

Silken Windhounds A New Breed

After more than 20 years of breeding dogs, a Texas couple, Francie and Chuck Stull of Austin, say they've "stabilized" a new breed called the Silken Windhound which they predict will soon gain breed recognition by the AKC.

It's a small elegant hound with long hair. It stands 18 to 24 in. tall and is a devoted, caring companion dog with a very confident personality. Their no-odor coat comes in a variety of colors.

The Stulls' goal in breeding the Windhounds was to create a hound smaller than a greyhound with a longer coat like a Borzoi (or Russian Wolfhound). To develop the new breed, they bred Whippet-type dogs to Borzois.

"For over a decade, we bred and kept these little treasures almost solely at the Kristull Kennel with no outside assistance or influence," Francie explains. "They are now stabilized as a true breeding line and with the help of a large group of dedicated owners and breeders, we are working on getting them recognized as their own breed."

Perhaps the most important trait that the Silken Windhounds are showing is their superb health and longevity. The Stulls have yet to lose a Windhound to old age, and some of their foundation dogs lived to be 20.

The Stulls sell a small number of Silken Windhounds, both puppies and young adults, to outside breeders and loving families.

Pet quality puppy prices start at \$750 each.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The International Silken Windhound Society, R. Lynn Shell, 2613 County Road 330,



Silken Windhound breed was developed by breeding Whippet-type dogs to Borzois.



Small, elegant hound stands 18 to 24 in. tall and has long hair.

McKinney, Texas 75071 (email: rlynn@borzoi.cc; website: <http://SilkenWindhounds.org>) or Kristull Kennel, Chuck and Francie Stull, 8708 Grelle Lane, Austin, Texas 78744 (ph 800 658-6699 or 512 280-1880; email: Silken@Kristull.com; website: <http://SilkenWindhound.com/>).



Gary Daniels makes "twig furniture" for every room of your home, as well as your deck or garden.

"Twig Furniture" Business Thrives On Rustic Look

For 22 years, Gary Daniels and his family have been making "twig furniture" from willow and birch. They displayed some of their creations at last year's Farm Progress Show near Alleman, Iowa, where he talked to potential customers with a constant stream of puns. Such as, "I just stick around." "I'm always going out on a limb and I never get stumped." "I started out as a tree doctor, but I couldn't stand the sight of sap. Then I realized I'd probably fall out of my patients anyway as a tree doctor." "If you tie a dog to a tree, is he bound to bark?"

When he gets serious, he explains what they do. "We call ourselves 'willow furniture artists'. We make twig furniture for every room of your home, as well as your deck or garden," says Gary. "Some popular items include picture frames, chairs, bar stools,

dressers, armoires, love seats, coffee tables, headboards, beds, bunk beds, cabinets, dressers, wardrobes, and even pool tables. Over the years we've made more than 500 different items."

People like the rustic look, says Gary. "Maybe they have a den with a fireplace and they want to make it look more like a lodge up north. Or they use twig furniture in their sun rooms. Sometimes people with contemporary homes set up rustic rooms using our furniture. From the outside you'd never guess they'd have our furniture inside. We have some clients with multi-million dollar homes. Once a month, we haul finished furniture in a truck out to furniture stores in Aspen, Colo., and Lake Tahoe, Calif."

Gary contracts with the Iowa Department of Transportation to harvest willow tree



Brian Spandl has a variety of belts and polishing wheels to tackle all kinds of jobs.

Metal Refinishing Business Thrives

By Dee Goerge

Rubbing lamps until they shine hasn't awakened any geniuses for Brian Spandl, but it has provided him with a thriving rural business.

As a metal finisher Brian helps people find out what lies beneath the blackened surfaces of sometimes valuable antiques. Since setting up Mill Lake Metal Finishing 12 years ago in Long Prairie, Minn., he has added more than 1,500 sq. ft. to his garage for a shop and storage.

"A blow torch started the whole thing," Brian says, pointing to a shelf of gleaming blow torches - just a few of the polished items that decorate the home he shares with his wife, Theresa, and their two children.

Brian spent two weeks cleaning the first torch with steel wool, acids and cleaners. Then he discovered a simple kit with polishing wheels and compounds. Within an hour, Brian had the torch polished and clear-coated - vastly improved from his amateur attempts. He next tackled an incense burner and a bullring.

Brian was hooked and started picking up work from neighbors and family.

He had worked in processing plants, oil fields and boat factories, but liked the idea of being his own boss. With a growing interest in antiques, there was good demand for a refinishing business.

By reading, experimenting and picking up tips from a former metal finisher, the Spandls have set up a clean, efficient system. Brian created rooms for each process, especially polishing which is especially messy.

The process begins at a workbench, where

Brian disassembles the item. Sometimes that can be the most difficult part of the job, he says. Then, except for cast brass and silver items that must be cleaned by hand, the pieces are dipped into one of five strip tanks to remove plating, soot, paint and grease. Everything then goes into warm, baking soda water to be neutralized.

Once the true metals are exposed, Brian repairs anything that's broken and sandblasts anything that needs painting. Some pieces need to be re-plated.

After an item has been repaired and polished, it is cleaned with a lacquer thinner and clear coated with lacquer to preserve it for years.

The Spandls refinish many copper boilers, fire extinguishers and blow torches. Because overhead costs are low, Brian charges \$20/blow torch and \$35/copper boiler.

A Deere plow, cow bells, train bells, firefighting equipment, gas pump nozzles and old parlor stoves have all come and gone through his workshop.

Though he doesn't like working on wood cookstoves, Brian likes refinishing parlor stoves, and he has several in his home and dozens more to finish. Most clients use them for woodburning; others modify them with propane.

Contact: FARMSHOW Followup, Brian Spandl, Mill Lake Metal Finishing, 28655 Cty. Rd. 29, Long Prairie, Minn. 56347 (ph 320 594-2799; email: milllake@realalp.com).

sprouts. "A highway crew cuts the trees down in select areas, then we haul it away in an old bus. It eliminates the need to mow roadsides," says Gary.

He also grows two different species of willow trees on his own land - fast-growing Australian willows and Curly willows.

He uses small Curly willows to decorate picture frames, and bigger ones to make legs for tables. "People like the curled look of the legs."

He gets his birch bark from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. "We cut and build year around. We take an all-wheel-drive Argo down into steep roadside ditches and use a modified Stihl brush cutter to cut the trees down. The brush cutter looks like a weed trimmer but has a chain saw blade on a round face. We use the Argo to haul the trees to a truck. We put tracks on the Argo so we can use it during the winter."

According to Gary, birch cuts best if the temperature is above 32°. Willows can be cut in temperatures down to zero or colder and



Twig furniture includes tables such as the one above.

actually bends better in winter. Prices range from \$12.50 for a 3 by 5 picture frame to \$250 for a 42-in. sq. dining table.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Beacon Woodcraft & Willow Works, 307 Kilbourn, P.O. Box 11, Beacon, Iowa 52534 (ph 641 672-1847 or 641 673-2956; email: beaconwoodcraft.com).