

## Picking Cart Lets You Lay Down On The Job

The battery-powered crop-picking cart from PaulB, LLC makes field work quieter and more productive. Two, high torque, planetary gear motors keep the cart moving even in rough conditions.

A 12-volt, deep cycle battery with its own 110-volt automatic charger provides power. Two models are available. One has a 24 series battery and 4 hr. run time, (11 hrs. picking time) and is priced at \$2,795. The second has a 27 series battery with a 6 hr. run time, (16 hrs. picking time). It's priced at \$2,845. Both offer ground speeds of up to 18 ft./min.

The picking platform is equipped with foot pedal control for forward and reverse.

Durable and easy to clean, vinyl-covered, foam pads adjust to any height picker. A vinyl canopy protects both the crop and the operator from sun or rain.

A high capacity storage tray mounts ahead of the operator for setting out plants or picking produce. A shelf beneath the canopy provides shaded storage for produce or supplies. Quick release pins and cushioned handles make it easy to raise the cart from 20 to 30 in. above the ground to match crop height. Wheelbase can be adjusted from 36 to 66 in. by moving the non-drive wheel in or out on the rear axle.

The lightweight cart can easily be pulled into position by hand. Multiple carts can be



Battery-powered picking cart comes with a vinyl canopy that protects both the crop and the operator from sun or rain.

towed to the field with a single ATV, tractor or truck.

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## "Slabwood Cabins" Help Attract New Business

Alec Alberti makes his living selling firewood so he's always looking for a way to promote his business.

That's why he decided to build a pair of "slabwood cabins" made from "mortarless" stacks of firewood. One of the cabins is used to store firewood, and the other to store woodworking tools. It has a wood burning stove inside with a steel chimney flue sticking out the roof.

To build the walls of each cabin he simply stacked 16-in. lengths of slabwood on top of each other. "The walls are built without a single nail," he says.

The slabwood cabins were erected in 2000 and are still standing in good condition.

"They've become local landmarks and good attention grabbers for my business. People stop by to photograph them all the time," says Alberti.

"When people first see the cabins they can't believe they're really made of slabwood and wonder why they don't fall down. I tell them it's because of the interlocking technique I use and because of the framing system. The strange thing is that all the slabwood is stacked directly on the ground, with no foundation at all, yet the building never heaves or shifts.

"Last winter my slabwood cabins survived the worst snowstorm of the century. I didn't remove the massive amount of snow on the roofs of the cabins

and yet, because of their unique construction, they were able to withstand the weight of all that snow and didn't collapse even though many other buildings in our area did collapse from the weight of the snow."

Each cabin measures 30 ft. long by 15 ft. wide and has 10-ft. high slabwood walls. There's a door and windows on three sides and a sloped, tar-papered roof covered with slabs of hemlock.

Building the cabins was easy, once he got started, he says. The first step was to lay interlocking slabwood support stacks at each corner and also at each end of the building. The slabwood is simply piled up between the corner stacks. "I kept everything leaning inward as I built the walls up," says Alberti.

He placed a 15-ft. long spruce pole at each end of the cabin to support the rafters, lashing the bottom of each pole to a locust pole that's buried in the ground. "I didn't want to bury the spruce poles in the ground because they would rot," says Alberti. More locust posts are placed at each corner inside the building to support the slabwood.

The roof's frame is made from small spruce trees spaced 2 ft. apart. The rafters never touch the slabwood walls.

He built the window frames out of 2 by 6's and nailed them to some slabwood, then placed windows off an old building inside them.

"Each cabin took about 2 months to build," says Alberti. "I fill one of the cabins solid with



Alec Alberti built this pair of "slabwood cabins" from mortarless stacks of firewood. Roof is independently supported by end poles.

firewood, and take it out as I sell it. The wind blows through and dries the wood, while the roof keeps rain and snow off."

The walls of the cabin with the wood stove are lined by 1/4-in. plywood to keep the wind out. "It can be 20 degrees below zero outside but I can still wear a T-shirt inside," says Alberti. "At one time I had a maple syrup boiler for demonstration purposes inside this cabin, with a cupola on the roof to vent steam produced by the boiler. However, when I converted the cabin into a shop for tools I removed the cupola."

Homemade chainsaw-carved sculptures decorate the cabins, including fake wood crows and toadstools.

Alberti says he started selling firewood at age 16. "I would cut and split wood all winter and pile it to season until I sold it the following autumn."

Alberti has used firewood to build other structures, including a giant 18-axle log truck



To build cabin's walls he simply stacked 16-in. lengths of slabwood on top of each other, using an interlocking technique at each corner.

and a full-sized semi truck (featured in Vol. 21, No. 1).

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## Rare Mountain Dog Guards Flocks

Only about 100 Estrela mountain dogs exist in the U.S. The ancient Portuguese breed, which is well-known for guarding flocks and herds, almost became extinct when the predator population was reduced, and shepherds no longer needed the dogs. With the growth of the coyote and wolf populations, there's new interest in the breed. And, of course, some people keep them as pets.

They are not the right dog for many people, says Cindy Martishius, the first U.S. breeder and president of the Estrela Mountain Dog Association of America (EMDAA).

"I want potential Estrela owners to understand that Estrelas need obedience. They need a leader and a fenced yard. You can't get around those things," Martishius says. "They can be very willful. No lab can out-chew an Estrela. They'll chew the

siding off the house. They can't be trusted off lead."

That said, the Leland, N.C., breeder socializes the dogs from the time they are pups, and they love children. But they also take their job as guardian seriously and patrol her fenced yard. While her Estrelas won't bother children, she has to escort adults into her yard. Martishius says Estrelas are the purest guardian dogs in existence. They don't herd; they just guard.

The instinct starts early. Martishius says puppies start growling at three weeks and eventually learn when it's appropriate.

Mature Estrelas are big. Females start at 24 1/2 in. tall and weigh up to 80 lbs. Males can be up to 28 1/2 in. tall and weigh up to 110 lbs. They are not fussy eaters, but prefer natural foods (raw meat), and they require regular exercise. Estrelas come in a variety of colors, and some have short-hair coats while

others have long-hair. They do well in both warm and cold climates.

The breed is stubborn, but can be trained. Martishius has used some of her dogs as therapy dogs — always on leash. The EMDAA sets standards for show dogs, and for ethical breeding practices.

Estrelas can be imported from good breeders for about \$1,000 plus \$400 to \$500 in shipping costs. Martishius sells them for \$1,200 and has a contract — to protect herself, the owner and the dog — that if the owner can't keep the dog it's returned to her.

"Make sure that you trust the breeder," Martishius says. "Be aware that with imported dogs you won't have a legal contract or warranty, but imported dogs are important for the future genetic depth of the breed. Make sure the dog and its parents have health checks by a vet. Though hip dysplasia is not a big problem in the breed, it should be



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checked for."

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