

Automatic Firewood Processor

Making more firewood in less time was the main objective of Warren Aikins, Rainier, Ore., when he first designed his "Chomper" Firewood Processor several years ago. Since then, he has reworked and refined the machine to the point where he now produces several versions of it for sale through his company, Rainier Hydraulics.

The Chomper processes firewood from cut logs of any length. It uses a shear blade to slice logs into lengths from 12 to 20 in. long. All functions are hydraulic, including the winch that pulls logs into the processing chamber and shear.

Here's how it works: A winch pulls logs into the processing chamber. Once the log is loaded, a shear blade cuts 80 percent of the way through the log. Then the shear blade moves forward, pushing the log through a set of fixed splitting blades. Once the log is split, the shear blade completes the cut. As the split firewood falls forward, the shear blade raises up and moves back to begin the process again.

"What makes the design unique is the way the shear blade cuts only part way through the log and is then used as the mechanism for automatically feeding logs into the splitter," notes Aikins.

Prices range from \$14,500 for the pto



A winch pulls log into chomper. Shear blade cuts 80% of the way through log and then drags log forward, pushing the end against a fixed set of splitting blades. Once the log is split, the shear completes its cut.

model to \$45,500 for the largest self-powered Chomper. Belt conveyors to stack or load wood are available. Other options include trailer packages, fenders and lights, automatic engine shutdown system, and tachometer/hour meter for the engine.

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Rebuild Batteries Better Than New

You don't have to toss your old cordless drill just because the battery's worn out and the company stopped making replacements. Primecell, a Bedford, Penn. company, has been rebuilding batteries for nearly 20 years.

"Battery technology changes so quickly that a lot of product today is made to be disposed of after 3 to 5 years," says Joel Cunard, owner of Primecell. "People can't find a replacement for their battery, so they have to throw out the tool."

Recent developments have resulted in huge improvements in cell performance. NiCd storage capacity has increased by as much as 50 percent. Rebuilding improves tool performance to state of the art technology. Not only are rebuilds less expensive than a replacement, but more than 97 percent end up with increased capacity.

Many rechargeable NiCd products can be upgraded to NiMh Cells. Original NiMh batteries normally have to be recharged with expensive NiMh chargers. Primecell is often able to install circuits that allow the rebuilt batteries to be charged with the original NiCd chargers, yet enjoy the greater NiMh

cell capacity.

"The company works with orders of all sizes," says Cunard. He cites customers as diverse as AT&T and NASA to individual ham radio operators, paramedics and home handymen.

"We pride ourselves on single orders for individuals, but we also do large orders for companies," says Cunard. "A new battery might cost \$100. We can rebuild for \$40."

One battery the company hasn't developed a process for is lithium ion rechargeables. Popular for their energy density, they are very expensive to replace, notes Cunard, and can be killed if undercharged or overcharged.

Visit Primecell's website for a long list of batteries that can be rebuilt and information on assessing your battery's health. Cunard suggests requesting an estimate before sending in a battery.



Primecell has developed a way to open batteries to replace the cells, then reseal them without damage.

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