Walk-Behind Rototiller Mounts On Tractor 3-Pt.

"It's a lot easier than using it by hand," says Roger Leitzen, St. Peter, Minn., who recently called FARM SHOW to tell us how he mounted his walk-behind rototiller on back of his 16 hp Ariens garden tractor.

Leitzen didn't want to till by hand any more but he didn't want to spend the money on a tractor-mounted tiller. He also wanted to be able to use the tiller by hand when necessary.

So he made brackets to mount the hand tiller on the tractor's 3-pt. The tiller faces backward, with the handles up alongside the driver so the clutch and throttle are within easy reach.

Leitzen runs the tractor in reverse, driving backward very slowly. The rototiller's wheels serve as depth gauge wheels, and the 3-pt.'s top link controls the angle at which the blades enter the ground (a threaded rod with an I-bolt on each end connects a crossbar between the rototiller handles to the top link). He used 1/4-in.thick flat metal to build the mounting frame, which fastens to the 3-pt. with two pins and two bolts.

"It works so well that I don't even have to look back as the rototiller works," notes Leitzen. "Because the tractor is hydrostatic driven, the 3-pt. is able to apply uniform down pressure to the tines.

"Some people have asked me if I could reverse the direction of the tines so I could drive forward. However, if I turned the tines around, their cutting edge would be on back instead of on front. The only way to resolve that problem would be to change the direction of the shaft.

Leitzen 3-pt. mounted his walk-behind rototiller facing backward on his 16 hp Ariens garden tractor. To operate the rototiller he runs the tractor in reverse.

"If I want, I can quickly remove the rototiller from the tractor and use the machine as a conventional walk-behind model."

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Tree Planter Made From Scrap Parts

With 16 acres of Christmas trees, Gary Albertson has plenty of use for a reliable tree planter. But when he needed a new one, he was reluctant to put out the kind of cash it would take to buy one.

Instead, Albertson, who also operates a welding shop in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, figured he could build his own for a lot less money.

He started with the main beam from an old pull-type plow. He stripped off everything but the shank. Then he built a frame and 3-pt. hitch for the beam and mounted a 20-in. coulter he bought at a local farm supply store in front of the shank.

He made wings to open a furrow from a 20 by 16-in. sheet of 1/4-in. steel by cutting it in half from opposite corners, to make two triangles. "I heated them and bent them into a curved wing shape and then welded them to the plow shank, just about an inch up from the tip," he says.

Behind the shank, he attached two 480 by 8-in. pneumatic trailer tires on wheels. "I found them in a junkyard. The axle was bent, but I needed only the stub shafts. I welded the stub shafts to the side of the tree planter, one on each side, tilted at about 30 degrees in at the bottom, to make press wheels to push the soil back in and firm it up around the seedlings," he says. Because the press wheels are welded to the planter, they act as gauge wheels and never let the shank go too deep.

Using scrap steel he had on hand, he built two adjustable seat mountings to support a couple of plastic bucket boat seats he bought at Wal-Mart. He made foot rests for the two riders from heavy gauge welded wire panels. On the frame in front of the seats, he mounted brackets to hold four 5-gal. plastic buckets. He made the brackets using old clutch bands he found in the junkyard that were just the right diameter to hold the buckets.

"Older tree planters had steel boxes for the seedlings. When we get trees in, we put them in a solution in 5-gal. buckets until we plant them. That always meant we had to take the trees out of the buckets and put them in the box on the planter. It takes time, it's messy, and the roots didn't always stay moist. This way, we just put four buckets on the planter and go. And there's nothing to clean up when we're finished," he says.

By itself, Albertson's tree planter weighs only about 300 lbs. He pulls it with a 25-hp four-wheel-drive diesel tractor, but says a similarly powered two-wheel drive could probably handle it. "With our hilly terrain, we've found the four-wheel drive tractor helps us get up and down hills and make straighter rows," he notes.

Tree planter is built on the main beam of an old pull-type plow. It's equipped with two plastic bucket boat seats and brackets to hold four 5-gal. plastic buckets.

He says a crew of three (a driver and two people on the planter) can easily set 4,000 seedlings a day. And he believes it could be used for transplanting a number of other perennials and annuals like onions and vegetables.

He figures the planter cost him less than $200 in new materials and parts, but most of what he used was from the scrap pile and the junkyard. He guesses it took 30 hours or so to put it all together.

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Old Schoolbus Converted Into Handy Flatbed Truck

"We use it for hauling everything from our weigh wagon to bulk seed boxes to water tanks. We can do a lot more with it than we could with an ordinary flatbed truck," says Jim Klassen, Benson, Minn., who converted an International Harvester 65-passenger bus into a flatbed truck complete with a traveling office.

Klassen is a seed dealer and also does yield checks on corn for area farmers who grow test plots. His converted "bus truck" has a big cab with a countertop at the back that supports a computer and printer. They're powered by a 12-volt converter wired to the bus's battery and are used to record and print test plot results. There's also a diamond plate steel toolbox on one side of the cab that's used to store grain testing equipment.

To convert the bus, he cut 22 ft. out of the middle of the body, moving the back section up to create a 5-ft. work area behind the driver's seat. He also cut off about 4 ft. of the frame that extends behind the rear wheels. He bought a used truck flatbed 8 1/2 ft. wide and 20 ft. long. He bolted it onto the frame and bolted a 2-in. receiver hitch onto the back.

"I use it all year long," says Klassen, who hired Klassen Repair of DeGraff, Minn., to do the work. "The bus's 9-liter, V-8 diesel engine and Allison automatic transmission were in good shape, and the bus had good tires and a new battery and brakes. My total cost was about $3,000. I couldn't have bought a commercial flatbed truck in the same good condition for that price.

"I use the bus truck during spring to deliver seed to farmers. I pull a trailer behind with a forklift on it, then load bulk seed boxes and pallets of seed on the flatbed. In midsummer I use the rig to haul water and chemicals to our field sprayers.

"During harvest the bus truck is used to yield check corn and soybean plots for area farmers. I remove the wheels from my Pioneer weigh wagon and bolt it onto the flatbed. This puts the wagon about 3 ft. higher, which makes it easier for the combine to unload into it. I mounted lights on back of the cab so I can work at night.

"I made about 60 on-farm test plot yield measurements last fall. The mini office lets me provide the farmer with computer-generated printouts of his test plots before I leave the field. I use the rear emergency door while sampling and grading each hybrid. I just walk out onto the flatbed to get a sample while the farmer harvests the next hybrid. The cab has good interior lights and stays warm and quiet even on cold, windy days. It works better than trying to use a laptop computer and a printer inside a pickup, because it's handier and less dirty."

Jim Klassen converted an IH 65-passenger bus into a flatbed truck complete with a traveling office. He uses the "bus truck" during spring to deliver seed to farmers.

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