

Fast-Growing Tree Produces Lumber In Seven Years

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

The "Empress Splendor" tree is said to shoot up 10 to 20 ft. in its first year of growth. In addition, it can be harvested for lumber every 7 to 10 years because, in ideal climates, the unique tree re-grows up to seven times after being cut down.

John Garbini of Myrtle Creek, Oregon says the Empress tree offers tremendous income potential to landowners looking for a new money-making enterprise.

Garbini's company, Wonder Earth Partners, is the sole distributor of the Empress Splendor tree for Oregon, Northern California, Washington, Nevada and Montana.

He works with World Tree Technologies of Scottsdale, Arizona, who researched and created the hybrid through cloning. The Arizona company studied the 12 different existing Empress varieties and chose the two most hardy trees (the Fortuni and Elongata), splicing them together to create the hybrid they call the Empress Splendor.

"The Empress Splendor is the fastest growing hardwood tree in the world, growing four times faster than any other tree," she says. "When mature, they have roughly 24 to 36-in. dia. trunks, and are 50 to 60 feet tall. Some diameters as wide as 48-in. have been reported."

Garbini thinks Empress trees can fill the demand for sustainable forests, since they

make reforestation far more economical and dramatically shorten harvest intervals. This spells profitability for landowners, he says.

"By planting one Empress tree, you can produce as much lumber - and pull as much carbon - as four poplar trees or six pine trees," he says. "The current market value of Empress wood is \$3 a board foot. It's strong, lightweight and blond in color, and also doesn't absorb moisture or rot. Empress wood is popular with Australian sailboat builders and some U.S. furniture makers are also starting to use it. You can use it to make plywood that's 1/8 inch thinner than regular plywood, and still have the same structural strength."

The trees have beautiful, lavender cluster flowers and start blooming in their third year, for 6-9 weeks in the spring. The flowers are edible and have a vanilla-jasmine scent.

The leaves can get as big as 36 inches in diameter during the tree's first year, according to Burton. The older the tree gets, the smaller the leaves get, eventually becoming the size of a large man's hand. They provide excellent shade and windbreak, and the leaves decompose quickly in the fall.

The Empress Splendor is also bug and fire resistant, Garbini says. Deer, however, love the taste of the leaves.

The tree requires little watering because it pulls water from the air through its huge



The "Empress Splendor" tree is said to shoot up 10 to 20 ft. in its first year of growth. The tree shown at left is only 18 months old. The log shown at right is from a 6-year-old tree. The wood is strong, lightweight and doesn't absorb moisture or rot.

leaves. It also has a strong tri-tap root system that goes straight down to the water table.

These trees are hardy in 120 F to -10° F, and grow at elevations of sea level up to 6,500 feet. Garbini has two 25-ft. tall trees with 6-in. dia. trunks in his back yard, which were planted as 3-in. seedlings two years ago.

A package of 45 to 50 trees cost \$12 per tree, 51 to 100 cost \$8.95, 101 to 300 trees are \$7.50, 500 to 700 trees are \$6.50, and 1,000 or more are \$6 each, (plus S&H).

"A 300-tree plantation on one acre works very well, with trees spaced 12-ft. apart. This

should produce a minimum 30,000 board feet of lumber in its first harvest."

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Love For Cattle Dogs Results In New Business

All Bruce Hoggood wanted was a better way to work his cattle. What he ended up with was a new business. His Midwest Cattle Dogs now takes up more time than his cattle do. Hoggood raises and trains dogs for sale and trains other people's dogs, too.

"I train 50 to 60 dogs each year for people who bought their dogs elsewhere," says Hoggood. He admits that not every dog can be trained. "The key is that they have to want to work cattle."

Hoggood raises shorthaired Border Collies and Hangin' Tree cattle dogs. The Hangin' Tree is a breed developed by Gary Erickson, Hoggood's mentor and the man he bought his first dog from. It is a cross of Border Collie, Catahoula Leopard, Kelpie and Australian Shepherd breeds.

Hoggood says good cattle dogs have to be aggressive and not afraid to get in close to cattle. Although his dogs can be used to work sheep, they tend to be too rough.

"In the past 25 to 30 years, Border Collie breeders have been raising them to work cattle, making them into tougher dogs that will bite, bark, nip at the head, bite the nose or nip the heels," explains Hoggood.

There is one similarity between his dogs and traditional sheep dogs. He trains them to circle and bring cattle to him, while other breeds are trained to drive them away from the handler. It's a practice that makes cattle gentler, he says. His dogs can gather a herd up and bring them to him. Or they can gather cattle into a cattle trailer in the middle of a pasture without the use of any gates.

"Border Collie, Australian Shepherd and Hangin' Tree are gathering dogs," he says. "It is bred into them. All we teach them is what we want them to do or not to do."

Hoggood has been raising and training



Bruce Hoggood raises and trains dogs for sale and also trains other people's dogs.

dogs for more than 12 years. He charges \$500 per month to train a dog for an owner with most dogs staying with him for two to three months. He sells 20 to 30 dogs each year, from \$500 for a Border Collie puppy to \$4,500 for a fully trained dog. A 10 to 11-month old starter dog with 60 to 90 days training will sell for \$1,500 to \$2,000, while a seasoned dog with four to five years experience goes for \$8,000. He notes that a decent Border Collie pup can be found for \$150 to \$250. The difference in price is a matter of breeding and training, plus his dogs are guaranteed to work cattle.

"Gary Erickson just sold one of his dogs for \$15,000 to a guy who will use it working cattle," says Hoggood. "That seems like a lot of money, but it will replace three hired men for perhaps 10 years. That's pretty cheap labor."

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After taking a quilting class, Lyn Hintz got the idea for a home-based business. She purchased a second hand, long arm quilting machine on which to quilt for customers.

A Quilt Shop On The Farm

By Dorothy Mack

Lyn and Randy Hintz are third generation farmers. Raising their five children on the farm south of Barrhead, Alberta is important to them. After their second child was born, Lynn became a stay-at-home mom, a decision she has never regretted.

In 1994 Lyn took a quilting class and quickly "got the bug," becoming an enthusiastic quilter. After visiting a country quilt shop to purchase some material, Lyn thought, "I could do that!" and an idea for a home-based business was born.

Lyn went to the Yellowhead East Business Development Corporation (an Alberta government program) for advice and help. After completing courses in accounting, bookkeeping, management, business plan writing and then doing her own business plan, she was able to get a loan.

Lyn planned to purchase a trailer to house her business until Randy suggested that their 22 by 22-ft. attached garage could be converted. "I thought about it for 15 seconds," Lyn says, then I called the contractor!" Homestead Fabrics and Quilting opened in

June, 2003. Lyn has built up an impressive selection of fabrics and supplies. She says that it's sometimes difficult to keep fabric current and that much of the money from the business goes back into fabric. When a fabric doesn't sell well, it is put on sale.

Lyn purchased a second hand long arm quilting machine on which to quilt for customers. Having this potential avenue of making money helped her in getting a loan and the long arm has proven to be popular. In 2005, Lyn quilted 120 quilts; 13 of those for Christmas gifts. She charges \$100.00 for a basic queen size quilt with the price going up depending on the amount of customized work involved.

Even though Homestead Fabrics and Quilting is located close to town on a main highway, it is a challenge to bring in sufficient business and Lyn is always looking for new marketing ideas. From October to April she holds weekly classes on a variety of quilting techniques. Students usually buy their supplies from her and often become repeat customers.