

Trailer Made From Old Fuel Oil Tank

"It makes a nice trailer that I can pull behind a pickup, 4-wheeler, or garden tractor," says James Jay Stump, Ft. Recovery, Ohio, about the tandem axle trailer he made from a 275-gal. fuel oil tank.

The trailer measures 48 in. wide by 5 ft. long and has a removable gate on back. It's painted Deere green and yellow.

Stump thoroughly rinsed out the tank to remove all residue, then laid the tank on its side and used a sawzall to cut off the top half. The fenders were fashioned from the cut-off piece of the tank. The trailer's four 8-in. wheels came off a boat trailer, while the tandem axles were made from axles off small cars. He removed the brake drums and cut 18 in. out of each axle to shorten them up, then welded the axles solid to the frame. Angle iron was welded onto the top edges of the tank to reinforce it.

On front of the tank is a metal bracket that can accept two different kinds of tongues; one with a height adjustable drawbar and the other

with a ball hitch. Either tongue can be replaced by simply pulling a pin.

There's a small toolbox and jackstand on front of the tank, and a metal bracket at each corner for installing pipe stake sides. A slow moving vehicle sign on back, along with reflective tape on both sides, make the trailer safe for pulling down the highway.

"It looks nice and pulls easy behind a pickup. I hardly even know it's back there," says Stump. "I've taken it to antique tractor shows for display. At home my kids hook it behind their 4-wheeler and take it to the woods to gather maple syrup or to collect pumpkins and so forth. They've even ridden in it in parades, where I pull it behind a bigger Deere tractor. I made some brackets for mounting a pair of seat benches inside the trailer."

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"It looks nice and pulls easy behind a pickup, 4-wheeler, or garden tractor," says James Stump about the trailer he made from a 275-gal. fuel oil tank. Trailer has a removable gate on back, and a small toolbox and also a jackstand on front.



Just A Pinch Grows Tomatoes Tall

You've never seen tall tomatoes until you've seen Charles Wilber's. One cherry tomato plant reached 28 ft. 7 in. tall. They not only grow tall, they produce lots of fruit. Four plants produced 1,368 lbs. of tomatoes to earn a cover picture on the *Guinness Book of Records*. Pinching back suckers was a vital part of how he did it.

In his book, *How to Grow World Record Tomatoes*, the Alabama gardener describes his pruning plan, as well as planting, watering and all-organic plant feeding techniques. The garden consultant uses 3-ft. diameter cages. His pruning technique makes it work.

"Suckers, if allowed to grow, become full-fledged stems, which in turn will send off suckers, which in turn will send off more suckers, forking again and again," says Wilber. "If these suckers are pinched off, the stem can be trained to grow straight up the cage."

Some gardening experts suggest pinching off many suckers and fruit clusters because the plant can't support them. Wilber's strategy, with his well-fed plants, is rather to selectively pinch suckers that grow from the crotch between leaf and stem, but not the fruit clusters that grow from the stem. This produces the maximum height, encouraging fruit production.

"The plant can climb to the top of the cage and then spill over and come back down, or a second cage can be set atop the first," says Wilber.

His ideal plant has 18 branches. The lower 6 branches are allowed to split once for a total of 12 branches. The top two branches are allowed to split three ways each for a total of 6 branches. As each branch develops, it is

led to the outside of the cage and trained to grow upward. Suckers that grow on the 18 branches should be pinched off if the branch is weak.

"If the branch is strong, allow the sucker to grow until a fruit cluster appears, pinching off new suckers," advises Wilber.

While the pruning removes new leaf growth, it encourages older, larger leaves. Wilber has recorded bottom leaves up to 28 in. long.

Key to proper pruning is to pinch, not cut the suckers, emphasizes Wilber, who advocates using a tweezers to pull off suckers early. Timing is also important. He advocates pinching suckers off before they reach 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 in. long. If they are bigger, pinching will create a wound that bleeds and stresses the plant.

Another important tip is to tie branches loosely to the cage once they reach it. Wilber suggests using soft, three-ply string and attaching the branch to a vertical wire on the cage. As the branch grows upward, continue retying it to vertical wires, pinching off new suckers as they appear. This keeps fruit clusters also on the outside of the cage for easy picking.

While Wilber, now in his late 80s, is no longer taking calls, his book reveals his secrets. It is available from Acres USA for \$14.95.

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Photo courtesy of Acres U.S.A.
Growing tall tomatoes is something Charles Wilber has become very good at by pruning and nourishing his plants his own unique way.

"Swim Noodle" Calf Sling

If you raise cattle long enough, you'll have to deal with "downer" calves who, for one reason or another, can't stand up properly on their own. To help the calves, Ron Aitken figured out how to use a noodle-type swim toy to hold them up.

He cut a 5-ft. long noodle in half and inserted a rope through the hole in both of the half tubes. Then he slid short lengths of PVC pipe over each rope and into the fun noodle, just far enough to prevent the stress of the rope from ripping through the end of the noodle. The rope ends were then suspended from overhead hooks. A pair of rope-type tie-down devices were inserted between the rope ends of the slings and the overhead hooks, allowing Aitken to raise and lower the sling

to suit the size of each calf. The tie-downs (available at any home improvement center) have a friction cam that allows the rope's length to be adjusted, and then hold the rope in one place when under load.

"It's an inexpensive solution to the problem," says Aitken. "The fun noodle distributes the weight of the calf across a softer and wider area than a bare rope, and it has no sharp or narrow edges to cut into the calf's hide. Over time, the sling can be lowered to encourage the calf to bear more and more of its own weight."

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Sling, made from a noodle-type swim toy, holds calf until it can stand up properly on its own. Over time, sling is lowered to encourage calf to bear more of its own weight.