Amazing Mini Tree Grows Full-Size Lemons And Limes

When Fergie's Nursery in Tifton, Georgia, introduced the Cocktail Tree in November 2006, it created a stir from customers all over the world. The tiny tree grows lemons and limes on one tree. When customers receive their trees, they usually have buds and fruit already.

"It's a tree that actually pays for itself," says Nelson Malcom, a third generation owner of the 60-year-old family business, who works with his father at Fergie's. "They are everbearing so they produce year 'round."

As a horticulturist, Malcom grafts rootstock to develop new varieties. The Cocktail Tree is rated cold hardy, he says, able to survive at 10 degrees for 10 hours. It can be planted outside in Zones 7 to 12 and up, as well as in coastal areas up to Delaware. In colder climates the tree is kept in a container and moved inside near a sunny window in the winter. Malcom says his brother-in-law in northern Minnesota kept a tree in a sun porch last winter and enjoyed fruit all winter long. Planted in a 10-gal. container, the tree grows to about 5 ft. in 18 months.

The key to bearing fruit is proper fertilization. The Cocktail tree requires a specific mix of minor elements (12-6-6, iron, zinc and copper) and regular watering.

"This is an area of the nursery that is just exploding," Malcom says, noting that customers from all over the world have ordered Cocktail Trees. One recently was sent to Cheers Bar in Athens, Greece.

At $29.95 (plus shipping), the trees are very reasonably priced, Malcom says. The Cocktail Tree comes in two varieties. One has Meyer lemons and Persian limes, like those found in the grocery stores. The other has Meyer lemons and Key limes, which are the size of golf balls and perfect for using in cocktails.

Malcom says the fruit is good; the lemons are almost sweet. It takes about 13 weeks from the time buds form until the fruit is completely ripe.

He adds that if people order a Cocktail Tree and mention FARM SHOW, he'll send free fertilizer for a year.

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Planted in a 10-gal. container, the tiny Cocktail Tree grows to about 5 ft. in 18 months. It produces lemons and limes on the same tree.

"It's an everbearing tree so it produces year round," says Nelson Malcom of Fergie's Nursery.

Steve Walnofer can cut young cedar trees from the comfort of his mini truck, using his front-mounted Tree Chopper.

He Chops Trees With His Mini Truck

With his mini truck-mounted Tree Chopper, Steve Walnofer can cut young cedars in comfort. The Tree Chopper, which uses no hydraulics and has no moving parts, was designed to be mounted to an ATV. Not surprisingly, the farmer and mini truck dealer prefers to use his 1995 Mitsubishi (see Vol. 28, No. 6).

"It's got a heater and radio and a good seat with a full back," he says. "Also, with a mini truck, you have 1,500 lbs. or more pushing power and a stronger frame, a steering wheel, foot pedal and gears. If you want more traction, you can even put ATV tires on it."

To mount the Tree Chopper, Walnofer designed his own frame mount. He started with the cross frame about 3 ft. back from the front end and bolted the long end of an L-shaped steel plate to butt up against it.

Walnofer then welded small pieces of iron with holes drilled for bolts to each of the tow hook supports on the front end. He also welded nuts in the ends of a section of 2 by 2-in. steel tubing that was long enough to fit between the tow hook supports. Bolts through the support irons secured the 2 by 2 in place.

Walnofer then ran two more lengths of 2 by 2 from the L-shaped steel plate on the truck frame to the front. He bolted them to the plate and welded them to the tow hook-supported tube in front.

"The two 2 by 2's tied the mid frame support with the front-end support," explains Walnofer. "Then I welded a 2-in. receiver hitch to the front end support where the tubes were welded."

The Tree Chopper ATV connection consists of a steel plate and four clamps that connect to the frame. To adapt it to the receiver hitch, Walnofer removed the clamps and bolted a length of 2 by 2 to the plate.

"To hook it up, I simply slide the 2 by 2 into the receiver hitch and it floats along at ground level," explains Walnofer. "I can take two bolts out, replace the clamps and use it on an ATV again."

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Tree Chopper was originally designed to be mounted to an ATV. Walnofer designed his own frame mount for his truck.

Home-built solar heater mounts in McLeod's living room window.

Simple Home-Built Solar Heater

Alvin McLeod of Didsbury, Alberta, made a simple solar heater that mounts in his living room window. The cost was virtually zero but it really pays off during cold winter months.

The home-built heater can draw air in at 68 degrees F and blow it back out at 110 degrees, he says. McLeod likes the fact that it's self-regulating - meaning that it immediately shuts off when the sun isn't out.

The system measures 24 by 40 in. and hangs suspended from a hook at the top of the 5-ft. sq. window frame.

"It sits on the bottom of the window frame, tipped back slightly because if you can have the whole unit perpendicular to the sunshine, it'll draw heat better," McLeod says.

The unit consists of a piece of 1/4-in. plywood with 3-in. dia. aluminum dryer duct tubing winding across its length four times, thanks to elbows. The tubing is held onto the board with five plastic snap ties running through holes drilled in the wood.

A 14 sq. in., 5-watt solar panel he purchased second hand powers a pair of 2 3/8-in., square, 12-volt DC fans (purchased from an auto parts store), which are similar to computer cooling fans. They fit right inside the aluminum tube structure at opposite ends, in open-ended elbows that face away from each other. One fan draws cool room air in one end of the system, and the other fan pushes hot air out the other end. According to McLeod, they each put out 2 1/2 cu. ft. of air per minute.

Once it was built, McLeod painted the whole thing "flat black" to absorb as much heat as possible from solar rays. He says the tubing does an excellent job of heating up the air as it passes through; however, it would get even hotter if the unit was enclosed in a lead-free glass case.

McLeod used duct tape to hold the tubing and elbows together at the joints. He points out that the air actually travels through 17 1/2 ft. of tubing (including the elbows).

"I thought a larger unit would produce more heat, so I made one twice as big as this one, but it didn't produce any more heat," McLeod points out. "As long as the sun is shining, it can be 20 degrees F outside and the furnace won't come on all day. The heat builds up in the living room enough to keep the furnace from coming on until later in the evening. Best of all, if the sun isn't shining no electricity is generated by the solar panel so the fans don't run."

McLeod spent about $100 on materials for his creation.