



Blair made a center discharge 38-ft. cutting table and mounted it on front of his Ford bi-directional tractor.

Swather "Expert" Builds Big Cutting Tables

When crops are light, you can find yourself doing a lot of running across fields with the combine to pick up just a little grain.

Grain producers who swath their crops can throw a couple of swaths together, but even then, there still may not be enough material to properly load the combine.

Merle Blair, Youngstown, Alberta, says that over the years, his father, Cecil, tried several different methods to solve that problem. "As long as I can remember, Dad has been looking for ways to modify machinery to make it more efficient or use less manpower to operate," he notes.

Decades ago Blair combined three self-propelled 30-ft. swathers into one 90-ft. unit that required three operators to work together. In 1980, he made a 52-ft. swather table that mounted on a single power unit. Then, in the late 1980's, the Blairs built an 80-ft. swather that mounted on front of a Massey 760 combine with the feederhouse removed. It worked great but in the early 1980's, they switched to direct-cutting and the swather became obsolete.

That's when Blair got the idea of using the swather components to make a big cutting table to mount on his big Ford bi-directional

tractor. He cut the header apart to make a center discharge 38-ft. cutting table, with a 3-pt. hitch so it could be pushed in front of the tractor. "We used the original knife drive for the left side of this unit and a 'wobble box' from a Deere cutter for the right side," he says. "We were able to incorporate the tractor's hydraulics into this one, and we're using a hydraulic motor instead of V-belts to run the canvasses."

The 3-pt. provides the push, as well as lifting the entire unit up for transport. He wanted to be able to change the angle of the header without lifting the machine off the ground. "We mounted a beam under the tractor, parallel to the swather, to give us a push point, so we could raise the table with hydraulic cylinders," he says.

Blair says that once you've figured out how to modify the swather heads, along with their mechanical drives, you can make one about any width you want. "They all have used the same design, with different methods of mounting them on the different power units," says Blair.

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Gooseneck hitch is 27 ft. long and pulls Juhnke's home-built 18-ft. grain drill.

Gooseneck Hitch Pulls Disk Ahead Of Grain Drill To Eliminate Tracks

"My son Barry and I were having problems with compaction caused by the dual wheels on our 4-WD tractor whenever we planted barley. We solved the problem by building a gooseneck hitch that lets us pull an 18-ft. Deere offset disk ahead of the drill," says Bill Juhnke, Parkston, S. Dak.

The gooseneck hitch is 27 ft. long and was built out of 4 by 6-in., 1/4-in. thick rectangular tubing. It has a house trailer socket on front that attaches to a ball that's mounted on the tractor 3-pt. A pair of hydraulic hoses go through the hitch back to cylinders that are used to raise or lower the drill's lift assist wheels.

They also built their own 18-ft. grain drill by mounting three Deere 6-ft. pony press drills on a steel frame. They bought the drills equipped with square packer wheel shafts and mounted them inside a steel frame that they built out of 4 by 6-in. and 4 by 4-in. rectangular tubing. They used a 4-in. sq., 11-ft. length of tubing to build an axle that

supports the lift assist wheels.

"We also use the drill to plant soybeans in 18-in. rows," says Juhnke. "We bought some plastic feed shut-offs from our Deere dealer and slipped them over the seed metering devices. We leave a pair of 24-in. wide 'skip rows' spaced six feet apart in case we have to drive through the field again after planting in order to spray or cultivate."

"The lift assist wheels are down only when the drill is on the road. In the field they're always up so that the drill's weight is always on the press wheels."

"We paid about \$300 for each drill and spent about \$600 to build the frame that supports them and the gooseneck hitch. We already had the hydraulic cylinders that are used to raise or lower the drill. We also bought about 100 ft. of hydraulic hose for about \$160."

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"Towing mower" pulls behind Barnes's Honda 300 4-wheeler ATV.

Riding Mower Decks Converted Into Low-Cost Pull-Behind Mowers

Bruce Barnes, Girard, Ill., turned a junked-out 54-in. belly mower off a Deere 455 riding mower into an aggressive, low-cost "towing mower" that he pulls behind his Honda 4-wheeler ATV.

"It'll cut grass and weeds up to 3 ft. high with no problems," says Barnes, who operates a welding shop. He uses a Honda 300 4-wheeler ATV to pull the rig.

He got the junked-out riding mower deck free from a local city. He welded a steel frame supporting four castor wheels to the top of the deck, and put a hitch on front. The hitch is designed to flex up and down and also from

side to side, allowing the mower deck to closely follow the ground contour. "The hitch is flexible, yet is rigid enough that I can easily back up the mower without having to watch it all the time," says Barnes. He also bolted on a 12 hp Briggs & Stratton gas engine that belt-drives the deck's three blades.

To lessen the noise coming out of the engine exhaust he rerouted the muffler down underneath the deck.

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Carpeted Garage Combines Luxury With Economy

When Adam and Ruth Schreiner of Westlock, Alberta retired from farming in 1992, they decided to build a house in town. Their goal was to do it as economically as possible.

The couple worked with their children and spouses to completely design and build a tasteful and comfortable home from scratch, hiring out only the electrical, plumbing, heating, flooring and cabinet work. Adam did the framing and helped with the drywalling, and Ruth headed up the painting crew. By doing their own building and finishing, the retired couple was able to complete their 1,200 square-foot home (including an attached two-car garage) for only \$85,000.

Rather than spend \$2,000 to pour a concrete floor in the garage, the couple chose to haul in sand and pack it with a roller. If they picked it up themselves, they were able to get the sand for free from their local cement plant.

However, when they started using the garage they found that too much sand tracked into the house, so they needed to find a solution.

A local shopping mall was doing some renovating and pulled out all of its carpeting. When Adam asked them what they were doing with it, he was told that it was being taken to the dump.

"I asked, if you're just going to throw it out and it's going to go to waste, do you mind if I take some of it, and they said okay," Adam explains. "We laid that carpet in the garage. It worked real well, except that when parking your vehicle, the carpet would push ahead when you stepped on the brake. To solve that problem, I nailed it down with 8 inch eavestrough spikes into the packed sand, which is pretty hard."



Adam and Ruth Schreiner say they couldn't be happier with their carpeted garage. The carpet lays over sand that was packed hard with a roller.

When water drips off wet vehicles onto the carpet, it just soaks down and away into the sand beneath. Every once in a while, the couple vacuums it to pick up the dirt that accumulates from their vehicles' tires.

The carpet gives their garage a cozy and luxurious look and makes the neighbors think they must be pretty well off to afford carpeting their garage floor.

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