



The mill rests on large timbers and is hand pushed. Note the ash boards stacked vertically along the wall as they are removed from the saw.

## Norwood LumberPro HD36

**My neighbor, Dwight Perkins, operated a small sawmill and manufactured grade stakes for years. His father, a welder/machinist in the ag engineering shop at the University of Maine, could make most anything, and Dwight inherited his genes.**

**T**he carriage, gang saw, and auxiliary equipment in his mill were mostly his own design and fabrication. In addition, to maximize income, he made fuel pellets rather than sell sawdust for bedding. Unfortunately, his mill burned last year and the intense heat from the sawdust pile deformed much of his equipment. Dwight considered retiring, but there's sawdust in his veins, and he just had to have something to do. He wanted to restart the business, part-time, to employ his son and leave the business to his son when he retires. So, he bought a portable band mill.

After considering all the makes and models available, he settled on a basic Norwood LumberPro HD36 because he could start simply and add hydraulic attachments as he progressed. He just can't say enough about the Norwood. The mill is quite large, and heavy, and it took Dwight and his son two weeks of working part-time to assemble and level it. It is mounted on large timbers, on the ground, but eventually he plans to add a trailer package and give it to his son. He has several options for automating the mill, but as most of his sawing is 50-inch, white-ash grade stakes, powering the carriage for such a short distance is not necessary. Plus, by pushing the mill, Dwight can feel his way through knots and twisted grain and also tell when the blade needs changing.

The HD36 can also take 1-1/2-inch blades, which Dwight prefers, because they do not deflect as much when cutting through hard wood. The 23-hp, V-twin engine makes for easy cutting. He is especially impressed with the tremendous increase in yield from the narrow kerf and wishes he had done this years ago. Initially, after sawing through and through, he stacked

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The mill is housed in the sawdust shed of the old mill. The fire heat deformed some of the metal sides, but the roof is sound. The open east side is temporarily covered with a tarp. At the left is a rack sized to hold 1/3 cord of slabs that are banded and sold for firewood. The remains of the old mill are in the left background.

When Dwight begins pushing the mill, squeezing the hand control simultaneously speeds up the engine and opens the blade-lubrication system. Since he cuts 50-inch bolts, powering the saw carriage is not necessary, plus Dwight likes to feel the saw moving through the wood.

five boards vertically and sawed five, one-inch grade stakes with each pass. This presented some problems, as ash is very hard and sawing through five different grain patterns can break blades. He considered stacking each log as a flitch so individual boards follow the same grain pattern, but, instead, has recently made a rip saw that cuts two stakes per pass. That has greatly simplified work and sped up processing, plus it saves wear on the band saw blades.

When I visited, Dwight was sawing small logs cut from his own woodlot, some so small he could only get four stakes. He prefers larger logs because of less work and less waste, and one large log yielded 144 stakes. At this point, he does not have a log deck and must load logs by hand, but a deck, or hoist, is in the offering. By-products of the mill are ash slabs banded in 1/3-cord bundles and sold for firewood, plus sawdust sold for chicken bedding. Since he has owned the mill for less than a year and operates it only a few hours a week, he has yet to install any conveyors or a log deck. Even in that short time, the mill has paid for itself.

Dwight's business ethic has always been to supply a quality product at a fair price and he has no problem selling everything he can produce. After a year of itching to get back into business, he has slowed down, but it wouldn't surprise me to see him improve the product flow and get into production, at least half-time. ■

*Ben Hoffman is a forester with 28 years experience in state, federal, and private forestry and 17 years in academia. Ben is retired as a Maine Licensed Forester, and Vermont Land Surveyor.*



After sharpening, stakes are fitted into a jig that holds 25 stakes that are then tied with wire to form a tight bundle. The stake pointer was salvaged from the fire, but has a new motor (inset left).



When sawing small logs, the right-side blade guide can be positioned close to the log to minimize blade deflection.



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