

## Make a European Style Hay Rake

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/hay-rake-zmaz79mjzraw>

By Susan Allen May/June 1979

It might look primitive, but a European hay rake is well-suited to its purpose. Here's how to make your own. The European-style hay rake looks something like this.



### Content Tools

There's really no comparison between the common mass-produced garden rake and the specialized haying tools used in Europe. French farmers handcraft their hay rakes from three kinds of hardwood: hazelnut for the handle, aspen or ash for the head, and ash or rowan for the teeth. If necessary you can use all ash, or if that's not available, strong and flexible spruce will do.

To begin, select the wood for your handle. Try to find a hazelnut sapling 8' to 10" taller than you are and about 2" in diameter. Fix the pole in a vise, and smooth off the bark and rough edges with a draw knife. (When it's finished, the staff should be about 8" taller than you are and 1 1/2" in diameter.)

Next, use a saw to make a 17" cut down the center of one end of the handle and - with a pocketknife - whittle these two ends into a pair of 3/4"-diameter circular prongs. Then, two or three strands of wire around the base of the Y- cut, and twist the ends tightly together with a pair of pliers to prevent further splitting.

For the rake's head use a 1" X 2" X 28" piece of ash. Fix the board in a vise with the 2" side up and drill two holes along the center line, one 12 1/2" from each end of the plank. Make the bores just under 3/4" in diameter, and go clear through to the other side so the handle's prongs can be wedged in tightly.

To make 30 teeth, you'll need three ash boards (each 1" X 30"). Begin by fixing a board vertically in the vise and carefully splitting it down the middle - lengthwise - with a hammer and hatchet. Then saw each half into five equal segments of 6 inches each, which should leave you with ten 1" X 1" X 6" square pegs.

Cut the other two boards the same way. Then get comfortable and whittle the pegs into round teeth with your pocketknife. As you carve them down (to 3/8" in diameter and 5" long) try to curve each tine slightly. (Teeth curved in the direction of the pull make for a stronger and more efficient rake.)

Now, hammer the teeth into 5/16"-diameter holes, pre-drilled to angle slightly toward the handle, through one of the 1" surfaces of the head. Tap them in until they're flush with the opposite edge. (Make sure all the curves point in the same direction.) As double insurance that teeth are solidly fixed, secure each one in place with a 3/4" nail on the handle side of the head. Each brad should protrude slightly, so that you can remove it if a tooth breaks and has to be replaced.

Finally, put the handle in the vise and match up the two center holes of the rake's head with the prongs. Hammer them together until the prongs, too, are flush with the other side and fasten the fork in place with two 1" nails pounded in at an angle from the top of the head. Again, let the fasteners protrude a little for easy removal.

Sure, makin' your own rake involves a little work, but when you're out raking hay you'll find it was darn well worth it!