

# LOGSPLITTERS

*Everyone should have one, however small.*

There is often now a distinction made between 'Logsplitters, professional' and 'Logsplitters, domestic'. Some manufacturers go as far as labelling some of their products as 'semi-professional'. Many involved in working with trees and timber are in the business in a capacity other than that of handling large quantities of fuelwood; almost all, however, have on some occasion needed to rend asunder the fibres of an oversized lump of wood destined for the hearth. I know for a fact that one sawmiller and furniture maker has been scanning this magazine recently to find out what machinery is available to deal with the small amount of roundwood he buys that is not suitable for the sawbench. One of the so-called 'domestic' models will suit him well. No apologies, then, for including in this review the smaller logsplitters available.

Political correctness would currently dictate that those with some time off would do their fitness a favour by spending a few hours producing sustainable woodfuel by swinging on the shank of a splitting axe. The varied selection of manual logsplitting implements forged by **Leonhard Müller** has set the standard in Europe, at least. More readily available in the British Isles are **Stihl**

products. Andreas Stihl is one of the machinery producers that still holds faith with the traditional woodsman's tool, marketing, for example, no fewer than three styles of debarking spades. (The Black Forest, the Daun and the Martens, to be specific). With that sort of commitment it is only to be expected that a glance through the Stihl catalogue turns up more than a few high quality manual splitting implements.

Müller and Stihl have their heritage firmly based in Austria and Germany respectively. Hardly surprising, then, that these countries are leaders too in the art of non-manual logsplitting. There are, however, a couple of less well-known alternatives to the standard hydraulic ram and wedge shaped knife (or knives). The Eagle logging bench from **M Large Tree Services** (tel: 028 9034 2838) screws a cone into the raw material to prise even the most stubbornly knotty hardwoods apart. A steady application of power from electricity, from a pto or the machine's own engine, allows the cone to drive its way between the fibres until the log is divided. The American Super Split system, on the other hand, stores power (from a petrol or electric motor) in twin flywheels linked by a pinion. Engaging a rack onto the pinion instantly



*A Posch SplitMaster makes the first pass through a knotty lump of beech. The height of the splitting knife can be raised and lowered hydraulically.*

transmits the stored power to the splitting wedge, which retracts by spring loading when the job has been done. This system is, as yet, limited to the smaller (or domestic) end of the logsplitter market. Details of the Super Split are available from Equipment Supply Services (tel: 01639 635123).

Rabaud logsplitters are manufactured on the French Atlantic coast and the range, distributed in the UK by **Caledonian Forestry Services Ltd** (tel: 01764 663798), caters for an extremely wide spectrum of users. The F4, F6, F8, F9, F12 and F14 (all designated by the manufacturer as 'leisure' machines) are electrically operated models, with splitting powers (in tonnes) as denoted in each machine's title. The splitting platform on the F8 'Green Adjustable' has three easily changed positioning options, leading to an ability to cleave timber up to 1.15m

in length.

A mini-tractor 12 tonne splitter and two engine-equipped units (Briggs and Stratton 6hp and 11hp motors) are available. The Eco and Farmer II pto-driven machines – 13, 16 and 19 tonne splitting power – are ideal for farmers, and the larger Groupe II 21/25 tonne vertical splitters perfect for co-operatives and machinery rings, according to the manufacturer. The F25 Horizontale and the F32 Professionnel are the machines for serious firewood production. The former has a hydraulically operated log lifting system and the latter a simply controlled power stroke travel adjustment. The larger vertical splitters are equipped with a log clamping system and Rabaud's patented heavy duty wear-resistant wedge mounting. Top mounted electric or hydraulic winches with eye-bolt or tong-style log attachments are also available to assist



*(Left) Thor logsplitters are available from M Large Tree Services. Some models in the range are being fitted with the innovative 'Leader' control system.*

*(Centre) Imported from France by Caledonian Forestry, Rabaud logsplitters are available nationwide. This trailed model was being demonstrated by Woodland and Garden Tree Services of Somerset.*

*(Right) The Woodline splitter range is available from Fuelwood Warwick Ltd. The WL10 Multipla can split vertically, horizontally or at an angle, as shown here.*

feeding the larger vertical models.

Among the wide range of products handled by **Fuelwood Warwick Ltd** (tel: 01926 484453) are the Italian Woodline log splitters. Conveniently, the model numbers, from the WL6 to the WL16/20 C/1150 identify the splitting force of the ram. In the latter case 16 or 20 tonnes of power is available from the 2-speed ram on this, the largest of the Woodline horizontal splitters, which is powered by either pto take-off or tractor hydraulics. Hydraulic log-loaders are fitted as standard on these 'top of the range' machines. The largest vertical model, the WL20 C/1000 also has the option of electric 3-phase power sourcing.

The compact WL6 is available only as an electrically powered version, but the WL8 and WL10 Bull have far more options: in versions (the Special and the DPG); and in power sources. The WL10 Multipla has one other particular flexibility that may make it a particularly appealing choice – four working positions: vertical, horizontal and two angles in between.

The Italian Thor range of log splitters is distributed in the UK and Ireland by **M Large Tree Services** (tel: 028 9034 2838). With splitting powers between 6 and 20 tonnes the machines are suitable for simple domestic use and for the most demanding professional applications. The manufacturer's ability to produce quality machines and guarantee regular deliveries was one reason for the Ulster-based distributor's decision to supply Thor products; another was the innovative 'Leader' control system. This allows both foot and single-handed operation while still complying with current Health and Safety regulations. It is said to give the Thor machines a 50% production advantage over similarly sized splitters.

The smallest in the range is the Alpino 6 tonne Electric model. The Thor Leader/Mignon machines (7.5, 8.5 and 10 tonne) are all equipped with the aforementioned control system which allows the wedge to be lowered to contact by foot control. The power stroke, however, can only operate with both hands on the controls. The 340 Economy (13 tonnes) works by tractor hydraulics or pto pump. The Hercules (15 tonnes) and the Practico (20 tonnes) are professional 3 point linkage mounted vertical machines. The 18 tonnes Super Magik incorporates a number of innovative designs – retractable cylinder for ease of transport, adjust-



(Left) Allan Marshall with Binderbergers great and small. The Herkules crane-mounted grapple splitter (foreground) is available in 30 and 40 tonne versions. (Right) The German manufacturer of BGU machines expects them to be taking a bigger share of the British market in future. The SP30 is the most powerful BGU log splitter.

able cutter stroke, a new design of frame and the single control for contacting the log.

**ArborEaters** (tel: 01273 493180) supply Pezzolato log splitters; machines also built in Italy. As well as the lower-powered 6 and 7.5 tonne models for occasional use, 'semi-professional' and 'professional' machines are available. The Jolly2 and Jolly3, for example, fit into the former classification with 9 and 11 tonnes of splitting power. Two horizontal splitters (Standard2 and Standard3) complete the semi-professional range with powers of 12 and 16 tonnes.

The professional Pezzolato vertical machines include the Jolly4 (13 tonnes), Pro H (13 tonnes) and Pro King (20 tonnes). The Horizontal Pro 20 tonne and Horizontal Pro30 tonne are the two top bracket log splitters. Both are equipped with log loader, produce cradle and a sliding cylinder for tractor transportation. PTO or electric power sources – or a combination of both – are available options on all but the smaller Pezzolato splitters.

Machines of the Austrian manufacturer Posch are distributed by **Jas P Wilson** (tel: 01556 612233). Despite the name the Home-Split models – 6, 7.5 and 9 tonne capabilities – are built to professional standards and can be supplied for tractor operation (hydraulics or PTO shaft). The machines are equipped with two-hand safety control and patented automatic timber securing mechanism. Splitting tables are easily inserted for splitting short rounds and a 'push-on' four way wedge is an optional extra. The latter can be fitted with rollers to assist easy withdrawal of the wedge from the cleft timber.

For large scale production Posch offer the HydroHorizontal 20/24

tonne, in which the splitting wedge is attached to the splitting piston, and the SplitMaster 26/30 tonne, in which the timber is forced against a fixed wedge. The Posch 'Autospeed' pressure sensitive ram control is standard on the SplitMaster, but is an option on new deliveries of the HydroHorizontal. A specialised machine from the Posch works in Leibnitz is the 10 tonne Pile Splitter. The two cylinder Pile Splitter can cleave timber up to 2.1m in length, for example for fencing stakes. By arrangement with the company greater cleaving lengths can be accommodated.

Binderberger machines are available from **Marshall Agricultural Engineering** (tel: 01892 770788). Splitting power, in tonnes, is denoted by the model numbering. One compact horizontal log splitter (SP8) is available, and three vertical models (H6, H8 and H10). The more powerful vertical log splitters (H17, H20, H25 and H30) have a standard turntable on the splitting base to assist manipulation of the timber and resplitting. Ram speed is automatically governed by Binderberger's SpeedControl system. A winch is available for drawing logs into the machine and radio control of this is an option.

Large scale operators may be impressed by the horizontal Gigant 30 (PTO/electric powered) or the Gigant 40 (PTO/electric/Hatz diesel) with its option of a twelve-way splitting wedge. With a maximum timber length capability of 2.55m the Goliath 40 is the horizontal format machine for big timber splitting. Binderberger offer a radio control system for some of their range that allows operation from even another machine – especially useful if raw material is being processed, for example, straight from

the bunk of a forwarder or forwarding trailer. The final weapons in the Binderberger splitting arsenal are the Herkules 30 and Herkules 40 crane mounted grapple-type splitters. Equally adept at handling and cleaving large diameter log sections, these simple machines are a great asset to any firewood yard.

Südhärzer Maschinenbau GmbH has built a solid reputation for producing materials processing machinery at Nordhausen in Germany's Harz Mountains. The firm's black and red BGU machines have, so far, not made huge inroads into the UK and Ireland firewood sector. This may all be about to change as the company is in the process of gearing up for a concerted marketing effort aimed at the British Isles. There may in the future be a far better spread of agents over here and the latest BGU innovations will not be long in arriving. The Premium Blue-Line, for example; smaller capacity machines such as the 6 tonne HS61/2 Tornado vertical and the 9T SM500 horizontal splitters built to professional strength and efficiency standards. Speed of operation is improved by a substantially increased oil flow.

The domestic and semi-professional range in the standard red and black livery at present consists of 7 vertical and 2 horizontal log splitters in the range from 4 to 14 tonnes. All but the smallest can use a tractor pto as the power source. For more demanding tasks the professional range consists of two vertical (USP16 and USP22) and two horizontal (SP20 and SP30) machines. BGU 3-point linkage firewood balers and manual and hydraulic log decks are also available. More information from **Perry Plant Hire (Devon) Ltd** (tel: 01363 866174).

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