



High-volume shredder uses a 20-gal. galvanized metal garbage can, bolted onto a plywood frame above a wheeled trash bin.



A 12-in. long rotating blade mounts inside the garbage can, direct-driven by an electric motor that bolts on under the platform. Shredded leaves fall through five 3-in. dia. pvc tubes and into the container.



Electric Leaf Shredder Turns Leaves Into Mulch

"I wasn't happy with the small electric leaf shredder I was using to shred leaves down into mulch for my garden. The weed whacker line on it would often break, snag or wear down, never mind all the dust. So I made a heavy-duty, high-volume shredder that handles big piles of leaves without any problems," says Joseph Parducci, Hampshire, Ill.

The shredder consists of a 12-in. long, 3-in. wide rotating blade mounted inside a 20-gal. galvanized metal garbage can, which bolts onto a plywood frame. An electric motor bolts on under the platform and is used to direct-drive the blade. Five 3-in. dia. pvc tubes correspond with holes drilled into the bottom of the can and extend down through the plywood past the motor's air intake. The shredded leaves fall through the tubes and onto the ground or into a container.

The 115-volt, 3,450 rpm electric motor came off an air compressor that Parducci already had. He mounted an extension to the motor's 1/2-in. dia. output shaft to hold the blade. The extension came off a buffing wheel and consists of a 1/2 by 20 shaft that's threaded on one end and a 1/2-in. sleeve that slides over the motor's shaft. Set screws

secure it to the motor shaft.

"I use it to make mulch for my 1/2-acre vegetable garden. It works great," says Parducci. "The shredded leaves are dime-sized when they come out of the tubes so they're lightweight and easy to spread. They're the perfect size for vegetable plant mulch. I store the shredded leaves in my barn during the winter in plastic bags.

"The blade is made from 1/8-in. thick metal and is sharpened on all 4 sides so I can reverse the blade if I need to. I use an on-off switch mounted on the plywood to start and stop the shredder.

"Later on I built a tilting metal stand for the shredder and mounted it on wheels so I can move the shredder as close as possible to the garden. When I'm done working for the day I blow the motor out with compressed air.

"I paid about \$11 for the buffing wheel adapter, which I bought at Grainger (part no. 6L104) and \$18 for the garbage can at Menards."

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Pallet Building A Cheap Way To Go

Steve Hoolsema combined pallets with fence panels and greenhouse plastic to make a simple waterproof shed for less than \$100. The 8 by 12-ft. building is only one of several pallet-based structures Hoolsema made after finding that a purchased 12 by 12-ft. shed could cost him as much as \$2,000.

"Pallets are fun to work with and make sturdy walls," he says. "I built the one with fence panels for temporary storage, but it turned into overflow of garden stuff for my wife."

Hoolsema says connecting them is easy. He lays panels flat, and splices them with deck screws and a 2-ft. long 2 by 4. Hoolsema usually starts by laying down plastic as a moisture barrier with the ground. For this building, he overlaid the plastic with 6 pallets for a floor. He set 3 pallets to a side and 2 on one end, attaching them to the floor pallets and tying them together with scrap 1-in. boards.

"I attached 3 cattle panels to the pallet walls, framed in one end and attached

greenhouse plastic over the panels," says Hoolsema. "I've had greenhouse plastic last 5 to 6 years, but I also put a tarp over this one to protect the plastic and secured it with more 1-in. boards."

He used leftover cedar siding to cover the floor and added a door at the framed end of the building. Eventually, he plans to cover the pallet walls with metal siding as he has done with other larger pallet structures.

"Metal siding unbelievably firms up the walls, which are already much sturdier than regular construction," says Hoolsema. "Once I put metal on the outside, the building is impervious to weather and will likely outlast me."

Hoolsema has also built a 12 by 12-ft. pallet shed for \$900 and a 12 by 16-ft. pallet barn for \$1,200.

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Icelandic chickens have small heads compared to body size with a short back and dome-shaped breast. There are only about 1,000 Icelandic birds in the U. S.

A Hot New "Old" Breed

Breeders interested in preserving the 1,100-year-old Icelandic chicken breed have been surprised by the recent surge of interest in the birds since they were featured in a Mother Earth News magazine article. Problem is, with just a little over 1,000 birds in the U.S. and only a handful of breeders, it's difficult to keep up with demand.

"We have a waiting list for hatching eggs and chicks," says David Grote, owner of Whippoorwill Farm in Iron River, Wis.

He cautions that despite the demand, getting into the business of breeding the birds isn't a get-rich-quick business venture. And breeders are concerned that the breed's popularity could be its demise if people aren't conscientious of keeping the breed pure.

Grote, a shepherd and artist, has raised Icelandic sheep for 11 years. He got his first Icelandic chickens from Lyle Behl, a fellow Icelandic sheep breeder.

"Lyle has been a great mentor for me. He was very generous with his birds and shared them first with our sheep community. It made sense that if you have Icelandic sheep you should have Icelandic chickens to go with them," Grote says.

Over the past 9 years, he acquired birds from 4 different lines and does not raise any other chicken breeds in order to maintain the purity of the breed that developed in isolation for more than 1,100 years in Iceland.

"The value lies in their genetics. They are around 78 percent genetically different (than modern chicken breeds)," Grote says.

They have a small head compared to body size and a short back and dome-shaped breast. Coloring varies greatly from black and white to browns, reds, blues and buffs. Legs can be willow green to yellow to blue to slate grey and combs vary in style.

"Their main traits are their natural instincts for broodiness and mothering skills for their chicks. They have good camouflage and natural instincts to ward off predators," he adds. "They really shine when allowed to

free-range and are capable of foraging much of their own food - a great asset considering the cost of feed these days."

They are good flyers and love to roost in trees. To avoid that, he feeds them their main ration in the evening inside the coop and shuts the door to keep them safe for the night.

The chickens lay about 180 medium size, ivory-colored eggs per year.

"They make a wonderful homestead flock," Grote says, and his customers include people with small backyard flocks to people who want a self-sustaining flock that will hatch and raise their own young without the need to purchase chicks each year. The birds are not considered meat birds, though he has processed young roosters that made good fryers.

Grote sells a dozen hatching eggs for \$50 (plus postage) and chicks for \$8/each (plus postage). When available, started pullets run \$25/each. He ships from April until about the end of June and again in the fall when the weather cools.

With proper housing, fresh water and feed, Icelandic chickens thrive in all regions, from the Deep South to the far north.

Grote and other breeders of these "Viking chickens" are pleased about the recent interest in them. He cautions that because they can look like any barnyard mix, it's best to not purchase them from chicken swap or other similar venues, but to seek out reputable breeders to make sure that what you are purchasing is pure Icelandic and not a crossbred.

"To quote Lyle Behl, 'Keeping them pure is the only way they can be preserved. They have been around for over a thousand years; we must be responsible keepers of this treasure,'" Grote says.

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Steve Hoolsema built this 8 by 12-ft. building out of pallets after realizing that a purchased 12 by 12-ft. shed could cost him as much as \$2,000.

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