



## Heavy duty weed-wacker VS push on flail mower for understory in older trees

Posted by [Fabio Chizzola](#)

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[Fabio Chizzola](#)

[Heavy duty weed-wacker VS push on flail mower for understory in older trees](#)

August 02, 2017 02:22AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 35

I saw a picture Michael put on his second Apple Grower book of his daughter "posing" with a push-on brush mower thru the orchard.

We have around 400 old and big trees and we have been cutting the grass under with a heavy duty weed-wacker where my offset (1 foot) brush hog doesn't get to. Using the weed-wacker has some pros, but the cons of changing the string so many times and taking such a long time to finish are making me think I might have the wrong piece of equipment.

Looks like best company for a push brush mower is BCS.....but before i dive into spending more money, wanted to ask whoever has experience with these machines a few questions:

1. how is the maneuverability of the BCS machines? I would have to go around a tree with hanging branches, is it doable with a machine like this? This is my biggest concern.
2. are these machine worth the money to just cut the grass under my big trees? or I should just stay where i am with the weed-wacker?

Thank you.

Fabio

[Westwind Orchard](#)

Zone 5b in New York

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Heavy duty weed-wacker VS push on flail mower for understory in older trees](#)

August 02, 2017 03:43PM

**Moderator**

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

I have had a BCS walking tractor for like 20 years. I use the brush mower attachment everywhere on the farm. I actually gave my sickle bar attachment to Josh (as these can *rattle you to death* and here, with so many rocks, I had to constantly replace teeth). I also have the Berta flail mower attachment, which is fantastic and better than the flail that BCS offers. I use the flail mostly in the market gardens to manage cover crops but have gone in on my flatter tree ground and it's worthy for pulverizing fallen leaves. I highly recommend [Earth Tools](#) in Kentucky for getting BCS equipment, even at a distance. Joel Dufour is the man for quality service and the best implement line (and a [business sponsor](#) of our grower's network to boot.) I've gotten my BCS equipment from Joel ever since my first machine, when I traded up to the 853 professional model.

As far as hanging branches go: You don't so much go around the tree as "dart back and forth" radially, using reverse to back out and then move to a good angle for mowing down the swath under the next branch. It's the one option for me on this hilly terrain beyond the trusty ol' scythe. I like how I can choose which plants to take down, while leaving others like comfrey as living mulch. There's a learning curve to handling the BCS, just like anything.

Lastly, all should know that my daughter never ever ran this machine, she was just happy to help her dad with a photo op for the second orchard book.

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 08/04/2017 02:44PM by Michael Phillips.

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[Josh Karp](#)

[Re: Heavy duty weed-wacker VS push on flail mower for understory in older trees](#)

August 07, 2017 04:09PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 18

Hi Fabio - Michael was clearly trying to kill me with the 'gifting' of his old sickle-bar attachment. I bolted it on and enthusiastically went out to work. An hour later, my hands and wrists were numb from the vibrations, and I realized these things are best given away to unsuspecting friends.

I have since discovered the 'double-acting' sickle bar mower from Earth Tools, which costs 2x as much as the single acting one but has virtually no vibration & is super awesome, I use it all the time. The single acting ones are truly terrible, please, no one waste their money on them.

PROS: It cuts a 4' swath (much faster than a 2' rotary mower), you can get a 6' also but wouldn't work for me since I'm also mowing between closely-

planted berries..but if you had big areas to cover, imagine how fast you could mow with a 6' pass. The BCS unit (or Grillo which I bought b/c \$1k cheaper) can offset it's handlebars to one side so the operator can be somewhat out of the way of branches, while the mower sneaks underneath a bit. & with the reach of a 4' bar you can get under the trees very effectively.

CONS: Unfortunately it is fairly easy to hit trees with this if you're not really careful...so be extremely careful using this setup on young plantings. I actually cut a 1" apple tree down, it cut it clean through. (ouch..) But for older, bigger trees, not really an issue..they can take an occasional hit.

This is a hay mower, lays down the grass clean-cut at the base..does not chop it up at all. This may be a pro or con, depending on your situation.

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