

Flail Mower

Posted by [Ethan Gouge](#)

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[Ethan Gouge](#)

[Flail Mower](#)

January 02, 2017 02:47AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 36

Are the orchard benefits (reduced vole habitat with a finer cut, chopping leaves for scab abatement, chopping prunings in place) worth running a flail mower over a more general purpose brush hog?

Roan Highlands Farm 6b, Roan Mountain, TN elevation: 3200 ft.

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 02, 2017 03:41PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

The two factors in favor of a flail mower that stand out to me are "offset access" beneath limbs on bigger trees (which you are not going to achieve with a brush hog) and heavy duty ability to chop substantial prunings in the aisle way. That actually pushes you towards what's called a flail chopper, which would be overkill in smaller orchards, plus it's ideal to shoot chips into the fungal duff zone. Tree size figures into this in a big way obviously. I use the the brush mower attachment on my BCS for fall clean-up as that indeed reduces vole cover satisfactorily. I do have an Italian-made flail attachment for the BCS as well, which is incredibly slick for chopping leaves but a bit cumbersome on the steeper sections of orchard slope. The nice thing about the two-wheel tractor approach is nearly full access under a larger tree canopy . . . but more labor-intensive choices come down to the scale of your farm operation and other diversified doings. That BCS flail attachment, for instance, is worth its weight in gold in the gardens for reducing a living cover crop to small bits without disturbing fungi and roots. I totally agree that a side-mounted cutter bar is the right choice for spring mowing. Bottom line: Take into account slope and acreage scale and additional purposes to determine the right fit for your farm whatever the piece of equipment.

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Zone 4b in New Hampshire

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[Ethan Gouge](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 06, 2017 05:15AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 36

Thanks Michael,

I'm trying real hard not to screw this tractor decision up. I didn't realize you still use your BCS to mow. If you don't mind me asking, how much acreage are you mowing with it? Do you mow with your 4 wheel tractor at all? I could mow 30% faster with the purchase of a BCS 34" flail mower (mowing with the 26" brush mower now) and put off the 4 wheel tractor expense for a few years until I need it to move bushel bins, but I'm cutting around 10 acres and would rather spend the time elsewhere.

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 06, 2017 05:03PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

Granite outcroppings make tractor mowing here nigh impossible, and parts of the orchard are too steep to want to try offset mowing. What keeps things humming is the venerable BCS, and I am using a 26" brush mower. The flail mower attachment is the same width as well, a choice necessitated by the overall weight of the machine on terrain. (I do have a 48 inch brush hog, hardly used, which I've decided to sell this spring.) I have three acres of trees in three locations on the farm, plus another several acres I keep open and/or "refresh" after the sheep have made their grazing choices. The BCS suits this ground and that scale well, especially as we have multiple gardens and cover crop extensively (which is where the flail attachment truly shines). My tractor is a 35hp Kioti, which gets used to spray (with a Rears three-point hitch PakTank), run the wood chipper, grade roads/plow snow, very occasionally till, haul logs back for firewood, bring in the apple harvest (with a fork attachment), and absolutely move materials like ramial chipped wood around with the bucket. It took some time to achieve all this but it's a happy place to be for what all I do.

Bottom line: Long straight rows on relatively flat ground where unending markets abide -- meaning you can grow more than several acres of tree fruit -- lend to the upgrade to tractor mowing. But even then you won't be able to reach as much ground beneath the trees as I can with the BCS regardless of the steep terrain factor. Sounds to me that you are straddling that very line, Ethan!

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

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[Ethan Gouge](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 07, 2017 03:44AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 36

Interesting Michael,

I do love my BCS and have collected quite an array of implements over the last few years. I do wonder (and maybe you can tell me) how the 26" flail handles thick field growth (as in opened the orchard back up with a pre harvest mowing). What is the engine HP on your model? Is it the BCS brand flail or Berta? I've read the Berta has a removable baffle that is useful for field mowing. I worry that my 13 hp 853 wouldn't have the power to run the 34" mower in high field.

'Straddling the line' is an apt analogy, haha. Unfortunately in starting orchards from scratch, the larger equipment is needed before the apples are coming in to pay for it! And then there is the whole game of working towards weening the farm from outside income. In my case it might make more sense to hire out some mowing and touch up with my BCS, or just put in the time to do it 26" at a time. I can't say enough about that little machine!

Roan Highlands Farm 6b, Roan Mountain, TN elevation: 3200 ft.

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[Paul Weir](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 21, 2017 12:36AM

Hi Ethan,

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 187

Some quick feed back to add to the discussion

I have a Falc CAT 1500F Fixed Position PTO Flail Mower which I power with a Kubota L3430 (30HP at PTO) class tractor.

Advantage to a Flail Mower is its ability to mow/shred grass, brush, cuttings and more -- up to about 2 inches in diameter . . . with ease. They use flails often called "hammers" vs blades and are also known to be much less prone to sparking and fire starting (a major plus here in the dry summers of California). My model has 20 flails.

I paid just over \$5,000 for mine back in 2005. Falc is made in Italy and with the weak Euro, they are going for similar money today.

Here is a current price matrix for Falc Flail options from [Solex Corp in Dixon, CA](#)

FALCAT1000FC1 Cat 1000 F: 40" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$4,440.00
FALCAT1200FC1 Cat 1200 F: 49" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$4,610.00
FALCAT1200FH Cat 1200 F: 49" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$4,610.00
FALCAT1350FH Cat 1350 F: 54" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$5,087.00
FALCAT1350FC1 Cat 1350 F: 54" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$5,087.00
FALCAT1500FH Cat 1500 F: 60" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$5,325.00 * This is the unit I have
FALCAT1800FH Cat 1800 F: 71" Shredder w/ Fixed Hitch \$5,510.00
FALCAT1500SPH Cat 1500 SP: 60" Shredder w/ Adjustable Hitch \$5,417.00
FALCAT2100FH Cat 2100 F: 83" Shredders w/ Fixed Hitch \$5,893.00
FALCAT1800SPH Cat 1800 SP: 71" Shredder w/ Adjustable Hitch \$5,827.00
FALCAT2100SPH Cat 2100 SP: 83" Shredder w/ Adjustable Hitch \$6,249.00

See all the various [Falc Shredders for comparisons here](#)

Here is [a nice explanation of the Falc models](#) via an Australian reseller.

My flail is a fixed mount which means it runs directly behind the tractor and can be made to offset slightly, but that is a manual adjustment and a pain in the butt while you are actively mowing and I don't do it and I just go back and clean those areas not reached up as needed. If you are going with a flail, spend the extra money and consider an offset unit or a hydraulic assisted adjustable unit which will allow you to reach in and out of the trees as you mow through your orchard better.

Every mower has its place. The flail mower will go through just about everything you can throw at it, but it is also the most expensive and you pretty much need 30HP minimum to run them. If you end up with a 50HP or larger class tractor you will be able to run a much larger class of Flail too, if that would be useful. Many of the offset styles require a higher PTO HP. Be sure to marry the size of the tractor with the PTO driven implements you plan to use.

[Gopher Hill Apples](#)

Zone 8 in California

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[Paul Weir](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

January 21, 2017 12:40AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 187

Want to add I fully agree with Michael on the slope and rock outcropping issue being a huge game changer in this topic.

If you have these, buying a tractor solely for mowing, or even primarily for mowing, would be a waste of money, in my opinion.

I think your idea of renting someone else to mow (try before you buy) and focusing on your BCS is the best near term plan.

Slow and steady wins the race, think ahead and spend your orcharding money wisely

Good luck Ethan!

[Gopher Hill Apples](#)

Zone 8 in California

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[Francis Brabant](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

February 09, 2017 09:01PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 11

Regarding rocks and such, the flail mower is pretty forgiving, especially with blades. Hammers are VERY resistant but will break apart at some point.

This year, I broke many hammers @ 45 \$ each. Not a happy camper. I did replace most of them with the least damaged hammers from my previous set. Those mower cannot run with a missing hammer. The vibration is unreal!

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[Ethan Gouge](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

February 10, 2017 03:59AM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 36

So hammers are more fragile than blades? I wouldn't have guessed that. How would you rate the durability verses a bushing?

Roan Highlands Farm 6b, Roan Mountain, TN elevation: 3200 ft.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Paul Weir](#)

[Re: Flail Mower](#)

March 25, 2018 04:54AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 187

Hi Ethan,

Just realized that this question never got answered.

Hammers are definitely not as fragile as blades. Go hammers if you have any brush and potential rockcrops that might sneak into your mowing areas from time to time

Flail mower is absolutely the way to go in brushy & rugged county

[Gopher Hill Apples](#)

Zone 8 in California

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