



PHOTOS BY BILL GOVE

Multitek 2040xP90



Reviewed by Bill Gove

The P90 is a machine that sets an **INDUSTRY STANDARD** for full-time firewood processors.

In recent months we have looked at a variety of sizes of firewood processors in the pages of this magazine and highlighted the advantages of various production models. The smaller models have an unquestioned place in the hands of part-time firewood producers. But if you are going to do a full-time, full-sized production effort, you need a machine that can do the job. Listening to the comments from the field, the Multitek 2040xP90 fits the bill as a trusted high-production machine.

Just south of New Hampshire's White Mountains along Route 16 in Tamworth, Whipple Roberts is into his second year using a Multitek 2040xP90, which he purchased new. It was obvious from the clean appearance of the machine and surrounding grounds that here was a man who considers mainte-

nance, neatness, and safety a daily part of his operation. A 22 x 40 foot pole building with a solidly trussed roof covers the entire machine, and Whipple thankfully opted for an operator's cab on his machine. The heavy snows and cold temperatures of a New Hampshire winter don't deter his work day one bit.

It was a bitterly cold morning as we walked around the machine, but the 80 HP John Deere diesel started with no trouble. Whipple has a way of giving the engine a little loving encouragement. He sets up a kerosene forced-air heater next to the engine and warms up the hydraulics and oil tank, for 10 to 15 minutes.

Whipple works alone and cuts an average of 14 cords in an eight hour work day, which obviously would include time taken to load

the long live log deck and perform any daily maintenance. He's put 1,600 hours on the machine in the year and a half that he's owned it, and found the 2040xP90 to be almost maintenance-free.

There were a few things on the machine that Whipple changed to suit his preferences, a practice that's common with just about any operator or any make of machine. He added grating on the trough bottom below the tilt tray to sort out the splinters and other unwanted trash. Although it does a good job of removal, he plans to extend the grate further. He also added his own length marker, which he considers to be superior to the one that was supplied.

Whipple is a little unhappy with the machine's tilt tray, the mechanism that tips to drop

Whipple Roberts (above and inset) sits in heated comfort in the operator's cab of his 2040xP90.

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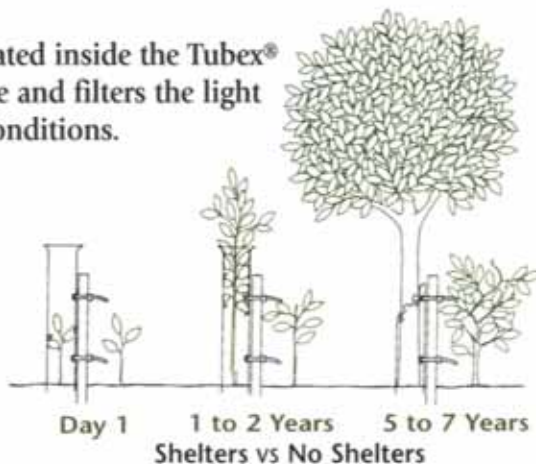
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Ray Colton uses the overhead shuttle grapple to guide a log.

the stick of wood down into the splitting trough after it has been cut to length by the chainsaw. The tilt tray works fine until he reaches the inevitable smaller diameter end of the log. The small sticks don't always have enough weight to roll off the tilted tray, and Whipple has to reach out the cab window with a pickaroon to give the stick a shove to get it to drop. He hopes to overcome the problem soon by adding some height at the bottom of the V on the tilt tray. He also doesn't like how the blower system for the sawdust constantly plugs up with bark pieces. Whipple will no doubt have it remedied soon, but at present he is at a loss as to how to do so.

I noticed that the hydraulic hoses had plastic wrap around them in any areas where there was a danger of wear by vibration, which is a nice touch. Whipple was quick to point out the safety seat in the cab as one of the better safety features on the machine. Once the operator leaves his seat, it takes pressure off the switch

underneath, and the system becomes inoperable. An overheated radiator or a hydraulic line blow will also shut down the system.

Whipple puts his wood out to dry in a large adjacent field and then does something quite unusual. Instead of dumping the wood in windrow fashion and leaving it to dry, he has a part-time helper stack the wood in neat piles.

Firewood finds a good market in this vacation home area, bringing Whipple \$135 a cord for dry wood. But he is quick to point out that the competition for firewood-quality fiber is strong from the wood chip producers, boosting his log cost to \$60 a cord. Any oak wood is sorted separately before passing through the processor, because it will bring an extra \$10 a cord. The condo customers generally want the wood split into smaller sizes, so Whipple normally uses an eight-way wedge on the Multitek adjustable wedge system.

Whipple Roberts cut 2,700 cords in his first year-working alone-and it

MultiTek 2040xP90 Spec Sheet

MODEL Multitek 2040 X P90	TRANSPORT WIDTH 8 feet
POWER UNIT W/HP John Deere 80 Hp Diesel	TRANSPORT HEIGHT 12 feet, 18 inches
FUEL CAPACITY 50 gal.	TIRES 16 inch
FUEL CONSUMPTION 1.5 gal/hr	AXLES Tandem
SPLITTER OPENING 27 inches	HITCH Pintle ring
SPLITTER CYCLE TIME 3.5 seconds	TROUGH LENGTH 20 feet
HYDRAULIC PUMP 4 section, 2,500 max p.s.i.	DECK 3 strand live deck, 7 feet 8 inches
CHAIN SIZE 3/4-inch 11 BC	MAX. LOG DIAMETER 20 inches
HYDR. TANK CAP. 125 gallons	MAX. LOG LENGTH 40 feet
WEDGES (STANDARD) Floating 6-way	CLAMP STYLE Shuttle Grapple
MACHINE WEIGHT 14,100 pounds	
TRANSPORT LENGTH 29 feet	

appears he may approach 3,000 cords this year. As far as he is concerned, the Multitek is able to meet his big demands.

Over in the Green Mountains of Vermont, the firm of Colton Enterprises also has found a successful niche for the Multitek 2040xP90. Ray Colton is one of the largest firewood producers in the northeast US; with an annual production exceeding 6,000 cords. Colton pioneered the concept of kiln-drying firewood many years ago, and now has four kilns in operation. Heated by a sawdust burner, each kiln holds 40 cords and will force-dry the green wood to 15 percent moisture content in a day and a half.

Most of Colton's firewood is processed in a stationary mill equipped with a single cut off saw feeding two splitting operations.

The Multitek 2040xP90 is used seasonally when firewood demand exceeds the capacity of the main mill. The machine is pulled out of storage and set up in the middle of the huge log piles.

Since Colton's 2040 serves as a backup, it sees the smaller wood, which allows the larger wood to go to the main operation, where there are a good number of employees to keep busy. Colton's Multitek is operated by one man, although it is fed by the full-time yard machine.

Because it operates on small wood, Colton's Multitek does not reach the production peak hit by Whipple Roberts. His operator has produced firewood at the rate of two cords an hour, but seldom exceeds one cord an hour. However, Ray Colton has

EST. PRODUCTION RATE/HOUR
2.5 to 3.5 cords

SPECIAL OR UNIQUE FEATURES

Overhead shuttle grapple feed, advanced safety features, vertically adjustable wedges

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Operator's cab w/heat and/or air conditioning, Flood lights, Live deck extension to 10 feet, Wood debris clean out conveyor, 4 and 8-way wedges, 20 and 30-foot conveyors

SALES PRICE (BEFORE OPTIONS)
\$59,000

MANUFACTURER

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no reservations on this matter. Like Whipple Roberts, his customers in the ski area condos and even in the Boston market want small wood. I noticed the operator continued to use a six-way wedge, even on the small wood. Colton said most of his equipment breakage is with the splitting wedge itself.

The cut off chainsaw on the 2040 uses a larger saw chain than most firewood processors: a 3/4-inch pitch 11 BC. Ray really likes this feature, after seeing first-hand how tough dirty wood can be on narrower saw chains. The 11 BC "pond and deck" chain will stay sharper much longer. Whipple Roberts said a chain sharpening lasted for 25 to 30 cords



Richard Smart's deflector chute can be seen at the top of his conveyor in this photo.

and a chain was good for about 400 cords.

Multitek's patented shuttle-grapple feed and clamp system worked very smoothly and quickly on all the Multitek machines I observed. It is the premier feed system on firewood processors. For

example, I watched when Whipple Roberts' live deck mistakenly dumped two logs into the feed trough, and Roberts was able to easily fix the problem without leaving the operator's cab. Colton Enterprises showed their

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WOOD PROCESSOR *Review*

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satisfaction with Multitek's feed system by having Multitek custom-build the grapple feed system used in their main mill.

Ray Colton also pointed out that Multitek does not use a two-stage hydraulic pump system, a system Colton has had bad experience with in the past. For commercial use, a two-stage pump has too many moving parts and becomes expensive to keep in operation. Multitek uses a quadruple system with simplified manifold components on the 2040xP90.

Down in the more heavily populated area of central Massachusetts, Richard Smart of Munson has well over 6,000 hours on his

Multitek 2040XP90. His operator described the machine as smooth running with seldom any hang-ups. He said he rarely needs to reach out of the cab window with his pickaroon to straighten out a wayward stick.

Richard Smart has added an innovation worth noting. His customers do not like the splinters and other small pieces that some people find make good kindling. So to please his urban customers, all of the "trash" must be removed. Smart designed a chute which he installed at the top of the conveyor he uses to load his truck. The trash pieces fall off at the immediate end of the conveyor and are deflected

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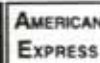
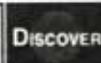
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back away from the truck by the chute. The firewood sticks fall off the conveyor just beyond the trash chute and tumble into the truck. It's not perfect, but it works.

After visiting three of these machines in action, it became quite obvious the Multitek 2040xP90 is built to do a man-sized job—and there are a num-

ber of them out there doing just that. The machine has a higher price tag than most models, but for a commercial producer, the 2040xP90 should be able to pay its way without too much of a problem. ■

Bill Gove is a retired forester who last worked for the Vermont Department of Parks and Forests.

Manufacturer's Comments

Multitek, Inc. is first in firewood processors in many ways: the first company in North America to manufacture a fully integrated firewood processor, the first with the overhead shuttle grapple log infeed design, the first to offer an interchangeable vertically adjustable splitter blade, the first to have an operator's seat with a heated operator's cab enclosure, and the first to have a sawchip blower.

If you are serious about volume firewood production, the Multitek 2040xP90 Firewood Processor is the pro's choice to do the job. This 2040 is a Leo Heikkinen (founder of the famous Prentice Log Loader Company) original firewood processor design and has proven a success for 15 years.

Popular options include a heated or air-conditioned cab, 10-foot log deck extension, wood debris clean out conveyor, and a 30-foot discharge conveyor with hydraulic lift.



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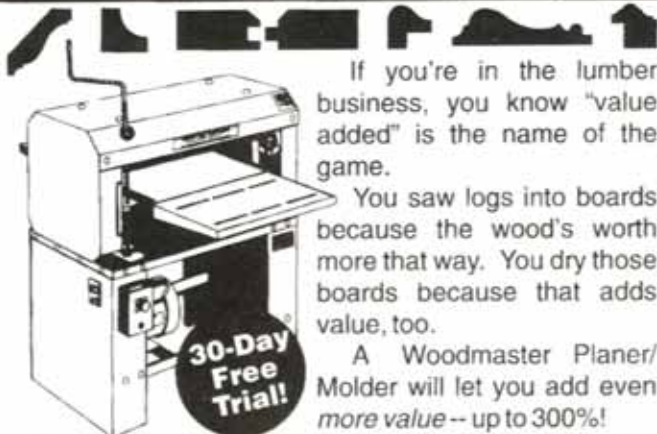
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