



Bruce Kropf makes quick work of splitting a block of hardwood on his Timberdevil wood splitter.



The Timberdevil VERTICAL SPLITTER

Hydraulic wood splitters have existed in various shapes and forms for decades. They can vary greatly in size, capacity, and design, but each has the same goal. I recently had the opportunity to speak with someone who definitely knows a thing or two about the subject and was eager to demonstrate what he believes is the best tool for the job.

Ever since humans first began utilizing fire as a means of survival, putting up a sufficient supply of dry, quality firewood has been an ongoing challenge. Nowadays, many homeowners prepare for the cooler months by bolstering their wood pile with the best dry (or “seasoned”) wood they can muster. It has long been understood that splitting wood generally improves the drying process and that split wood better lends itself to clean, easy burning. Though many of us still relish the days spent brandishing mauls, wedges, and splitting

axes, those who need to split large volumes of wood, either for personal use or commercial purposes, have sought a better way.

Bruce Kropf has been involved in the forest industry in various capacities for 37 years. He has owned and operated his own company, B. Kropf Forestry Service, for the last 23 years. Employing four full-time staff, Bruce is involved in logging, hauling, tree marking, woodlot management, and commercial firewood production in southwestern Ontario. Bruce produces approximately 200 bush cords of mixed hardwood firewood

every year. Although he does sell directly to individual buyers, he also supplies several larger distributors throughout the province.

Although Bruce could have chosen to tackle this task with any of the plethora of available splitters or wood processors, for about the last 15 years he has stuck with one particular machine—a Timberdevil splitter.

Manufactured by Labelle Wood Splitter Inc. in La Conception, Quebec, Timberdevil has been producing wood splitters since 1978. With several models ranging from light-duty residential splitters to heavy commercial units, Timberdevil splitters can be customized by adding various items such as conveyers, log lifts, and table extensions.

Having first seen a Timberdevil machine at a local farm show, Bruce was impressed with the machine’s features, ease of maintenance, user-friendliness, and speed. His first Timberdevil was purchased as part of a shared-ownership arrangement, which worked well for several years. Because he was extremely happy with its performance, Bruce decided he would buy his own unit, opting for a single vertical unit with a 15-foot conveyor and a hydraulic lift table. The machine was purchased directly from the manufacturer. That was about seven years and over 1,000 cords ago, and his machine continues to produce, trouble-free.

**Timberdevil
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- Machine height80 in.
 - Machine length15 ft.
 - Machine width50-55 in.
 - Machine weight500 lbs.
 - Splitting force28 tons
 - Engine9-hp or 11-hp Honda
 - Hydraulic pump2-stage
 - Splitting options2-way or 4-way
 - Cycle time4 to 7 secs.
 - Log loader typehydraulic
 - Conveyer15 ft.
 - Maximum log diameter72 in.
 - Maximum firewood length21 in.
 - Cords/hour6
- Contact Info:**
 Timberdevil Forestry Equipment Inc.
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 La Conception, Quebec
 Canada J0T 1M0
 ph: 866/686-1654
 fax: 819/686-2477
 www.timberdevil.com

A Demonstration

I stopped in to see Bruce on a cool autumn morning, and between customers, we headed back to the wood pile for a real-world demonstration. Although the unit is self-propelled, Bruce opts to leave it stationary most of the time, instead bringing the wood to it. With the operator area neatly tucked inside a repurposed cube van body, Bruce and his employees are able to comfortably operate the Timberdevil for a solid nine hour shift.

Bruce cuts blocks using a chain saw on a raised platform. Logs are placed on a log deck and brought toward the operator. As rounds are cut, they fall through the opening to the ground below until they are handily scooped up with either a John Deere 444J wheel loader or Bobcat skid steer. Back at the splitter, Bruce has built a large hydraulic-tilt feed table on an old truck frame. The tilt cylinder is powered by the splitter by simply disconnecting the factory hydraulic log lift and connecting Bruce's homemade unit. Once the feed table is loaded with blocks, the operator is able to easily control the tilt with a hydraulic lever and gravity does the rest. I was impressed to see that nowhere in this process was an operator required to bend down or lift from the ground; all work processes were accomplished from a comfortable standing position.

When I asked Bruce why he chose this system over a self-contained wood processor, he was quick to point out that he feels wood processors are great, as long as logs remain fairly straight and consistent. With the extremely varied diet of hardwood his operation sees, including ash, beech, maple, and many others, and the range of stem size and uniformity, he firmly believes that he can achieve better production and more control over piece size with his chosen system.

Once Bruce had explained his overall process, a quick pull on the



Bruce uses a shop-built hydraulic tilting feed table to keep a steady supply of wood at his fingertips. The Timberdevil's hydraulic splitting ram is activated by a simple foot pedal.

starter cord and the Timberdevil came to life. Bruce's machine is actually equipped with an electric starter as well, but the battery was dead and Bruce was quick to point out that the machine starts so easily with the pull cord that he was in no hurry to charge it! Bruce's machine is equipped with an 11-hp Honda

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FIREWOOD SPLITTER REVIEW



The 11hp Honda GX340 that powers Bruce's Timberdevil comes equipped with a keyed electric start, as well as a recoil backup.



Self-propelled and equipped with an automotive-style steering wheel, the Timberdevil can be moved to the wood.



Split pieces are directed onto the attached hydraulic conveyor, providing the flexibility to load directly onto a truck, or piled on the ground.

GX340 engine, which he says has no trouble powering the splitter functions through a 2-stage hydraulic pump, which it does on relatively little fuel. The push of one lever had the conveyer started, and another began to raise the feed table until Bruce had several blocks within easy reach. Manually sliding each block into position beneath the vertically-oriented hydraulic ram, a quick press on the foot pedal brought the single-way splitter

head down with 28 tons of force and easily split the block in two. Although the Timberdevil can be equipped with a 4-way splitter, Bruce likes the control the single cutter gives him, so he can precisely determine final piece size by turning or repositioning the round.

After watching Bruce process a few blocks, the first thing I noticed was the Timberdevil's speed. Cycle time is from 4 to 7 seconds; the Timberdevil was ready for the next

pass as fast as the block could be repositioned for further splitting or a new block slid into place. There was absolutely no waiting for the ram to cycle back before making the next pass. The key to this quick cycling is in the large, heavy flywheel that comes standard on the Timberdevil. The extra rotating mass helps maintain hydraulic pressure, making for a very quick cycle length. It wasn't long before there was a healthy pile of wood



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FIREWOOD SPLITTER REVIEW



The B. Kropf Forestry Service company in southwestern Ontario produces approximately 200 bush cords of mixed firewood every year.

under the end of the conveyer, and Bruce insisted I take a turn at the controls.

Though nowhere near as productive as Bruce's practiced movements, I was nevertheless able to quickly and efficiently add to the pile. The simple, straightforward design was very easy to learn. Bruce says that with two men working (one sawing and the other splitting) they can generally pro-

duce 8 to 10 bush cords per day of stove-length wood (12- to 16-inch lengths); however, if needed, the Timberdevil can accommodate piece sizes up to 26 inches long. Again, Bruce concedes that there are likely wood processors out there that can produce more, but at a much greater cost in initial purchase price, maintenance, and operating expenses. Bruce was quick to point out that mainte-

nance and durability of the Timberdevil have been excellent; aside from replacing a few hydraulic hoses over the years, the machine has been absolutely trouble free.

I left Bruce's having been truly impressed with the design and capabilities of his Timberdevil vertical splitter. Its ability to quickly, easily, and safely split whatever wood he threw at it and to do so year after year was commendable. I would certainly encourage anyone in the market for such a machine to give the Timberdevil a good look. You never know—it may be just the ticket to help keep the fires burning! ■

Jon Marriott is a Registered Professional Forester in the province of Ontario, and has been involved in forestry and sawmilling since the age of 14. He currently lives in southern Ontario, where he works in the vegetation management industry.

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