

Swather Converted To Self-Propelled Tree Cutter

"It does a great job cutting cedar trees in our pastures," says Barry Stuppelbeen, 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 Stuppelbeen.

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.

"I've used it for 5 years with no problems and couldn't be happier with it," says Stuppelbeen. "I can raise the shears up to 2 ft. high, and use the hydraulic cylinder on the top link to tilt the shears left or right. It takes only about 5 sec. to open or close the jaws. I can cut a 24-in. dia. tree if I can get at it from 2 sides.

"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.



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

"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.

"On newer tractor or skid loader-mounted tree cutter models, the steering wheel is used only to turn the machine left or right. The problem is that you have to keep pressure on the shears all the time because as the shears starts to close, it tends to push the entire machine backward. You have to keep one hand on a lever at all times in order to move the swather forward or backward."

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Office Table Made From Old Wrenches, Auto Parts

Eric Stern wasn't thrilled with the powder blue particleboard conference table his new employers offered to put in his office. So he made his own out of a pile of old wrenches. Stern works at an automotive tool distributor so the table fits right in. Years ago, the company sold some of the wrenches that can be seen under the glass top.

"I do metal sculpture on the side," Stern explains. "I like to use tools to create functional art." His business card holder is made of wrenches, and his home is filled with funky tool art. An old crank drill rolls out toilet paper. An air horn blasts when someone rings the doorbell. A bowl of welded washers holds fruit. Gears, wrenches and other odd parts become decorative sunflowers after Stern finishes with them.

The table started with a bunch of wrenches he bought on eBay. A friend gave him an old engine block.

"I spent two weeks taking it apart," Stern says. "It was rusted together, and I'd go home and pound on it in the evening." He used the crankshaft for the table's central column and the six pistons to support the table's glass top.

After cleaning the wrenches with a wire brush, he welded a 42-in. ring of wrenches around the outside. He used three large striking wrenches for the legs. The first time he set it upright, one of the legs broke off. He had to level the legs again after he softened the hard steel of the crankshaft with an acetylene torch and got a better weld. Stern used steel angle stock, shims and bottle jacks to level everything up and tried to place the wrench names up so they could be read.

"There's nothing valuable," Stern says. "I like wrenches that have curves and interesting shapes."

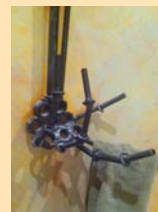
He sprayed the finished piece with several coats of clear coat, which makes it shiny and provides almost a cushion between the pistons and the glass top.

The 150-lb. table was a hit as soon as he rolled it into the office on wheels he had wisely attached.

"It definitely can be a distraction," he admits. "People tell stories about working



Eric Stern made his office table out of a pile of old wrenches and auto parts.



An old engine crankshaft forms table's central column and pistons support table's glass top. Business card holder (above) is made of wrenches. Photo at left shows funky towel holder.

on cars, and one guy knew right away what engine the pistons are from."

He enjoys the memories and stories his wrench table inspires.

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