

Scything Contest Still Going Strong

Lucien D. Paquette, of Middlebury, Vt., may be 91 years young, but that hasn't diminished his interest in the "scything" contest he started in 1978 that's held at the Addison County Fair near Middlebury, Vt.

"It's held people's interest over the years," says Paquette, "People have a good time with it. Mostly, they do it for nostalgia and just the enjoyment."

The rules haven't changed over the years. Judging is based on time, width of cut (as wide as possible), and evenness of stubble at the end of the swath.

Competitive categories include: "Men" (17 through 59 years), "Seasoned Stock" (60 through 79 years), and "Old Bucks and Does" (open to all). Contestants are asked to hand mow a distance of 25 ft. Ladies, youth under 16, and men over 80 mow 15 ft.

In the 2007 event, there were 26 partici-

pants. The field used for mowing is seeded to what Paquette calls "natural hay." It's mostly timothy that hasn't needed reseeded for quite a few years, due to care and fertilization. It also requires "pre-mowing" until June, to prevent over maturity by contest time.

"American-style scythes are being used, but European or Australian scythes are more popular now," he says. "They're made of softer steel than the American."

According to Paquette, several local people make their own snath (the long handle with two smaller handles). They make straight ones, as opposed to the old American bent snath, which is heavier. The Scythe Supply Store in Maine also has straight snaths, he points out.

Prizes for the hand-mowing contest are trophy plaques for the first three places in each



At 91 years old, Lucien Paquette still competes in the hand mowing contest he started in 1978.

class and ribbons to all participants. The contest has no entry fee.

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Dwight Keller carved this 1/8-mile dirt race track out of an alfalfa field on his farm.

Private Race Track For Cars, ATV's

Racing cars and ATV's is a fun pastime for Dwight Keller of Berthold, N. Dak. But he doesn't go to the local speedway. Instead, he uses a 1/8-mile dirt race track that he carved out of an alfalfa field on his farm.

"I built the track about one year ago and we use it a lot. It's a fun place for my 11-year-old grandson and I to race old junker cars and 4-wheelers," says Keller. "There's no start or finish line. We just pull up two cars or ATV's side by side, wait for someone to drop a flag, and go."

He used an old 1968 self-propelled Gallion road grader to make the track and he also uses the grader to maintain it, too. The grader is equipped with a Cummins 6-cyl. engine and a 14-ft. moldboard, along with a dozer blade on front.

The cars he races are usually old ones that he's able to buy cheap. "All together we have five cars that we race which include a 1995 Geo Metro, a 1993 Ford Escort, an old Honda Accord, and two Nissans," says Keller. "I didn't spend more than \$50 for any of the cars. In some cases they were pretty banged up when I bought them. We paint numbers on the cars to give them somewhat of a race car look."

Once in a while, he says, a few local people



"It's a fun place for my grandson and I to race old junked cars," says Keller.

will come up and "enter their car." "I always have them sign a 'no liability' form before they race on the track. All drivers have to wear helmets and seat belts, although so far we haven't had any incidents. But mostly it's just a family thing. Because the track is so small it's impossible to go very fast."

When Keller first started racing cars, he wrote the mileage down for each car because he was curious to see how many racing miles they'd put on. "One of the cars already has 140 miles on it, which is a lot of racing for a 1/8-mile track," says Keller.

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Dish Makes Great Gazebo

Looking for a way to use an old mega-size satellite dish? Why not build a gazebo for the yard? Don Kuntz built one about 10 years ago, and it has handled Minnesota winters just fine.

"My brother gave it to me just to get rid of it," he recalls. "I had seen one used for a gazebo before and decided to make my own."

Kuntz built from the top down. He hung the dish in his shed and built a framework to hold it up. He used 8-ft. 2 by 4's for the uprights and treated 2 by 4's for the floor. Each upright consists of two 2 by 4's butted at their inside edges and angled to match the round edge of the 8-ft. dish. A set of wheels on one side let him move it as needed.

Kuntz bought decorative plastic fencing and hung one strip just below the dish edge with a 2-ft. wide strip around the base. Plastic corner gingerbread pieces dress up the low cost gazebo even more.

"I've had it up for about 10 years now and it still looks great," he says.



Don Kuntz made this gazebo for his yard using an old satellite dish as the roof.

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Farmyard "Lighthouse" Built From Old Fuel Tank

When George Daulton's wife fell in love with lighthouses, he had just the answer. When they got back home to Virginia, he built her one. It was as easy as standing an old fuel tank on end. In fact, standing the fuel tank on end was the hardest part of the whole effort.

"I had a bulldozer operator dig a hole and set the tank on end in the hole," explains Daulton. "I used 8 bags of cement and a bunch of rebar to stabilize the tank and hold it in place."

Since the 5-ft. diameter lighthouse is for looks only, Daulton didn't worry about stairs for access. To complete the look, he built a light cage out of plywood and steel pipe, with clear Lexan sheets for glass.

"A friend gave me a set of safety lights and I put them inside the light cage with a power cord running to the base of the tower," he says. "Initially I ran them off batteries, but I am going to switch to AC power."

Daulton finished off the lighthouse with a coat of Rustoleum paint in strips of white and black. "I only needed one coat of paint, but I wanted something that would cover the rusty tank and keep it standing," he says.

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Lighthouse was built by standing an old fuel tank on end and then building a light cage on top.

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