Utility Vehicle Built For Less Than $500

A Wisconsin farmer says his home-built utility vehicle was inexpensive to make and works as well as anything on the market.

"I got the inspiration after my dad bought a Deere Gator a few years ago. I wanted one, too, but I didn't want to spend the money so I converted a Subaru pickup," says David Miller, of Pickett. "I based the design on a Kawasaki Mule, My total cost was less than $500."

He started with a 1987 Subaru Brat 4-WD pickup which he bought from a friend for $125. He stripped it down to the 4-cyl. gas engine, 4-speed transmission, brakes, steering, and coil spring suspension system. A new frame was fabricated from 2-in. sq., 3/16-in. wall tubing. He replaced the original wheels with larger (26.5 by 1400-12) turf tires, and he made 5-in. wide spacers in order to adapt the new four-bolt wheels to the original five-bolt pattern. He cut 12 in. out of the driveshaft to fit the shorter, 72-in. wheelbase.

A 44 by 54-in. hydraulic dump box mounts on back. The box is lined with a sheet of 1/4-in. thick white plastic. A 12-volt power pack operates a pair of hydraulic cylinders that raise and lower the box.

Dump box is raised and lowered by a pair of hydraulic cylinders that operate off a 12-volt power pack.

A hood was fashioned out of broken plastic panels from a Pepsi vending machine. The side panels hinge on the bottom and swing out for easy access to the engine.

Miller added a roll cage with a cargo light on back and headlights on front. The machine has two seats that flip forward for access to the rig's gas tank and battery. To make the shrouding around the base of the seat and the top of the hood he used plastic off the front part of a pop vending machines. There's a drawbar hitch on back.

David Miller started with a 1987 Subaru Brat 4-WD pickup and ended up with a utility vehicle. "I use it for hauling rocks, dirt and wood, pulling wagons, and so on," he says.

"I use it for hauling rocks, dirt, and wood, pulling wagons, and so on. The box has a 1,500-lb. load capacity," says Miller.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, David Miller, W11215 Zoar Rd., Pickett, Wis. 54964 (ph 920 589-6936).

Home-Built Deere Utility Vehicle

Stanley Byerly needed a little utility vehicle to haul things like grass clippings, leaves, and tools around his New Salisbury, Indiana, farm.

He had a dumping yard trailer and an old Deere model 72 front deck riding mower, so he decided to put the two together.

To make the machine, Byerly first removed the deck from the front of the old mower and shortened the remaining frame so the operator's seat is slightly behind the drive axle. He replaced the original 8-hp motor with a 10 hp Briggs & Stratton.

Then he coupled the remade power unit to the trailer tongue with an articulated steering joint that also allows the trailer to flex from side to side. "It's like a universal joint - or maybe half a universal joint," he says. "If I were doing it over, I might just use half a universal joint instead."

Big articulated tractors have hydraulic cylinders at the articulation point. Byerly didn't see a need for that. Instead, he fashioned a manual form of articulated steering using a rod that pulls or pushes on the joint.

He says nearly everything he used to make the utility vehicle came from the junk pile. He used a steering wheel from an H Farmall and a steering gear from a Fordson Major Diesel. The seat he salvaged from an old Murray riding lawnmower.

In order to make the trailer and the mower the same height, he put the hubs from an old Bolens lawn tractor, along with the wheels and 12-in. tires, on the trailer. With the bigger wheels and tires, he needed more clearance, so he raised up the trailer body by removing it from the frame and setting it back on top of some 4 by 4-in. wood blocks. Remounted this way, the trailer still works the same. "I didn't have to change anything about the way the trailer dumps," he says.

The only real cost to make the machine was his own time.

To make his utility vehicle, Stanley Byerly joined a dumping yard trailer to an old Deere 72 front deck riding mower.

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Splitter consists of a 10-ft. long, steel I-beam with a fixed push plate at one end.

Skid Steer Splitter Handles Giant Logs

"It lets me use my skid steer loader to split logs up to 46 in. long and any diameter. Works fast and you never have to get out of the cab," says David Miller, Pickett, Wis., about his hydraulic-operated log splitter. It quick-taches to universal mounting brackets and operates off the loader's hydraulics.

The splitter consists of a 10-ft. long steel I-beam with a fixed push plate at one end. A splitting wedge slides back and forth on a pair of steel rollers, powered by a big 6-in. dia., 3-ft. stroke hydraulic cylinder.

A 10-in. wide, 14-in. high "spacer block" at one end of the beam can be used to split shorter pieces of wood. The metal block reduces the opening to 36 in. The block is hinged at the bottom and rests at an angle behind the I-beam. He can flip it up into place by tipping the loader arms.

After splitting the wood, Miller can also use the machine to pick up the split pieces and haul them away.

If he wants he can remove the splitter from the skid loader and set it on steel legs or on a wagon rack or truck bed. He hooks up the splitter hoses to any hydraulic source and uses a separate valve to operate the cylinder.

"It has a lot of power. I've used it to split logs up to 5 ft. in diameter with no problems using a New Holland skid loader equipped with a 65 hp diesel engine," says Miller. "I built it because I have a home-built wood stove that's 4 ft. wide and will take a 50-in. long log. I triple plated each side of the I-beam with 1/4-in. thick steel for extra strength.

"It didn't cost a lot to build. The I-beam was scrap metal, and the cylinder came off an old garbage truck. I spent about $70 on hydraulic hoses and valves. My total cost was only about $300."

Unit can split logs up to 46 in. long and any diameter.

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