

## Corn Broom Expert Keeps “Lost Art” Alive

George Slater of Felton, Delaware, makes handmade corn brooms with twisted wood handles, a “lost art” that was taught to him by a friend.

Slater puts on broom-making demonstrations at various farm shows throughout Delaware and Pennsylvania, selling his product as he goes.

He grows his own broom corn, harvesting the tassels which are used for the broom straw. He says it takes about a pound of “straw” to make one broom.

A half acre of broom corn is enough to make about 150 brooms, which is Slater’s yearly output.

He makes five different styles of brooms: a kitchen broom, a fireplace broom, a wisk broom, a fan broom (strictly for decoration), and a feather-duster style broom.

His fireplace brooms are especially unique because they have twisted wood handles. The twisted wood grows naturally in the woods when vines wrap around a tree as it grows.

Slater’s other broom models have regular commercial handles that he purchases. He made his own tool for winding the straw around the handle.

He makes the brooms by soaking the straw in water, and then placing it on the handle before using his device to twist it and a wire tightly around. The foot-operated tool allows him to wind the straw around the base of the handle and wrap it tightly with wire. He then hand sews three seams across the straw to hold it together. As the straw dries and expands, the union is secured further.

“The brooms you buy at the hardware store are half bamboo on the inside and they break off,” Slater points out. “Mine are 100 per cent



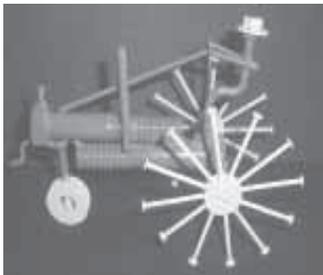
Traditional handles make Slater’s brooms unique as well as being effective.

corn and they don’t come apart or break. You can wear them right down to the nubs and strings - I know people who have done that.”

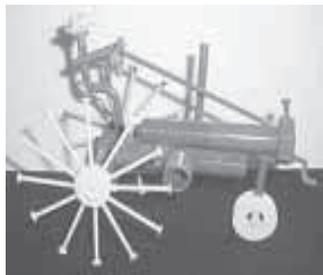
Slater also makes his own sewing needles for broom making, and has filled orders for others. “There is such a thing as a commercial broom sewing needle, but it’s sharp on both ends and I don’t like it,” he says. “I was a truck mechanic and fabricator for over 30 years, so making a needle that is six inches long, a half inch wide and one-eighth of an inch thick out of steel was no problem.”

Corn broom prices are as follows: kitchen broom - \$14; fireplace broom - \$9; wisk broom - \$6; fan broom - \$75; and feather duster style broom - \$10 (plus shipping).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George Slater, 5468 Sandtown Rd., Felton, Delaware 19943 (ph 302 284-4503).



The 6 by 5-in. tractors can be painted a variety of colors. They’re made from nuts, bolts, nails and washers. Plans are available if you want to make your own.



## Nails, Bolts Used To Make Toy Tractors

“About a year ago I started making toy replicas of old tractors out of old bolts, nails, nuts and washers. They’ve become a big hit in our area. I’ve sold some and given others away as gifts. Everyone loves them,” says Ken Berggren, Unityville, Penn.

Each tractor measures about 6 in. long and 5 in. high. The body is made by welding together a pair of big bolts. Twelve nails are used to make each rear wheel. Two bolts are used for the rear axle, one bolt is used for the front axle, and a nail is bent into the shape of a man who’s seated on the tractor. His arms hold onto a steering wheel that’s made from a washer. A long nail forms the steering linkage and a short length of tubing forms the exhaust stack. A pair of large washers are used for the front wheels. A short length of bent nail serves as a hand crank on front.

“I use a small jig to make the rear wheels.

At first I used a wooden jig, but it didn’t last long because of the welding work. My stepson, Jason Huff, who is a machinist, then made a jig out of round stock, and it works great.”

Berggren paints the tractors in green and yellow, blue, orange, and red, all with white wheels. “The green and yellow models seem to sell the best, but I can make the tractors just about any color,” he says.

Two-color tractors sell for \$20 plus S&H; one-color models for \$15. For anyone who’d like to make their own tractors, he sells plans and a parts list. “All you need to build these tractors is a welder and some extra time,” notes Berggren.

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## They Make Totem Poles To Tell Family “Legends”

A couple in Florence, Oregon, makes a living by hand carving totem poles on a custom basis.

They run classified ads in newspapers that read: “Memorialize your pet with a custom cedar story pole.” In addition to pets, they also carve poles in honor of family events, or for other reasons.

Steve and Margaret Benson say every family has its own “legends” and that’s what usually ends up on the poles. Many families consider the poles family heirlooms that they will pass on from generation to generation.

“A story pole can tell something about your family history, a significant event, or maybe just the story of your favorite animals. No two totem poles are alike,” Margaret says. “We’ve been doing this for 22 years, and by striving for quality and using traditional designs along with our own original designs, we honor the native American culture from which the idea originated.”

The Bensons also hand craft totem furniture such as beds and chairs which have uprights that are carved in totem style. In addition, they make carved plaques and signs, family crests, wildlife carvings and structural supports like carved pillars.

They require a 50 per cent deposit before starting a project, and the balance is due 30 days after receipt. They will ship COD and have a handling fee of about \$100 which includes a hand-built crate, packaging and insurance.



“A story pole can tell something about your family history, a significant event, or maybe just the story of your favorite animals. No two totem poles are alike,” says Margaret Benson.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Wood Age, Steve and Margaret Benson, 5690 Shady Lane, Florence, Oregon 97439 (ph 888 486-8367 or 541 997-2292; fax 541-997-7946; email: woodage@presys.com; website: www.thewoodage.com).



Camper was home-made in the shop, says Bergsgaard. It has two bedrooms, a TV lounge, bathroom, and a second floor deck.

## Bi-Level Camper Includes Porch, Garage

A 46-ft., bi-level camper built by Del Bergsgaard of Shelly, Minn., has some unique extra features.

Besides all the regular amenities of any large trailer or motor home, the unit includes an open-air 8 by 9-ft. porch on the top level that can be used for sight-seeing, visiting or grilling.

In addition, there’s a 12-ft. airtight garage at the back where the traveler can haul a smaller car. The door turns into a ramp and the entire unit requires a semi-truck to pull it.

The trailer is of all-welded steel construction, with two inches of rigid foam insulation all around, seven windows, and stainless steel sewer and water tanks.

On the main floor, there’s a 9-ft. long TV lounge, a 25 sq. ft. bathroom, a 20-ft. long kitchen, a short hallway, and a 12-ft. long garage. The upper level includes a 9-ft. long bedroom, a 9-ft. balcony and a 14-ft. bedroom.

The trailer meets department of transportation regulations for all U.S. states and Canada, according to Bergsgaard.

Bergsgaard says he built the whole camper himself in his metal fabrication shop, and had fun doing it. He’s had many inquiries from others who are interested in having him build them.

“I’m interested in finding like-minded people I could work together with on building these trailers,” he says. “It’s very feasible for myself and four other good men – an electrician, a cabinet maker, a plumber and another welder to build these to order and sell as many as we could make. The price would range from \$90,000 to \$200,000, depending on which features the buyer wants.

In the meantime, Bergsgaard rents his trailer to rig owner/operator friends, and he’s interested in selling it.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Del’s Metal Fabrication, Del Bergsgaard, 310 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Shelly, Minn. 56581 (ph 218 886-7936).