Axe Handle "Saver" Also Splits Wood

Shane Zeiger splits five to eight cords of wood per year by hand, so the chances of his breaking an axe handle are pretty good. Or *were* pretty good, before he came up with a metal axe handle "saver" that eliminated the problem.

"It lets me split a log clean through at a point where the handle is most likely to break," says the Three Forks, Montana man.

The axe handle "saver" consists of a sleeve made from 16 ga. galvanized sheet metal and measures about 8 in. long. Zeiger, who makes his living as a sheet metal worker, used a ballpeen hammer to roll the metal up to make a flange on top, which he then pop riveted together. He also welded a diagonal blade, made from 1/8-in. thick steel with a sharpened cutting edge, onto the bottom of the sleeve. Then he welded the blade to the axe head.

"The cutting blade increases the cutting length of the axe which is important when you split wood, especially wood that doesn't have a straight grain," says Zeiger. "Sometimes as the axe head hits the wood, the handle comes down on a piece of unsplit wood and the weight of the head causes the handle to break off. The blade on my axe handle cuts down through that unsplit wood.

"A new axe handle can cost $20 or more. In the past I tried wrapping wire or duct tape around the handle, but it never would hold. When I made this modification four years ago, I had been breaking one to two handles per year. Since then, I haven't broken a single handle. If the handle ever should break, I would just remove the rivets and open the sleeve a little, then pull the handle out and replace it."

Axe handle "saver" is fitted with a diagonal blade that welds to the axe head. "It lets me split a log clean through at a point where the handle is most likely to break," says inventor Shane Zeiger.

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Ford Pinto Powers Loader Tractor

Dan Knoblich needed a small loader tractor to clean out his barn and move snow, so he built one. His only idea was an image in his head from looking at full-size payloaders.

"I started with 5-in. channel iron for the frame," explains Knoblich. "I used 2 by 4-in. rectangular tubing for the loader arms and built the bucket out of old box car siding."

Working without a plan, he sized the frame to the axles from a GMC truck. The engine platform was designed to handle the engine and transmission from a Ford Pinto.

"I put the engine and transmission in backwards so the transmission faced forward," explains Knoblich. "That made it easier to add a 5 to 1 gear reduction, as it would reverse the direction of the drive with a shaft that went back to the rear end."

He designed the loader arms for 6 ft. so there would be no problem with them extending out beyond the front wheels. The 36-in. uprights for the arms sit just ahead of the driver's seat and midway between the two axles. The cross arm brace also serves as a mounting point for the GMC steering wheel and shaft.

The 24-in. hydraulic lift cylinders were also salvaged from the old GMC. To tip the bucket, Knoblich used a 36-in. cylinder that had been used for a wheelchair lift on an RV.

"The hydraulics are powered by a Ford power steering pump," he says. "I screwed a pipe fitting into the pump where its original reservoir had been mounted. Then I ran a pipe back to a 3-gal. reservoir behind my seat. It's real overkill. I never come close to using that much fluid."

One of the few things Knoblich bought new for the project was a set of valves. Nearly everything else was recycled.

"I had a blast building it," he says. "It took about a year, and I only have about $1,200 in it."

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"I had a blast building it," says Dan Knoblich about his small loader tractor, which he uses to clean out his barn and move snow (above). The engine and trasmission are from a Ford Pinto, and the hydraulics are powered by a Ford power steering pump.

Homemade 2-wheeled fork has four long tines welded onto an angle iron frame. Works great for moving big chunks of firewood.

2-Wheeled Log Fork

"My homemade 2-wheeled fork works great for moving big chunks of firewood," says Ken Voigt, Wausau, Wis.

The fork rides on a pair of plastic wheels and consists of four long tines welded onto an angle iron frame, which is positioned just an inch or so off the ground.

"I just roll the unit up to the firewood, then give the frame a kick to slip the tines under the wood. Then I tip the forks back and go. I built it as lightweight as possible to make it easy to handle."

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Water cannon is often used to pump water out of low spots before planting. Note blast of water shooting out at front of tractor.

Water Blaster Dries Up Field Ponds

A water cannon may be the answer for field ponds. It will eliminate those temporary lakes that slow fieldwork for days or weeks. The big pump can move 1,000 gallons a minute, blasting it across more than four acres in a 190 degree arc for faster drying. Hoses can also be attached to move excess water to nearby drainage.

"Guys in our area use them to pump out the low spots before seeding," says Dave Klassen, Double A Trailers, Two Hills, Alberta, Canada. "They also use them in the summer or fall to rescue crops from ponding caused by a heavy summer rain."

Klassen admits the price of a water cannon can seem hard to justify. However, he also points out that getting a combine or tractor stuck at a busy time of the year can also be expensive. Double A has been making the systems for the past eight years. While the pulleys, pumps and nozzle are off-the-shelf components, Double A makes everything else. Prices fluctuate with steel costs. Two units on hand in mid-November were priced at $33,900 each, but steel has gone up 40 percent since they were made.

Double A's water cannon boom is hinged for a transport length of 83 ft. When pulled to the edge of a water hole, a hydraulic cylinder on the boom pushes it out to its 111-ft. working length. Klassen says the suction end is usually backed into the slough about 70 ft. Once lowered into the water, the mesh-covered intake sits on a 40 by 40-in. platform.

"Some weeds and such do make it through the mesh, but as long as they can be forced out the 2-in. irrigation nozzle, there is seldom a problem," says Klassen.

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