

The Memo

A Newsletter for members and friends of the
Roseville Historical Society.



The Scythe

All about the best cutting-edge tool ever
(Excerpts from Farmers Almanac by Janet Wallace)

"There was never a sound beside the wood but one, and that was my long scythe whispering to the ground."

-Robert Frost, American poet (1874-1963)

THE SCYTHE, an ages-old tool for mowing grass, is enjoying new popularity as a truly "green" machine.

Typical new adopters of this ancient exercise are farmers who have 2 acres of hay or 5 acres of pasture or a field of grain to cut for personal use. The tool is a multitasker: It is useful both for mowing a lawn or hay and for whacking weeds. It is quiet, does not require fossil fuels, and emits no exhaust.

The Romans introduced the scythe to Europeans as a tool for cutting grass during the 12th and 13th centuries. By the 16th century, the scythe had replaced the sickle (a curved metal blade with a short handle) for gathering crops.

Early settlers brought the scythe to North America, but the art of making a scythe seems to have been lost in the journey. In Europe scythe blades had been hammered by hand. In the New World, they were stamped out of sheets of steel and then sharpened by grinding. Today, many descendants of early Austrian, German, Dutch, and Scandinavian users prefer the scythe to mechanical tools.

(Con't page 4)



Eugene Richter demonstrates
scythe use

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