

A Big Farm In Australia

Last issue we told you about a small 15-acre family farm in Germany that earns a substantial income for its owners. We recently heard from another kind of farmer in Australia who does things in a very big way on 1,800 acres.

David Trevilyan is a farmer-inventor who became famous "down under" years ago for building one of the world's largest tractors. He called it his D9 simply because it was powered by a D9 Cat engine, with 385 hp and 1,870 ft. lbs. of torque. The tractor is still used today to level land, deep rip, and operate as a crane. In the last few years it has been modified to include a swing-around cab. "It's still one of the world's biggest home-built tractors," says Kris Trevilyan, who recently emailed FARM SHOW about the family's operation.

Over the years other farmers became aware of David's talents and started requesting that he make all sorts of other machines. These were all made with a few core principles in mind – cost effectiveness, strength, durability, and minimal maintenance. "His idea was to build a machine that he himself would be happy with and that would last forever. He wasn't interested in spare parts or excessive warranty claims," says Kris. "His philosophy is that if you build the machine properly in the first place, then the farmer won't have any problems."

He made components for his various machines to be interchangeable so farmers could make do with what they already had.

His line of machinery includes:

- No-till Multi-Planter. It can plant into all conditions ranging from conventional tillage to full trash cover, and even virgin soils that

have never been touched by machines. It has a unique tine and press wheel system that results in precise seed placement and depth. A 2-in. dia. hydraulic cylinder is fitted onto each tine, pressurized from fluid held within the center frame of the machine. As soil conditions vary, the operator simply increases and decreases the pressure to control planting depth. The press wheel, which is hinged off the center of the tine, can be adjusted to allow pressure from the cylinder to be put on either the point of the tine or the press wheel, as required. The press wheel is controlled by a parallel linkage so constant planting depth is maintained even on hilly ground.

"We have a 111-ft. wide machine on our farm, but we can make them to virtually any specification. We've made two 120-ft. units so far, and we recently quoted a 302-ft. Multi-Planter for a customer," says Kris.

- Stickrake. The 18-wheel "stickrake" is designed to clear big chunks of land by windrowing rocks, trees and brush. The biggest model the Trevilyans make weighs about 12 tons.

There are deep open gaps between the fingers which allow dirt to flow through while still passing trash from one wheel to the next. The frame is hinged every fifth wheel so the rake hugs the ground even on hilly terrain. The machine's rear wheels are steered hydraulically to place the machine where it will work most effectively in relation to the tractor and the previous row. A flame thrower can be fitted to the rear of the machine to facilitate a one pass rake and burn operation.

Trevilyan also builds large chisel plows, cultivators, cotton stalk pullers, and cotton



David Trevilyan says his "D9" is one of the world's largest home-built tractors. It's powered by a D9 Cat engine with 385 hp and 1,870 ft. lbs. of torque.



Trevilyan's 18-wheel "stickrake" clears big chunks of land by windrowing rocks, trees and brush.



Big no-till Multi-Planter is 111 ft. wide. It works in conditions ranging from conventional tillage to full trash cover.

multimulchers.

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How To Grow A Giant Gourd

Growing giant gourds is more than just a matter of planting the right seed. You have to baby them along and give them plenty of what they like best...everything!

"The secret to raising a big gourd is plenty of fertilizer, plenty of water, and good soil," says Jeanie Dixon, treasurer and webmaster, American Gourd Society. "They love high organic matter, the higher the better. They like plenty of sun, too."

Gourds also like plenty of space. Dixon sometimes raises as many as 200 plants at a time, enough to cover about half an acre.

One big variety is the bushel gourd with its flat top. Another is the giant kettle gourd with its peak top.

To make giants out of your gourds, Dixon suggests you have to be ruthless. "Cut out the extra fruit, leaving only two or three gourds per plant," she says. "If you are going for a contest contender, leave only one per plant and the closer to the main stem the better."

To make sure it always has enough water, Dixon advises laying a drip irrigation hose around the main plant. Even giant gourd plants actually have a small and shallow root system, not more than a foot deep and within 2 1/2 ft. of the main stem. Fertilizer also needs to be spread close to the main stem.

How big is big when it comes to gourds? Dixon co-hosts the Giant Gourd Growing Championship on the internet. The champion dipper gourd, grown by Phil Hart of Monticello, Ind., hit 69 1/2 in. long. The largest giant gourd was 79 1/2 in. round and 156 lbs. This was a giant bushel gourd grown by Paul Jeffers of Taylorsville, Ky.

"Competitors save their own seed, but they are very sharing," says Dixon. "They have papers and a history of their line, like a pedigree."

Dixon's passion is painting gourds, and she has turned big ones into coffee tables. She



Champion dipper gourd is 69 1/2 in. long.



Jeanie Dixon turned this giant gourd into a beautiful painted coffee table.

advices treating a gourd like wood if using it for a craft or as a base for painting. She sands out any bumps, rinses it in 10 percent bleach to kill any mold spores and then seals it like wood.

Dixon's website has a host of links to gourd suppliers, growers and associations, including the American Gourd Society.

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The Kuczers have been raising, training, and selling mini horses since 1990. Most weigh 200 to 300 lbs.

They Do Big Business In Mini Horses

Kuczzer Farms is a "one-stop shop" for anyone interested in mini horses. They sell horses and also mini driving carts, wagons, single and team harnesses, chariots and specialty harnesses.

Miniature horses weigh 200 to 300 lbs. and can pull four times their weight on good footing. They can be used for pleasure driving and also in obstacle course competitions.

"Mini's are easy for children to show and train," Linda Kuczzer says. "Our two grandchildren have had a lot of fun working with them."

For Linda and her husband Tom, at Pulaski, Wisconsin, the business has become a much-loved sideline to their 90-cow dairy.

They've been successfully raising, training and selling mini horses since 1990, but in 1996 realized there was a retail demand for high quality yet affordable miniature horse equipment.

"Our specialty is driving and it has evolved beyond our expectations," Linda explains. "We originally catered to the average horse person on a more local scale, but one of our clients encouraged us to show our horses at

the national level and that has exposed our horses and equipment to a much wider audience."

The Kuczzers work with an Amish craftsman in Pennsylvania whose quality is outstanding.

Their sons, Adam and Bob, build a selection of wagons. The two men have developed a high level of wood and metal-working skills. They're assisted by Linda's dad, Leo Van Donsel.

"We've continued to broaden our equipment line so that we have a wider variety of two-wheeled and four-wheeled carts. We have other suppliers in Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania. We've also gone into supplying draft harness," Linda explains.

Cart prices start at \$475, F.O.B. Kuczzer's farm. Harnesses start at \$288, plus shipping. Horses generally start at \$500.

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