

Cedar Sawmiller

When purchasing a new sawmill, the accessories are often ignored or deemed too expensive, but shouldn't be. It's important to have an eye to the future of the sawmill business's potential because an upfront investment in an accessory today could deliver big business income dividends tomorrow. It could open doors to new customers, result in higher utilization and higher value recovery from each log, and allow the company to produce complete building packages in-house.



That's what British Columbia-based Valley View Industries did when they went shopping for a new band sawmill. They manufacture wood products primarily from cedar. "Cedar is very good for its natural resistance to rot and decay," says Nick Price, Valley View Industries owner, "which is what makes it an excellent building material for outdoor structures, fencing, decking, and saunas. It's light and has a lovely appearance."

Nick Price (left), owner of Valley View Industries, thought long and hard about what accessories would fit well with his new band sawmill, and that investment has paid off with multiple benefits.



While they chose a Wood-Mizer LT40 band sawmill as their main breakdown unit, they also purchased a bed extension, debarker add-on, twin-blade edger, 4-sided planer/moulder, and Wood-Mizer's Lathe-Mizer tenon kit.

The tenon kit allows Valley View Industries to produce tapered and specially shaped logs on their new band sawmill that can be fit together for either structural support or appearance applications. For example, the Lathe-Mizer can produce perfectly round, hexagon, octagon, and triangle log shapes. Price says that they have evolved from only producing about 15% of their product needs in-house to 100%, and there is also a lot less waste with their new system.

Valley View Industries is located in close proximity to western red cedar country on a 2-acre site in Kamloops, British Columbia. It leverages both its location and extensive knowledge to supply cedar wood products throughout North America and even Japan. They also work with Douglas fir, maple, and oak, but cedar is their bread and butter, representing about 85% of their production. They are both a building contractor and cedar wood product supplier. Their building materials are manufactured either from raw logs or from rough lumber that they remanufacture into cedar fencing, decking, and more-refined lumber products.

Price is carrying on the family tradition started 30 years ago by his father, Norm, who founded the business. He is maintaining the company's reputation for installing products like log gazebos, decks, hot tub enclosures, pergolas, sheds, cabins, fences, and so on. About half of their business is custom cutting and installation, while the other half is stockpiling popular cedar products for retail sales.

With their new Wood-Mizer LT40 band sawmill and supporting equipment, they have reduced delivery times of their building structures and building materials to customer sites by a month. "With our new Wood-Mizer LT40 sawmill, we can cut in 3 or 4 hours what used to take us a week," Nick says. "It's night and day. Even though we are so busy, and we are booked for so many weeks ahead, we are still producing much quicker, at a higher volume, and at a higher quality than we were previously."

They selected the wide LT40 model so that they can saw logs up to a 34-inch diameter. The smallest-diameter log they process has about a 12-inch top, but on average, they deal with logs that are about 24 inches in diameter.

The logs are shipped to the yard in 65-foot lengths and then they are bucked by hand according to the company's needs. Most building material is manufactured from logs measuring 8 feet to 16 feet. "We have the bed extension on the mill for longer stuff that allows us to go up to 26 feet long," says Nick.

His Wood-Mizer LT40 also has the debarker add-on, which Nick says is an essential component for his operation because cedar is notorious for accumulating rocks and mud around the base of the log. The debarker helps to extend saw blade sharpening intervals and lifespan.

In terms of blade selection, he uses a standard, economy-grade, 1.5-inch



The Lathe-Mizer accessory allows Valley View Industries to produce round, hexagon-, octagon-, and triangle-shaped logs for building projects.



In addition to sawing primarily cedar wood products, Valley View Industries also installs structures like this pergola. They have shipped products throughout North America and even Japan.

Cedar is known for its durability and resistance to rot, which makes it an excellent building material for exterior applications.

blade for the first cuts to create a stack of cants. Then he will switch to a Stellite-tipped blade for sawing the cants into final lumber products. “We find that by taking this approach, the blades last a bit longer and we get a nicer finish on our products,” says Nick.

But that is only part of their production line. Producing cedar structures often involves more than simply producing dimensional lumber and timbers. Debarked and custom-tapered cedar logs are often part of a construction project and have great customer appeal as a retail product. That’s why the company invested in a Lathe-Mizer tenon kit add-on for their band sawmill.

Valley View Industries is busy. At present, it’s about an 8-week lead time on gazebo orders. In addition to the LT40 band sawmill, they also own a Wood-Mizer EG200 twin blade edger to improve any boards that have wane or any that have bark on the edges. “From our sawing and edging process, we create a stockpile of wood measuring anywhere from 1-inch by 4-inch lumber to 6-inch by 6-inch timbers,” Nick says. “From there, our employees, who are actually working on building projects, will pick out of those piles. So, if they are building, for example, a pergola, they will pick out all they need for that order and then take the pieces into our shop for preparation.”

As part of the milling process, the sawyer will follow cut recipes for specific building projects to ensure that what is being sawn on the bandsaw mill and remanufactured through the edger meshes with building project needs. Excess material is diverted into inventory. Very little goes to waste.

Their Wood-Mizer’s MP360 4-sided planer/moulder is used to finish and add value to their wood products. They also intend to add a resaw and a dry kiln, which will allow them to produce more cedar products for indoor use. ■

Tony Kryzanowski is an award-winning, Canadian-based writer with over 25 years’ experience reporting on many aspects of sawmilling and woodlot management in both Canada and parts of the United States. He is passionate about small-scale sawmilling, sustainable forest management, and maintenance of forest biodiversity and ecosystems.

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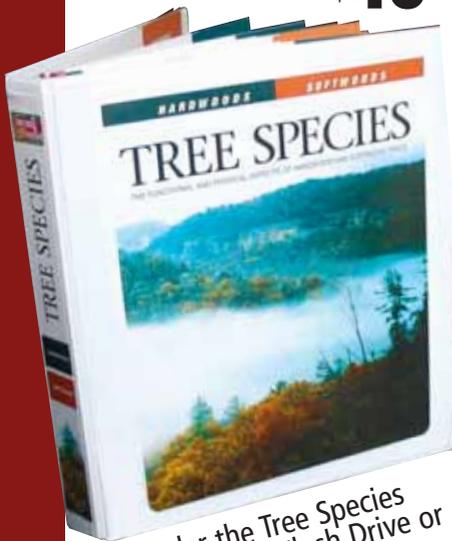
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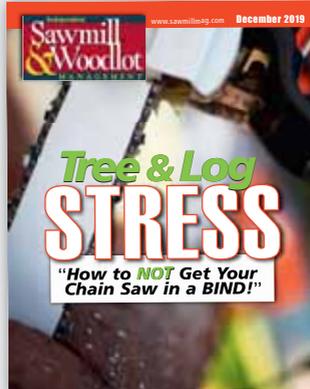
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