

Dear Phil,

3/16/85

When we farmed I wound up growing nothing but poultry and a garden. I had a ~~horse~~ horse by proxy, not my own, those of friends, used only for plowing the garden when I raised no other crops and had no need for tractors. The advantage of a horse in the garden plot is that it does not compact the earth as heavy tractors do.

If I read your letter correctly, you are going to fell five trees, oaks and pines. Prompts the question, did you ever do this before. It requires some knowhow, particularly if near buildings or other trees, ornamentals, fences, utility wires, lanes and roads, etc. If they fall the wrong way, trouble, trouble.

Will you use them for fuel? If so saw them to length, don't chpp, and split them if too thick. And what about the trimmings? I use most of them for fuel, when I'm by the stove and can tend it. They give faster heat, but for a brief period only.

If you are going to use them for fuel, better to get them down before the sap rises, which will be soon. This is particularly true of pine which also is one of the poorer fuels. Fewer BTUs per pound and more creosote, meaning deposited in the chimney and if you have a fireplace, in its throat, the part immediately below the chimney but not visible from the room.

One way or another you have to trim the branches out. A hatchet is safer than a machete but I prefer a machete and use it more. Work your way out from the trunk end of the branch, which is easier and avoids splitting the wrong way and extra work. Meaning the branch will split, etc. One cut of the oak ought be saved for a chopping block, for cutting to length and if you are not experienced for ~~trimming~~ trimming the branches.

If you are going to use working the trees up as exercise then you ought postpone it until after the grass stops growing. Otherwise the felled wood will kill your grass. No sun will reach it.

Unless these trees are away from anything on which they can fall, particularly any houses, you really ought not consider felling them yourself unless you've had prior experience, which I gather you have not.

Wood is a good and cost-efficient fuel but not in an open fireplace, with a good stove. Mine paid for itself the first year because I had no wood costs. This is not very typical. Nor is my this year's cost of about \$250 or the possibility that I'll have no wood cost at all next year. (This year we used 10 gallons of K1 kerosene as supplemental heat in Lil's office, which is as far away from the stove as one can get in this house. Those stoves are very efficient but we never have it on when we are not present and never at night.)

If you have any tools to buy please tell me before then more precisely what you want. Then I can perhaps be of more help.

Unless there is some real purpose in removing these trees, remember, once it is done you cannot change your mind and it will take a long time to replace trees of that size.

Best,

Harold

March 13, 1984

Dear Harold

Much thanks for the book (check enclosed) and for your letters. I have written to Mc Knight. I'm going to have my library order multiple copies of your books.

I really appreciate all of the very-specific wisdom you provided on chopping wood (a veritable HOW TO DO IT manual for desk jockies like myself). I don't like power saws, because they are too scary. Indeed, I do realize the import of exercise. I jog some, and I enjoy it - and now, I can get back to woodchopping! We installed solar-heating (hot water only) and so 5 of our 60 ft oaks and pines will be felled - so chop I will.

I know your's was actually some sort of working farm - but with a horse and all?

Thanks again,

Best Regards,

Phil