

Mini Thresher Harvests Small Plots

If you want to grow wheat just for family consumption, all you need is a mini thresher like John Howe builds. The compact unit threshes and winnows wheat and rye and does a great job on dry beans, too.

"You can harvest an acre of grain with a scythe in a couple hours, and then thresh out up to 20 lbs. of clean grain an hour with my thresher," says Howe.

He says you simply hold a sheaf of grain by the stems and insert the grain heads into the hopper where the beaters thresh them. Grain falls down a tube into a bucket, while the chaff is blown out the end of the unit.

"If any chaff remains in the grain, you just run it through a second time," says Howe.

He built a prototype about 25 years ago and then resurrected the idea a couple years ago as interest in local food production grew.

"I've tried it with all types of beans," says Howe. "It chews the stems up, and the beans come out so clean that they can go right in

the pot."

Howe pulls the bean stalks when they are mature, dries them on a tarp under a roof and runs them through the thresher when fully dry. While the beans slow the thresher down by about 50 percent, he still gets about 10 to 15 lbs. of beans per hour.

"Every two to three minutes you may have to scoop the trash out, but you don't have to worry about picking pods off," says Howe.

He is building and selling the 40-lb. thresher/winner unit for \$585, including shipping. That price doesn't include the 1/3-hp electric motor, which he suggests buying locally.

"A new motor runs about \$50," he says. "It only draws about 150 watts. You could also power it with solar cells."

He has a solar package which includes a 130/120-watt panel, inverter, battery box and 30-amp charge controller with LED indicators sells for \$1,100.



"You can harvest up to 20 lbs. of clean grain per hour with my mini thresher," says inventor John Howe.

Howe would like to find someone to build and market the thresher/winner. He estimates that material costs would be under \$100 if built in volume. Each unit takes 2 to 3 hrs. of labor.

"I would give the design away to someone wanting to produce it," he says. "It works

well, but I need others to play around with it."

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Warren Melcher used parts from an old riding mower to power this giant trike.

Giant Trike Powered By Lawn Mower Engine

When Warren Melcher saw an oversized tricycle in FARM SHOW a couple years ago (Vol. 33 No. 1), he couldn't resist making his own version.

He had a stockpile of parts, including an old riding lawn mower he got from a neighbor.

"I made the frame out of square tubing from an old cultivator and a discarded bed frame," Melcher says. "The spoked wheels are off a 1940's Gleaner combine."

He had to rework the transmission with chain drives to match the lawn mower transmission to the big wheels. Purchasing those parts for about \$200 was his main cost on the project.

"The most challenging thing was to get the control levers to hook up. I ran them inside a square tube, and it was tricky to get everything in there," Melcher says.

He cut the lawn mower pedal in two to make gas and brake pedals for his big trike. He bent pipe to make the handlebars.

Instead of metal, Melcher used cedar and willow wood to cover the motor and build a two-person seat, which is about 4-ft. from the ground.

"I'm 6 ft. 4 in. tall and the handlebars are above my head. I put a step to get on it," he explains.

He completed the trike over the summer and took it to one parade. Before he takes it to future parades he wants to add an old 1941

Ford truck teardrop headlight.

The trike has a tongue from a Deere grain drill so he can pull a chore wagon around the yard, but Melcher admits he built it mostly for fun.

He looks forward to giving his grandchildren rides on Grandpa's Tricycle.

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Cocoons Cut The Cost Of Buying Worms

"Buying cocoons is more cost effective than buying worms," says John Naramore, owner of BWCN Farms in Banks, Ore. "You can buy 800 cocoons for \$20 plus shipping, and get about 3,200 worms. If you buy fully grown night crawlers you get 200 for \$20."

Naramore raises African night crawlers, which aggressively pull food down into soil. His main market is selling castings that are mixed with other ingredients into potting mixes.

It was his wife, Maria's, idea to sell cocoons. After the castings are removed with a 1/8-in. mesh screen, bedding material falls through a 1/4-in. screen. There can be anywhere from 1,000 to 1,800 cocoons in each gallon of the bedding material. When the material is rinsed through a window screen, the cocoons remain.

Naramore ships the cocoons through the mail. Customers spread them in their gardens or fields over a layer of organic material and cover them with more organic material. Cocoons can be spread anytime in spring or summer when the temperature is 70 degrees or more. Within a couple of weeks tiny worms emerge from the cocoons. It doesn't really matter how thick or thin you spread the cocoons. The worms migrate to wherever there is food.

Studies show that worms hatched in a new environment are better able to adapt than transported worms. He emphasizes the importance of placing the cocoons in moist organic material such as compost, leaves or grass.

He also notes that most soils have more worms than people think. To find out, dig a



Cocoons are shipped through the mail to customers who spread them in their gardens or fields. Within a couple of weeks, tiny worms emerge from the cocoons.

hole 18 in. deep, and throw in some kitchen scraps. Cover the hole and then open it back up in a few days. Many people are surprised at the number of worms they find eating on the bacteria of the compost.

Naramore started his worm farm about five years ago when he retired. He sells castings, cocoons, night crawlers, worm bins and books.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Naramore, BWCN Farms, P.O. Box 817, Banks, Ore. 97016 (ph 971 226-3309; www.bwcfarms.com).

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