

## He Turns Shovels And Saws Into Works Of Art

Norb Weber has an artistic way to turn Grandpa's old shovel into a keepsake. He cuts scenes into it with a plasma cutter and attaches a rain gauge to the handle to make it functional garden art.

He also cuts designs in handsaws, circular saw blades, cast iron skillet and he makes fire rings.

"Everything is recycled," says the St. Cloud, Minn., barber.

He started in 2002 by making fire rings from old air compressors and garden art for his lake home. To sell them, he realized he needed to come up with an original idea - something that hadn't been seen anywhere. He first tried cutting on a hand-saw, and learned that he needed to adjust the temperature and cutting speed for different thicknesses.

"You have to get what you are going to do, in your mind," Weber says. "You've got to keep it moving along or you'll burn a hole."

Cast iron skillets are particularly challenging.

He draws his designs on paper, then transfers them to the piece he's cutting. The more intricate the design, the trickier it is to make sure it remains intact.

"Most people can't believe it's all free-hand," Weber notes.

Many of his scenes are "up North" designs with birds, wolves, deer, trees, etc. But he makes a variety of items to please people's tastes, including pets - even dolphins. He made a custom fire ring with silhouettes of the Simpsons cartoon family. The buyer planned to sandblast and powder coat it before giving it as a gift.

Weber leaves his art natural or paints it according to customers' wishes. He sells at craft shows and events, but smaller items can be shipped. Prices vary from \$25 for shovels and saws, to \$250 for custom fire rings.

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Noel Weber cuts scenes into shovels and saw blades with a plasma cutter.



Many of his scenes are "up North" designs with birds, wolves, deer, trees, etc.

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"It's big enough to hold large parts and is easy to move around," says Ron Hanen, who made his own portable sandblaster using a 3,000-gal. plastic water tank and an old satellite dish.

## Portable Sandblaster Made From Plastic Water Tank

"I made my own portable sandblaster using a 3,000-gal. plastic water tank and an old satellite dish. It's big enough to hold large parts and is easy to move around," says Ron Hanen, Montevideo, Minn.

He started with a 3,000-gal. plastic water tank that he already had. He cut a 3-ft. sq. opening out one side of the tank to make an access door. An air-powered blast gun hooks up to an air compressor. A siphon hose runs from the gun down into a bucket of sand.

To build the sandblast "pressure pot", he used a 16-in. dia., cone-shaped air cleaner off a road grader. He connected an 8-in. dia. metal pipe to the bottom of the air cleaner to hold a sand valve. Then he connected another length of pipe to the top of the air cleaner, which is used to fill the pot. He cut an opening in one side of the tank to feed the air.

An electronic solenoid is used to open a

one-way air valve which opens the sand valve at the bottom of the pot, allowing air to mix with the sand - all at the touch of a button that mounts behind the blasting tip.

An exhaust fan clears away dust during sandblasting. Lights inside the tank provide light.

"I built it because I didn't have space in my shop for a sandblaster," says Hanen. "I got the satellite dish from someone for free. The 3-ft. sq. window has a pair of 7 1/2 in. dia. access holes cut into it that are spaced 16 in. apart. I fitted the access holes with protective gloves that I bought from a tool and equipment company.

"To clean a part, I reach inside the square opening to hold the blasting gun."

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Joseph Rupinski built a large corn bin (left) in his basement that supplies his corn burning stove via an electric feed conveyor (right). Screw conveyor runs from bin to flexible plastic filler tube.

## Basement Bin Makes Corn-Burning Easy

After years spent carrying corn in 5-gal. buckets to a corn burning stove in his basement, Joseph Rupinski of Twining, Mich., decided there had to be a better way. So he built a large corn bin in his basement that supplies the stove via an electric feed conveyor.

"It's a clean, easy way to get corn into the stove," says Rupinski. "All the corn is handled mechanically, with no hand labor."

Made with 2 by 4's and plywood, the bin measures 8 ft. square and 6 ft. tall with a sliding plywood cover on top. The bin is filled through a window in the basement wall. A screw conveyor runs from the bin to a flexible plastic tube. To fill the corn stove Rupinski just swivels the tube over to the stove and flips a switch.

"The system works much like the coal bins people used to have in their basements," says Rupinski.

Rupinski grows and harvests all the corn that he uses in the stove on his 40-acre hobby farm, using an antique 2-row corn planter and

a small Gleaner self-combine combine. "I originally bought the planter to plant wild-life plots to attract deer. Now that I heat my house with corn, the deer get less and I get more," says Rupinski.

He says he paid \$4,200 for his Bixby corn stove but that it has been well worth the money. "This stove burns efficiently and starts up easily with the push of a button, using electricity to start the fire. Using the thermostat, I can electronically adjust output between 8,000 and 50,000 btu's on a touch pad. It has a special high-burn system which automatically clears the firepot of ashes periodically, but doesn't disturb the operation of the stove at all. With many other stoves you have to clean them out by hand every day or two. The only limitation is that you have to be somewhat mechanically inclined to get the hang of it."

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Feed tray over tire is made out of 1/2-in. thick plywood, with 2 by 4's for the base and sides. Cattle can easily reach the feed Kiehne dumps on tray.

## Tire Feeders Hold Up To Cows, Weather

Instead of buying \$130 metal feeders that rust out in a year, Larry Kiehne makes feeders out of old tractor and backhoe tires and treated wood for \$25.

Up to 10 beef cattle can easily reach the 5 gal. of ground feed he dumps in the center of each tire feeder, says the Jackson, Mo., farmer. The feeders are sturdy, and the cows don't climb on them and wreck them as they did with metal feeders.

"I work for an equipment dealer that removes tires," Kiehne says. "They're happy to get rid of them."

He makes the feed tray out of 1/2-in. plywood and 2 by 4's for the base and sides.

The trays are 4 by 4-ft. or 5 by 5-ft., depending on the size of the tire. He bolts the tray to the tire.

Kiehne drills holes in the side of the tire that is on the ground so water doesn't collect inside. He also drills a hole through the tread part of the tire for a chain so he can pull the tire feeders around with a 4-wheeler.

After experimenting with one tire feeder, Kiehne built eight more, and he says his neighbors are building them, too.

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