

Wood Wagon Built With “Old” Wheels



Using a pair of old steel wheels, Dennis Wiard built a wooden wagon using home-sawn timber and parts from various pieces of antique farm equipment.

A set of old wagon wheels found new life when Dennis Wiard used them to build a wooden wagon. Semi-retired, he still raises some wheat, hay, oats, and other small grains.

“I clean my own wheat for reseeding and thought an old-fashioned wagon would be just right for supplying the seeder,” says Wiard. “I put the wheat in a gravity box before running it through the cleaner. From there it goes into the wooden wagon.”

The steel wheels still had their wooden spokes and hubs, but that was all. Wiard visited an Amish neighbor who had some antique wooden wagons. He patterned his after them.

“I have a sawmill and had sawn out some cants from elm trees that had been drying for a year or so,” says Wiard. “I cut them to length and then turned them down to cone shaped ends to fit inside the cast iron hubs.”

To turn the 6 by 6 in. cant ends down, Wiard fabricated an oversized lathe that turned at about 100 rpm’s. He used a chainsaw to whittle down the ends and then sanded them to fit the hubs.

“They had to be perfectly concentric at both ends,” says Wiard. “Getting them to the exact cone shape was almost impossible, so I took some Durham’s Rock Hard Water Putty and shoved it into the hub before inserting the axles. The putty filled up any voids I had.”

On old wagons a threaded bolt ran through the wooden axle and the hubs. When tightened down, nuts pulled the axles into the hubs.

For his new old wagon, Wiard ran 3/4-in. rebar through the hub and axle to the opposing hub. “I welded threaded bolts on each end that I could tighten down to squeeze

the hubs onto the axle,” says Wiard.

He made the main beams for the wagon undercarriage from 4 by 8-in. native lumber from his sawmill. He attached them to the rear axle and to the fifth wheel on the front axle, reinforcing them at the front and rear with cross members to prevent twisting.

He notes that fabricating the fifth wheel was his biggest challenge. He used two, 1/4-in. thick, 15-in. diameter steel plates, attaching one to the front axle and the other to the undercarriage of the wagon.

“I added a grease zerk to the fifth wheel to keep it lubricated,” says Wiard.

A 1-in. bolt runs through the plates to tie them together. It extends down and through the front axle as well as through the front end of the reach (a 4 by 4-in. cant) that is bolted to the rear axle.

“It prevents pulling the front axle out from underneath the wagon, while letting it turn 60 to 70 degrees” says Wiard.

The box sides are made of home-sawn cherry boards with a floor of fiberglass over plywood. “The floor is real slippery,” says Wiard. “A sliding door on the end gate directs small grain seed into a tin funnel. I set a 5-gal. pail under the funnel to transfer seed to the drill.”



A 1-ton hoist raises and lowers the box.

A vertical post attached to the front cross member lifts the box to speed unloading. The 6 by 6-in. steel post was salvaged from a New Holland Haybine. A 1-ton hoist that runs through pulleys on the post raises and lowers the box.

“I dressed up the corners of the wagon box with angle irons from the #7 picker,” says Wiard.

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He Turns Maple Syrup Into Sugar

Folks who visit Tony Peeters’ maple syrup stand discover a second sweet treat - maple sugar.

Because of maple syrup’s low glycemic index, it appeals to diabetics and people on the Keto diet. Maple sugar can be used in baked goods at 1/4 the rate of regular sugar.

“One gallon of syrup makes 8 lbs. of sugar. But not all syrup will make sugar,” says Peeters, Menahga, Minn. He notes that he uses only the syrup made from sap collected early in the season because it has lower invert sugars (4 to 2 percent).

He starts by cooking the sap into syrup, then running it through a filter press and into 40-gal. stainless steel barrels. Of the 14 barrels of syrup he made last year, he set aside 5 for sugar.

To make the sugar, he reheats the syrup

to 255 to 260 F and pours it immediately into an industrial 60-quart mixer. The heat and the stirring evaporate the water, and within a few minutes turns the syrup into sugar. Peeters pours it in tubs to spread it out and cool thoroughly before straining out bigger clumps to grind before packaging it.

The sugar’s texture is between white sugar and powdered sugar. Some people like the maple flavor in their coffee. When it’s used in baked goods, the maple flavor isn’t noticeable. But it’s low glycemic index releases sugar slowly into the blood stream, making it a better option for diabetics. Maple sugar also has fewer calories, 11 calories/tsp., compared to 16 calories/tsp. of white sugar.

The extra work is worth it, Peeters says, as it has increased his customer base. He sells the sugar for \$15/lb.



Tony Peeters sells maple sugar as an alternative to regular sugar. Maple sugar can be used in baked goods at 1/4 the rate of regular sugar.

Last season he had 2,400 taps, and he hopes to increase to 4,000 to 5,000 taps in the next couple of years. He doesn’t have a website, but Peeters ships orders.

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Curly Horses Ideal For People With Allergies

Curly horses come in all colors and patterns and are usually 14-to 15-hands tall, but they come in all sizes. They are stocky, heavy-boned with thick necks and legs.



Owners say there is a lot to love about the American Bashkir Curly Horse breed. The most obvious is the variety of hairstyles they have - from mane and tail ringlets to wavy crushed velvet to full poodle curl.

The hair is important to people who love horses but are allergic to them.

“Curlies are hypoallergenic like a poodle,” says Joan Olson, who raises them at High Desert Equine Center near Reno, Nevada. “We send hair to people and some people come to the ranch to test it out.”

While eliminating allergies is crucial, new Curly horse owners quickly discover a bonus.

“Curlies are truly different. They are so easy to get along with and they are easier to train,” notes Sue Davis, manager for the center’s arena and events. Olson “blames” Davis for becoming so passionate about the breed. Both belong to the American Bashkir Curly Horse Registry, of which Olson is president.

The breed history goes back to three “curly” horses found in a wild mustang herd

first reported in Nevada by the Damele family in 1898. After an extremely harsh winter in 1932, most domestic and wild horses froze or starved to death. But Curlies were among the few survivors, and the Dameles started breeding them. After another storm in 1952, four Curly mares and a colt named Copper D survived. He became the first stallion used for breeding with Arabians, Appaloosa, Quarter Horse, and other breeds.

Two genes in the chromosomes cause the hair, and are the basis for the breed, Olson says. The name Bashkir comes from curly horses found in Russia that were thought to come from that region, but they actually came from the Loki region. There are no DNA connections to the U.S. horses, but there are similar traits between the Curly U.S. horses and South America horses.

“Crow and Sioux Indians considered them special, and they were ridden by medicine men according to cave drawings,” Olson says.

Curly horses come in all colors and patterns and are usually 14-to 15-hands tall, but they come in all sizes. They are stocky, heavy-boned with thick necks and legs. The double-sided mane falls on both sides of the neck.

“You don’t want to brush the hair; it gets fuzzy,” Olson says. Instead, it’s often braided to avoid tangling after being washed and

conditioned. Curlies shed in the summertime, but Olson and Davis also clip the hair in the winter because the horses sweat when working and the hair remains wet for a long time.

The unique hair attracts interest, and currently the Curly registry has more than 4,200 horses in five categories.

“We have breeders from all over the U.S. and in Canada and Europe,” Olson says. Some owners compete with Curlies in dressage, jumping and other open competitions. They are priced similar to other breeds, starting at \$2,000-\$3,500 for colts.

Olson invites people to come to the center to test for allergies or to just check out the Curly breed. Her favorite visitor story is about a couple from New York City. The man wanted to propose while they were on horseback, but she was allergic to horses. They traveled to Nevada, took a trail ride, and he proposed to her on a Curly horse.

For more information about the horse breed, check out the ABC registry website.

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