



Fire truck is designed so it can be pulled forward while the water hose is working to move with the blaze.

“Half-Price” Fire Truck Built By Local Firm

The Rochester, Ill., fire department saved at least half the cost of buying a new “brush fire truck” by having it built at a local fabricating shop, rather than ordering it from a factory.

Not only did they save money but the truck they got does a lot more than commercial models, says Rochester Fire Chief Jerry Moore. “We spent \$56,000 for the truck. A similar commercial rig would have been well over \$100,000,” he says.

What’s better about the truck is that water is pumped by a 2-cyl. Italian diesel engine which direct-drives a turbine pump. It’s aligned so the water hose can be attached from the ground at the rear. That means the truck can be pulled forward while the hose is working to move with the blaze.

The Rochester fire department has had a

specialty brush and field fire truck for the past 50 years. Some 70 percent of the department’s fires are field and brush fires. The new truck is a 1999, 550 4-WD Ford with diesel engine. It can be used to spray water out of the back end. It carries 400 gal. of water and can be refilled from a tanker at the scene of the fire.

The truck was built by Trotters Inc., of Buffalo, Ill., a company that normally builds farm equipment.

“We avoided the chrome and frills that are on commercial trucks and came up with a truck that is all business,” Moore says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jerry Moore, Rochester Fire Department, 401 E. Main, Rochester, Ill. 62563 (ph 217 498-9419).



“Rope Along” can be used between two pieces of rope of any length, making it handy for all kinds of winching jobs.

New “Come-Along” Works With Rope

You can use this new “Rope Along” with any length of rope. That means it can be used on a wide variety of jobs, including almost anything you would ordinarily use a winch for, says the distributor, Dakota Sales.

The company says it’s lighter and faster than conventional come-alongs which must be used with cable or wire. And you’re not limited by length.

In effect, the Rope Along can be used as a winch for all kinds of towing jobs. It lets you use any ordinary rope to tie down loads.

Available in two sizes – the “Little Brute”, which sells for \$59, and the “Big Brute”, which sells for \$79.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dakota Sales, 7560 153rd Ave. SE, Wyndmere, N.Dak. 58081 (ph 800 260-9944 or 701 439-2860; Web site: www.dakotasales.com).



Rope wraps around spool on tool, held tightly by “grab” ratchets (above). Tool can also be used like a conventional “come-along” to secure big loads (below).



He Built His Own Composting Machines

By Jim Ruen

Composting can work miracles when it’s done right. Just ask Ken Soda and his sons, Kevin and Steve, who once made 400,000 lbs. of dead carp “disappear” for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Sodas raise 300 acres of mint near Princeton, Wis. After processing, they’re left with hundreds of tons of waste material which they dispose of by composting. For the most part, they mix viney mint hay with chicken manure. Once in a while, they get a load of other stuff – like the big load of dead fish.

“When the DNR gave us the fish, we ground it up and added it to the hay. In 36 hours it was all gone, and there was no smell either. As long as there is oxygen in the pile, there are no odors,” says Ken.

When Ken started composting in 1986, he built a pull-type composter by rebuilding a Howard Rotovator. He stripped it down, taking the gearbox bearings and half the 20-ft. shaft. He built a new frame out of 4-in. sq. tubing and hung the shaft from it.

Starting from the center, two rows of teeth spiral out and away such that when the beater is turning, it pulls the compost material in and fluffs it up and over the top into a windrow.

Every four inches on the shaft, he welded 3-in. wide steel teeth to form a 20-in. dia. beater. Each tooth was mounted in line with the shaft; however, the end was heated and twisted perpendicular to the shaft to form a

paddle effect. Soda then reinforced the teeth with 2-in. wide, 1/4-in. thick steel strap.

After several years, Soda sold his pull type unit and built a self-propelled unit. He tore apart a Highboy sprayer and rebuilt it using the front wheels, frame, motor and hydrostatic rear wheel drive. He fitted it with a 12-in. dia. shaft and 4-in. wide, 1/2-in. thick steel teeth, welded to the shaft and protruding out from it by 5 in. This made the drum 22 in. in dia. overall. The platform is 112 in. wide, allowing it to straddle the row better. The beater, like the drive wheels, is powered by hydrostatic motors on each end, driven in series. The beater moves up and down on hydraulic-controlled arms that extend down from the frame. This allows the machine to enter or exit a pile at any point.

“We had to seek out a lot of advice from people who understood hydraulics,” says Soda. “You can get heat buildup and have to equalize pressure between the pump and the motors you are driving.”

Although Soda admits having to rebuild the drives on the hydraulic motors, perhaps because of a torque differential between them, he says the composter works great. Each year, he and his sons produce approximately 1,000 tons of “black gold” with which they enrich their sandy upland soils.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ken Soda, 10928 County Road J, Princeton, Wis. 54968 (ph 920 295-3171).



Soda built this self-propelled composting machine by rebuilding a Highboy sprayer.



This pull-type composter was built out of a Howard Rotovator and is equipped with a 20-in. dia. beater. He used the same design on self-propelled composter shown above.