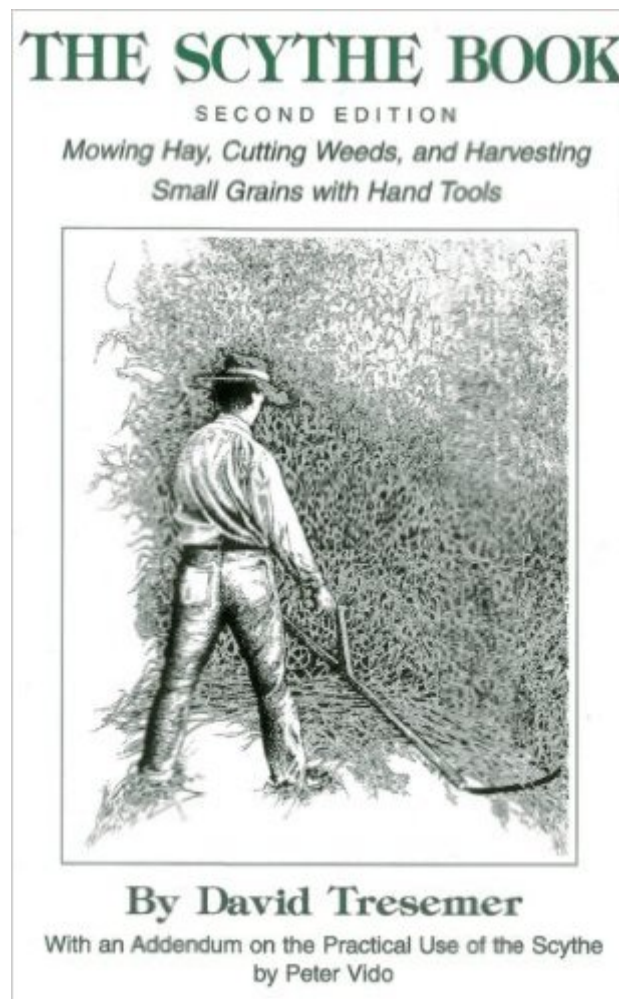


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The Scythe Book Second Edition Mowing Hay, Cutting Weeds, And Harvesting Small Grains With Hand Tools



Synopsis

In the last few years, interest in the scythe has grown remarkably; and so have the sales of The Scythe Book. Now Peter Vido, who has written two outstanding articles for Small Farmer's Journal on the use of the scythe, has contributed an addendum for this book on the practical use of the scythe based on his own extensive research and experience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The second edition of The Scythe Book was released this June and I am posting this before it lists it as available, but I hope that will soon change. The original text by Dave Tresemer has not been re-edited. It is still a good introduction to this wonderful tool. The core of the new edition is the addendum by Peter Vido. Peter is extraordinarily dedicated to the scythe as both a practical tool and as a model of wisely applied human engineering. Peter shows us how complex and subtle this simple tool can be. The depth of his knowledge may overwhelm the uninitiated on first reading, but as your experience grows with this tool, Peter's commentary becomes increasingly valuable. There is a lot of important information packed into this addendum and any scythe enthusiast will learn much from this master. The European scythe accomplishes more than the mundane job of cutting grass. It offers us an opportunity to step away from the craziness of American lawn culture. It gives us the space in which to breathe, listen and explore our own rhythms without burning gasoline. This book is the place to begin.

The author rants against the 'American' scythe, and all things American, which seems to him to represent modern, industrial, evil. The 'European' scythe is traditional, pure, righteous. The reader may become confused to find that, according to this book, the 'European' scythe may have been invented in Turkey, and might be made today in China. Also, the early American scythes were made by Europeans just like in Europe. The terminology is standard, though it is a little inaccurate. The 'European' scythe is hammer forged from a bar stock. The 'American' is stamped and formed from sheet material. So the scythe the author is so fond of is a hammer forged scythe. Simple as that. Europe really has no claim to it. Here's the basics to using a scythe: Adjust it so that you are standing and the blade is just slightly tilted up at the edge. Cut the grass when it is wet. Keep the blade close to the ground, actually just riding lightly over the ground. Swing the blade pointy end first. Don't slash like using a sword, but slice like cutting bread. Cut only a few inches at a time.

This book is essentially split in two. The first half is older and written by David, the second half is newer and written by Peter. I liked the sections written by David, but he was often a bit vague in explaining things. There was a lot of what and not a lot of why. Peter on the other hand goes into great lengths to explain the minutia of his naming conventions. Where David lacks, Peter is superfluous. Often the two differ in opinion as well. Neither of them really get it right and I am left with questions and wishing I had a better book on scything. Additionally the parts written by Peter are filled with disdain for anyone other than him and his elite little home schooled family. The book drips with narcissism to the point where towards the end I became disgusted with it. Two stars for being the ONLY scythe book. If you can, find someone to teach you instead of slogging through this mess.

First, this book is primarily about the European scythe, not the American scythe. The author mentions the American scythe very briefly before dismissing it as too heavy to use and an inferior tool. I haven't used a European scythe, and perhaps I would find it easier to use if I tried it, but I do have a couple of beautiful antique American scythes that I picked up at a farm auction and they work just fine. I was disappointed with the author's dismissal of the tool. What the book does have is a very in depth description of the history of the scythe, including a discussion of early short handled sickles, the steps involved in crafting a scythe, harvesting techniques and quotes about harvesting from a wide variety of literary sources. After reading this book, I'm thinking about hunting down a copy of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina just to read the sections on harvesting. I was hoping for a little more "how to" info, but I think perhaps that is best obtained from an experienced user who can not only

show you how to do it but critique what you're doing as you do it. The basics are here to get you started, and the author's passion for hand tools is obvious. Keep your blades sharp and your back strong and you'll be surprised what you can accomplish.

It takes a certain kind of person to choose cutting grass and weeds by hand over more conventional technology and this book will appeal to those that choose the less beaten (and noisy) path. A gentle combination of how to and philosophy, *The Scythe Book* is for those who aren't in a hurry and want to learn about the tool, its history, and its use in a manner of respect and appreciation.

In that this seems to be the only available book on scythes you could say it is the best book on scythes. The author drifts into New Age gibberish twice but then only for a moment. The rest of the info seems to be good; and this is certainly a great beginner's book. My complaint is that it does not go beyond a beginner's book. The book will help you get started, but if you buy a scythe you really should find some old hand at scythes to further your education.

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