

Door Knockers Made From Horseshoes, Railroad Spikes

Rod Hancock of Nanaimo, B.C., creates custom door knockers from old horseshoes and railroad spikes. As a semi-retired welder, Hancock enjoys experimenting with unique projects.

It takes Hancock about an hour to make a door knocker. He uses real horseshoes and railroad spikes, never reproductions.

Each shoe or spike goes into a concrete mixer to knock off rust and dirt. He then sandblasts them before welding a bar across the top so it will act as a knocker. The final step is drilling two holes into the bar for easy mounting.

Hancock also makes individual letters with horseshoes. "Everyone has their horse's name on the wall of the stall at horse shows," he explains. "With these letters, they can spell their horse's name with horseshoes." The letters cost \$12 each. "If your horse is named Buck, then you're in luck. But if his name is George Worthington Witherspoon Saltenstall Hemersnip III, I'm sorry, but I don't think it'd be worth shipping something that heavy," he laughs.

So far, Hancock is primarily selling at craft fairs and horse shows throughout British Columbia, though he will ship. Door knockers sell for about \$25 each,



Hancock makes door knockers and other ornamental items using railroad spikes and horseshoes.



depending on style, and the shipping costs vary by location. Interested buyers can reach Hancock by email.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rod Hancock (rhwelder@shaw.ca).



Photo courtesy of The Livestock Conservancy

Java chickens lay large brown eggs and have good mothering instincts. Expect about three to four eggs per week once the birds start laying at 6 mos. old.

America's Second-Oldest Chicken Breed

As the second-oldest chicken breed in America, the Java chicken is a long-time favorite of those lucky enough to raise them (for the record, Dominique is the oldest breed). Not only are the birds above-average egg layers, but they're excellent for meat production, do well in cold weather, and are capable of foraging for much of their food.

Java chickens originated from various Asian breeds brought to the United States in the 1830's and were officially recognized by the American Poultry Association's Standard of Perfection in 1883. They were a popular dual-purpose breed on the East Coast for generations and became the ancestors of today's meat breeds like the Jersey Giant, Rhode Island Red, and Plymouth Rock, each of which soon surpassed the Java in popularity. In fact, the breed nearly went extinct by the end of the 20th century until breeders brought it back from the brink. But even so, their populations are dwindling fast.

"Murray McMurray Hatchery sponsored The Livestock Conservancy's 2021 Census, a comprehensive look at 7,500 flocks submitted by nearly 2,000 breeders and hatcheries," says Dr. Judy Brummer, Interim Executive Director of The Livestock Conservancy. "Within it, just 327 breeding Java chickens were counted from private flocks and 200 in mail-order hatchery flocks. This is a

significant decline since 2015 and has moved Java to a critical endangerment level on the Conservation Priority List."

Today, two types of Java chickens are recognized: regular and bantam. These are found in black, mottled, and white color variations, although auburn coloring has also been reported. Overall, javas are a large breed with broad backs and a single small comb located farther back on the head than usual.

Javas are ideal homestead companions and thrive when given space to free range. Javas have a pleasant temperament and are known for being docile and calm, especially around kids and other chicken varieties. The birds lay large brown eggs and have good mothering instincts. Expect about three to four eggs per week once the birds start laying at 6 mos. old. While an excellent-tasting meat bird, Javas grow slowly and may take 6 mos. to reach their mature weight. That's one of the reasons why they have been surpassed in popularity by the breeds they were used to create.

Connect with the Livestock Conservancy to find breeders near you to help keep this American heritage poultry breed alive.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312 (ph 919-542-5704; www.livestockconservancy.org).

Portable Soaking Tubs Let You Take Baths Anywhere

Denise Rousslang of Wadena, Minn., has developed a range of lightweight, portable bathtubs based on products from the past. These Victorian-style soaking tubs are ideal for condos, apartments, tiny homes, and other places where a traditional bathtub isn't feasible.

Rousslang was inspired to develop the tubs after retirement piqued her interest in moving to a smaller space. Bathtubs are hard to come by in condos and senior living facilities due to liability concerns, but she didn't want to give up the indulgence. Searching online, the only soaking tubs available appeared to be heavy built-ins or unreliable blow-up tubs. Failing to find a solution, she decided to build her own.

She found an authentic Victorian brothel tub on eBay in 2020. Rousslang used the tub as a prototype for a fiberglass model that would be more durable, incapable of rusting, and lighter in weight.

Rousslang sells three models: a Victorian bathtub (\$595), a fiberglass soaking tub (\$895), and a plastic soaking tub (\$395). Each tub is manufactured locally in Minnesota.

The Victorian bathtub is a portable replica of her beloved brothel tub that measures 40 in. by 25 in. and weighs 20 lbs. when empty. It's sturdy enough for children and adults and will fit most showers or bedrooms. The streamlined design allows you to take a comfortable bath with just five to ten gallons of water, and it's easily cleaned and stored when not in use.

The portable fiberglass soaking tub comes with a molded comfort seat that allows you to soak up to your neck. As delivered, it's free of electrical devices, moving parts, and places prone to leakage. The tub also works for post-workout ice therapy. It's 29 in. tall with a 30 in. top diameter and weighs 40 lbs. empty. At total capacity, it contains 58 gals. The tub's upright shape minimizes surface area, meaning the temperature will stay constant for many hours. It can be filled in 17 mins. with a garden hose, and a simple siphon method will drain the tub in approximately 25 mins.

The portable plastic tub has the same



Soaking tubs come in plastic or fiberglass and are lightweight, the fiberglass model weighing just 20 lbs.



dimensions as the fiberglass model but weighs just 20 lbs. It includes a hose drain plug below the seat. Like the fiberglass tub, it can hold heat for hours longer than a regular tub and fits in most showers.

Today, Rousslang advertises her portable tubs around her hometown in a specially modified van. She's donated many to school athletic departments to aid recovery from sports injuries. For now, it remains a cottage business as she develops a system for nationwide shipping.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Victorian Bathtubs, PO Box 266, Wadena, Minn. 56482 (ph 218-398-2077; deniserealestate1@gmail.com).

He Made A Custom Cabbage Slicer

Harlan Nonhof of Phillipsburg, Kan., has designed an efficient cabbage-slicing machine. "A few years ago, I had the opportunity to watch a friend slice cabbage by hand to make sauerkraut," he said. "He made a lot of sauerkraut and had to slice cabbage most of the morning."

This served as inspiration for Nonhof to conceive of a device to streamline the process. "I like to make things that hopefully make projects easier," he explains. "So, I made a simple machine with an electric motor to slice the cabbages." The following year, he took it to his friend's house to test it out. Nonhof's friend prepared the cabbage heads while he ran them through the slicer. Together, they cut about 200 lbs. of cabbage in an hour.

The driving mechanism is a used "Snapper Personal Pace" walk-behind mower. "This gave me various stroke speed options and also the safety of being able to disconnect the motor from the drive system while keeping the motor running," says Nonhof. He replaced the gas engine with an old electric motor from a washing machine. The board is used to apply pressure on the cabbage head while slicing to ensure that the cuts are even.



Nonhof made his slicer after watching a friend spend hours slicing cabbage for sauerkraut.

When the cut is complete, the top board rests on the top of the hopper to prevent it from contacting the cutting edges.

A long plastic tub catches the cabbage as it's cut at a rate of 35 strokes per minute. The machine is about 5 ft. long and breaks down into three pieces, the largest of which is about 50 in.

To date, Nonhof has used his cabbage cutter just that one time. He wants to sell it to someone who can put it to use. Those interested can contact him directly.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Harlan Nonhof, 431 S. Fifth St., Phillipsburg, Kan. 67661 (ph 785-447-0241).