

## A Cut Above the Rest

by Lewis Edwards

*Posted: June 26, 2008*



*Ricky Powell of RFCC grinds a petrified oak tree with a Gyro-Trac GT-25 heavy-duty mulcher.*

When Darla Shiver, a landowner in Jacks Branch, Florida, needed an 8-foot-diameter petrified oak tree removed from his property and more than 7,000 feet of fence line cleared, he figured the job would require a brushcutter for the fence. But he didn't have a clue what to do about the oak tree.

Shiver called in a tree removal specialist to bid the job, but when the specialist discovered that the tree was a virtual rock, the price of the job became astronomical. So, Shiver called around for other bids. He learned from his daughter that a small site-prep and land-clearing business was located about 10 miles down the road. RFCC Inc., it turned out, had the experience and the equipment to tackle the job.

### Skepticism at the Site

Ricky Powell has been running RFCC Inc. for more than nine years. The site-prep, right-of-way and land-clearing company staffed by him, his wife, Fay, and their sons, Clay and Cody, operates out of Molino, a small town in Florida's panhandle. Their fleet consists of two ASV RC-100 skid steers with Gyro-Trac 500HF quick-attach cutter-heads, a Bobcat T300 compact track loader with a US Mower mulching head and a Gyro-Trac GT-25 heavy-duty mulcher.

At Shiver's property, Powell was met with skepticism. Shiver had never seen a mulcher like Powell's before and didn't believe Powell could cut down the petrified oak tree with it. "He looked at my Gyro-Trac and looked at that tree, and he told me he would pay just to watch me try!" Powell says.

Powell, who has been in the site preparation business for more than 30 years, knew the 8-foot-thick oak was not an unusual size for his mulcher. "I've cut trees a lot bigger than this," he says. "I knew it wasn't going to be a problem."

His solution for safely grinding bigger trees like the one on Shiver's property is the planar tooth cutter-head on his Gyro-Trac mulcher. The planar teeth slice through trees like a chainsaw, creating fine, potentially reuseable mulch. The Gyro-Trac cutter-head is also designed with a patented spiral pattern, which has guide ribs between the teeth to prevent the operator from "bouncing on the board," or binding the head on a tree.



*In the panhandle of Florida, RFCC Inc. operates as a family business with a small fleet that maximizes site-clearing power.*

The planar tooth cutter-head is one feature that led Powell to choose the Gyro-Trac brand of mulcher. He had looked at various mulching machines for more than a year before deciding to purchase a Gyro-Trac. "I went all the way up to Edmonton, Alberta looking for the right mulcher/tree grinder," he says about his search.

He had used mulchers with various types of teeth, including carbide heads, but has since opted against the use of a carbide head because of safety concerns. "I really love the planar teeth [of the Gyro-Trac]," he says. "Carbide teeth will grab a chunk of wood and throw it a mile. When you are in a suburban area where you have kids playing in the woods and [they] want to stand around and watch what you're doing, carbides become too much of a liability."

In addition to the planar teeth, Powell appreciates the Gyro-Trac's ease of maintenance in the field, as well as its ability to work in wet areas. "For the woods, they don't come any better," Powell says. "It's the baddest thing you'll ever see."

## **Grinding Away**

Powell's heavy-duty equipment proved to be perfectly matched for the removal of the oak on the Jacks Branch property. "It took about an hour and twenty minutes to cut it, eat it and grind it flush to the ground," Powell says. When he was done, there was nothing left but a bed of mulch. Shiver was blown away. "He was just amazed!" Powell says.

The speed and ease of downing the oak led to more tasks on Shiver's property. "I cut it so fast," Powell says, "[that] Shiver asked me to take down a bunch of his pecan trees. I drove my Gyro-Trac around, ground the pecans down, then went over and cleared more than 7,000 feet of fence line."

## **Helping Out to Make a Living**

RFCC's efficient efforts are paying off for the family business. "If we weren't making money, I wouldn't be here today," Powell says. "Nobody's getting rich right now, but we're making a good living." He says the members of his family are "like pieces of the puzzle."

"We all do our part," he says. "My wife does all of the paperwork, Cody takes care of maintaining the machines, and Clay and I do the site-prep work. Sometimes I go in and tinker around with a machine while Cody's out, and he'll come and help us on a jobsite. We're all here to help each other."

RFCC also takes on "small jobs all the time for people in the area who just need a stump ground up or a tree mulched up," Powell says. "We don't ever charge them

because it's the right thing to do."

This whole-hearted approach to business ultimately pays off for Powell and his family. "We get 90 percent of our business from normal everyday people ... and people know people. If you help one person today, that person may know two people that could give you business tomorrow. That's the way we work, and I wouldn't have it any other way," Powell says proudly.

## **Manufacturer Information**

ASV, [www.asvi.com](http://www.asvi.com)

Bobcat, [www.bobcat.com](http://www.bobcat.com)

Gyro-Trac, [www.gyrotrac.com](http://www.gyrotrac.com)

US Mower, [www.usmower.com](http://www.usmower.com)

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