



Corn cob blasting gives wood a rough hewn look, as shown in these before and after photos of a wood-sided home.

Corn Cob Blaster Renews Log Homes

Sandblasting is a powerful restoration tool, but sometimes it's a little too powerful - especially when it comes to refinishing wood such as the outside of a log home. That's where corn cob blasting excels.

"Corn cob grit is gaining more popularity," says Jacqui Weber, owner of ProBlast, which sells a blaster that works with all media from sand to soda to corncobs. "Cob blasting grit is made from the woody ring of the cob. It's quite gentle yet opens the grain and makes it rustic looking. It gives wood a rough, hewn look."

Besides refinishing log homes and wood siding, corn cob grit is ideal for electric motors and hydraulic cylinders because it doesn't etch glass or foul bearings. It can also be used on aluminum, fiberglass, masonry, plastic and other materials as well as to remove flaking paint and to do general plant maintenance. It leaves no residue and is absorbent.

"Corn cob is very low in dust. It's worker

and environmentally friendly, compostable and the residue doesn't harm grass or plants. It's a good media for thin metals, because it doesn't require pH neutralizing after blasting, as is the case with soda," says Weber.

Corn cob grit sells for \$15 to \$30 for 40 lbs. "We don't sell franchises, but we help people as if we were," Weber says. "We provide product support and help customers with their blast businesses."

The decade-old company is unique in that it has one blaster that uses all kinds of media, some of which are very unusual. For example, mussel fisherman on the East Coast use sea salt to blast eel-like pests off their equipment.

The multimedia blasting package sells for about \$8,000. Prices vary in the U.S. and Canada.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, ProBlast Inc., 91 Ontario Street, Bowmanville, Ontario, Canada L1C 2T2 (ph 866 750-9876 or 905 926-1262; www.problastusa.com).

Christmas Tree Rental Business Catches On

The idea of renting Christmas trees for the holiday season is catching on, according to a couple of Canadian companies that tried it.

"Many people don't want to cut down a tree that takes, on average, 8 yrs. to grow, just to have it in their living room for 3 weeks before tossing it out. They feel that's wasteful," says Jeff Ferguson of Evergrow Christmas Trees Co. of Vancouver, B.C. "We offer a guilt-free way to enjoy the natural beauty and scent of a spruce or fir tree. After the holidays we take the potted tree back."

All the renter needs to do is keep the tree's soil moist.

Evergrow rented out all 200 of their trees by Dec. 1, last year and they have a long waiting list for next year.

Evergrow delivers the trees and then picks them up again 3 weeks later, charging \$95 to \$150 for the complete service, depending on location and tree size. When the season is over, they send the trees to a nursery to be cared for until they can be rented out again.

Carbonsync Holiday Trees™ also serves the greater Vancouver area and provides the same type of service, but charges \$25 to \$125. Afterwards, they give the still-potted trees to habitat restoration groups for replanting.

According to Carbonsync's Brad Major, the company also experienced high demand, quickly renting out 130 trees, 105 of which were full sized.



Renting a Christmas tree lets you enjoy the natural beauty of a spruce or fir tree without much hassle. All you have to do is keep the tree's soil moist.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Evergrow Christmas Trees Co., Burnaby, B.C., Canada (ph 604 438-6771; www.evergrowchristmastrees.ca) or Carbonsync Holiday Trees, P.O. Box 1983, Squamish, B.C., Canada V8B 0B4 (ph 604 626-7668; www.carbonsync.ca).

Backyard Butcher Goes To The Meat

Don Livermore doesn't sit in town waiting for someone to bring in an animal for butchering. He takes his rig to the farm and butchers right in the backyard. In 90 min. he can kill, clean, quarter and load a full size head of beef. Within 2 to 3 hrs. of the animal going down, it's being cut up at a local meat cutting shop.

"It's just a job, and someone has to do it," says Livermore, who's been doing "it" for more than 40 years. In fact, his slaughter truck is 40 years old.

Livermore started his business in 1972 and charged \$5 an animal. Today he charges \$65 and slaughters an average of about 400 head of sheep and beef a year. His business was interrupted recently, however, when Livermore had an accident on the racetrack. An avid stockcar racer at age 70, he broke his neck, but expects to be back at work - and on the racetrack - within a year.

Livermore's trade is dying out, he says. Demand has steadily dropped over the past 10 years or so. For many years he never slaughtered fewer than 1,000 animals, reaching a peak of 1,300 in 1996. He recalls when there were as many as 6 mobile slaughter trucks working the roads of southwestern Ore. Today there are only three.

"Some farms where I used to butcher now have hundreds of houses sitting on them," says Livermore. "I don't think business will ever get back to what it used to be. Many people no longer have money to buy a half or quarter at a time. They've learned to live on hamburger from the store."

What hasn't changed is how he does the job. Once the animal has been put down (hopefully with a single bullet), he skins it, most of it on the ground. Then an electric hoist on the truck is used to lift the carcass to finish the skinning and remove the organs and offal. A reciprocating saw splits the carcass in half and then into quarters, which are hoisted onto the truck.



Photo courtesy Craig Reed

Don Livermore drives his slaughter truck to farms and then butchers animals right in the customer's backyard.

When Livermore started out in the business, he spent about \$12,000 on a van and fitted it with a stainless steel interior for hauling meat. A separate small stainless steel room was installed behind the driver's compartment. It holds four 55-gal. drums to hold hides and offal. Livermore salts and sells the hides, while the offal goes to a landfill. He also installed a potable water supply tank in the truck. Livermore estimates a new truck would set him back around \$60,000. He has no plans to buy a new one, says his wife Jayn.

"I think he'll keep doing it until he can't get up in the truck anymore or it gives out," she says. "Guys are betting on which one is going to give up first."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Don's Mobile Slaughtering, 374 Buckhorn Rd, Roseburg, Ore. 97470 (ph 541 672-1004; no19racerlady@yahoo.com).

Moisturizing lotion bars are all natural, with no artificial ingredients. Deodorant-style tubes are also available.



Skin Products Made On The Farm

Farmer Brown's All-Natural Solid Lotion Bar prevents "Chicken Lady" Barb Miller from getting chapped dry skin. The entrepreneur has added the lotion bar to the soaps and toiletry products she makes and sells from her Westfield, Penn., farm business, Miller's Homemade Soaps.

Miller knows personally the importance of caring for skin. She used to grow vegetables for farmers markets, and she and her husband raise chickens on 90 acres of pasture. She made lotion bars a few years ago when she kept bees and wanted to do something with the beeswax. She initially gave the bars as gifts, and then decided to add them to her growing soap business.

"The lotion bars are all natural with no artificial ingredients," Miller says. "If people have skin conditions, they can be sensitive to fragrances. By not having any fragrances, they don't have to worry about having some kind of adverse reaction."

The lotion bars contain beeswax to soothe and protect; jojoba oil, which mimics skin's natural oil and penetrates deeply;

and Shea, rich, buttery oil, which has been used for skin care for thousands of years.

To make application convenient, Miller molds her bars in deodorant-style tubes. She recommends putting on regular lotion, then rubbing on Farmer Brown's solid lotion to seal in the moisture. Customers have told her they used it to relieve sunburn pain. Health care workers, who wash their hands frequently, use it to prevent chapping. Skiers rub it on their face before hitting the slopes. People with psoriasis and other skin conditions report relief from the lotion.

Use a lotion bar for everything from chapped heels, to dry hands and skin from working in the garden, doing chores or any other outdoor activity.

She sells her soap products through her website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Barb Miller, Miller's Homemade Soaps, 604 Reservoir Hill Rd., Westfield, Penn. 16950 (ph 814 367-5909; www.millershomemade.com).