saving features include a controlled ventilation system, [LED lights](#) and locally sourced bamboo for the indoor and outdoor flooring.



The doors of the containers have been perforated to provide a sun-filtering effect. Image by Bartosz Kolonko via Playze.

Tony's Farm is more than just an agricultural operation; it is also a major tourist attraction. Chinese organic farming pioneer Tony Zhang created the farm in 2004, taking a plot of chemically damaged and worn out soil and slowly reconditioning it over three years. Today, it's the largest organic vegetable growing operation in Shanghai and is completely free of toxins and pesticides. The operations include a state-of-the-art, RMB60 million water filtration and circulation system to ensure responsible water resource management and protection from pollutants.



The farm offices within the containerized structure about the warehouse operations. Image by Bartosz Kolonko via Playze.

Visitors now flock to the 11,400-square-foot containerized center to learn about organic farming and other healthy, sustainable lifetime choices. The structure also contains a gift shop for tourists and offices for the staff, which are adjacent to the warehouse operations of the farm.

Soon, the building will become the lobby of a new tourist hotel that is currently in the works. According to the Tony's Farm website, the hotel will provide "Canadian-style wood houses," a fishing terrace, and "a large plot of land exclusively for children to plant and observe how a plant grows and to learn how strawberries are harvested."

---