

## Swather Converted To Self-Propelled Tree Cutter

“It does a great job cutting cedar trees in our pastures,” says Barry Stupplebeen, Anselmo, Neb., who mounted a 3-pt. Precision Mfg. tree shear on front of a Hesston 6400 swather to come up with a low-cost tree cutter.

“I already had the Precision tree shear, which I had bought back in 1996 (ph 888 497-3224; www.precisionmfg.com). However, I didn’t like having to turn around all the time, and it worked slowly because my tractor needed more hydraulic capacity. The swather’s wide footprint keeps it much more stable on hillsides than modern tractor or skid loader-mounted units,” says Stupplebeen.

He bought the used 1970’s Hesston 6400 swather at an implement dealer for \$200. It measures 9 ft. wide and 5 ft. tall. He cut 2 ft. off each end of the head, leaving only the center section where he mounted the shears.

The swather head was originally shaft-driven. He needed more capacity so he installed a high volume hydraulic pump on the shaft to open or close the jaws.

The shears hook up to the swather head using the original 3-pt. mounting arms. However, the 2 lower arms were relocated farther down using holes that he cut into the head.

To reinforce the lower arms of the 3-pt. mounting brackets he welded in lengths of angle iron where the sickle had been on the swather and drilled holes in them for a steel rod, which secures the shears to the swather. A pair of cotter pins are used to keep the rod in place. To reinforce the top link he welded 2 lengths of rectangular steel tubing on top of the swather head, then installed a big hydraulic cylinder.

“It has a zero turning radius so it’s very maneuverable. Another advantage is there’s no cab, so I can get in underneath tree branches better without breaking windows. It’s only 6 ft. tall except for the rollbar, which is lower than a skid loader. I added a metal bar to protect against trees falling on the operator, and I mounted chains on the tires for better traction.

“All steering operations are totally controlled from the steering wheel, which makes the machine much easier to handle. The Hesston 6400 is the only swather I know of that works this way. I simply push the steering wheel forward to move forward, pull back on the wheel to back up, and turn the wheel left or right all with one hand, which leaves my other hand free to operate hydraulic levers that open and close the jaws, raise and lower the shears, and tilt it. I push a hydraulic valve to open the shears and pull the valve to close them.

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**To build his low-cost tree cutter Ben Stupplebeen mounted a Precision tree shear on front of a Hesston swather.**



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- replaceable plow tips
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