Splitter With "Window" Mounts On Skid Steer

Matt Trelstad likes to see what he's doing, so when he built a log splitter for his skid steer, he built it with a "window". The design not only lets him see what he's doing, it is stronger and more rugged than an I-beam. The design worked so well that he began making and selling them.

"I heat my house with wood and used a stationary splitter for years. But after two hernias, I knew there had to be a better way," he recalls. "I had a skid steer, so I built a splitter using two pieces of channel iron mounted back to back with an 8-in. by 24-in. window in between."

The reinforced channel iron also allows wear pad guides in the middle to support the push plate. In addition, it eliminates the twist and flex common to I-beams.

Trelstad says the design lets him split wood faster than other designs. Mounted on the front of his skid steer, the splitter serves double duty. With fingertip control, he can grab a log or branch and carry it to a pile and drop it. He can even use it to hold the log off the ground while cutting to avoid an accidental dip in the dirt with the chainsaw.

Trelstad makes three large splitters with windows, his Pro Series. He also makes a fourth and smaller splitter with a more traditional I-beam design. The large ones have main beams that range from 80 in. to 9 1/2 ft. in length. The three models have 24, 30 and 36-in. strokes. The 24-in. stroke has a 4-in. cylinder and weight 800 lbs. It sells for $2,695. The 30-in. stroke has a 5-in. cylinder and weight 900 lbs. It sells for $3,195. The 36-in. stroke also has a 5-in. cylinder, but weighs 1,000 lbs. and sells for $3,795.

"All three are extremely heavy duty, even to the extra gussets with 3/8-in. steel plate ahead of the quick attach plate," says Trelstad. "They need to be strong there as that's where all the leverage is."

The working end is a two-stage design with a 12-in. splitter face. The narrower first stage sinks 6 in. into the wood before the wings hit. They spread the log a full 8 in.

"The 12-in. face makes the wedge more aggressive to begin with," says Trelstad. "Pushing the log onto the wedge makes the splitting action even faster."

While the Pro Series is designed for heavy use and fast splitting, Trelstad also offers a smaller and less aggressive splitter. The Warrior follows the more traditional I-beam design. The 80-in. long splitter has a 24-in. stroke with a 4 1/2-in. cylinder. It's priced at $1,695.

Log splitter is built from two pieces of channel iron mounted back to back, with an 8 by 24-in. "window" in between.

"The Warrior can handle large pieces, but it was designed to be really fast at making smaller pieces," says Trelstad. "You have the option of using four-way splitting wings with small logs. If you take the wings off, you can use it on large pieces as well. It just isn't as aggressive as our Pro Series."

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Window design lets Trelstad see what he's doing and is also stronger than a single I-beam.

"No Weight" Rolling ATV Snowblower

Andrew Scibona, Brockport, N.Y., couldn't justify the cost of a new ATV-mounted snowblower. So he built his own using a 1970's Ford snowblower powered by an 11 hp Honda engine that's bolted to a caster-wheeled steel frame between the ATV and the snowblower.

"It works better and faster than I had hoped," says Scibona. "It's very heavy, but there's no weight on front of the ATV which makes the ATV easy to steer at all times. Driving it is like pushing around a shopping cart full of bricks."

The 42-in. wide snowblower was originally designed to mount on front of a Ford LGT lawn tractor. Scibona cut the gearbox off the blower and welded it to the frame that supports the Honda engine. The engine belt-drives the gearbox, which chain-drives the snowblower.

The snowblower came equipped with a long steel bar that went all the way back under the garden tractor and hooked up to the tractor's rear hitch. The bar needed reinforcement so Scibona cut off part of it and welded on a length of 1-in. dia. steel pipe. He also welded a homemade metal frame onto the snowblower and made a motor mounting plate.

The snowblower is activated by pulling on a lever. An electric winch is used to lift it.

A power window motor off an old car is used to swivel the snowblower chute from side to side. The window motor is hooked up to the ATV's battery and is operated by pushing a handlebar-mounted button.

"It's easy to hook up. I just drive the ATV in over the drawbar and hook it up to the hitch on back of the ATV, then hook up two chains on front," says Scibona. "I paid less than $100 for the engine and spent about $50 on steel. My total cost was less than $300."

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Scibona mounted a snowblower on front of his ATV by making a caster-wheeled cart that carries all the weight.

A-Frame Hydroponics Saves Space, Back

A Gro-Max A-frame packs 80 ft. of row space into less than 50 sq. ft. The 8-ft. long, 10 shelf A-frame stands about 7 ft. tall. With the stepped design, not only do you maximize floor space in your greenhouse or your basement, but you maximize light use as well. Best of all, you don't have to bend over to pick.

"Stackable hydroponics use light and space more efficiently and also reduce labor and disease potential," says Barry Goldsher, president, FarmTek. "They can be set up for commercial production inside high tunnels or for personal use inside a basement with grow lights."

The newly introduced units were designed primarily for forced strawberry production. Frame weight limits rule out tomatoes, melons and other tall or heavy production plants. However, that still leaves lots of options.

"You can grow greens, flowers, green beans, herbs, peas and more," says Tracy Cella, Gro-Max specialist. "We expect folks will try lots of different things."

The Gro-Max A-frame shelves are made with 17 gauge galvanized conduit and 18 gauge galvanized roll-form steel with cross bars on every level. The wire shelves are fabricated from 1/8-in. galvanized steel aircraft cable and PolyMax wire stabilizers.

Cella recommends Grodan Grow Slabs or PolyMax Grow Tubes filled with a hydroponics medium such as rock, wool or coir. The basic unit, without growing medium or drip irrigation system, is priced at $369 for a single or $349 for 10 or more.

"You can use our drip irrigation system or design your own system with our drip-fed media-based irrigation components," says Cella. "We have one set up for the 8-ft. long frame that would run $140; however, there may be price fluctuations up or down based on a customer's needs."

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Gro-Max A-frame maximizes floor space by packing 80 ft. of row space into less than 50 sq. ft.