

Poly Tank Deer Stand

"Several years ago our state DNR approved the use of elevated deer stands. So I decided to build a stand that would keep me comfortable while hunting," says John Siefker, Saline, Mich., who turned a 1,200-gal. poly tank into a deer blind. It sets 14 ft. high on top of a tripod wooden frame.

The 7-ft. dia., 6-ft. high tank has a carpeted floor, a swivel chair, a portable heater, and big double hung windows all the way around. A metal ladder provides access.

A neighboring farmer gave him the big water tank. The first thing Siefker did was to cut a door opening and power wash the inside twice to make sure it was clean.

He used three 18-ft. long 4 by 6's to build the tripod stand, connecting them together with metal rods and burying them 3 ft. deep in the ground. The tank is lag-bolted to plywood on top of the legs.

"The tripod frame provides more stability than a 4-sided structure would, and the floor is bolted on tight and carpeted so it's always quiet inside," says Siefker. "With the swivel chair I can see uniformly out through the windows on all four sides," says Siefker.

"It works as good as I had hoped. Three deer were taken from it the first season I put it up," says Siefker. "Most of the time the pilot light on the portable heater is all that's needed to keep me comfortable. I spent about \$80 on the 4 by 6's I bought for the frame. Everything else was salvaged material."

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John Siefker turned a 1,200-gal. poly tank into this low-cost deer blind. It sets 14 ft. high on top of a tripod wooden frame.

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Cargo Van Makes Great Hunting Blind

For less than the cost of a new plastic hunting blind, Jerry McCabe has a 112 sq. ft. hunting blind. Even better, he can pull it into place and pull it home again when he's bagged his deer. The 8 by 14 by 7-ft. tall blind with its wood floor is more like a cabin on wheels than a traditional hunting blind.

"When I saw the cargo van for sale at a local auction yard, I knew I could use the box for a blind," says McCabe. "I figured I could strip the cab and frame down and sell enough parts and scrap to more than cover its cost."

He pulled the van into his shop, cut away the bolts holding the box to the van frame and lifted it off. Once the van was out of the way, McCabe rolled an old wagon gear into place. Two timbers mounted to the running gear provided a solid frame for bolting on the cargo box.

"I had a couple of 4 by 5-ft. picture windows that I had traded for some mechanical work. I had the local lumber yard install them," he says. "I studded up the back doorway with 2 by 4's and filled in the open space with a door and with metal from the sides where the picture windows were installed."

McCabe did buy shooting windows for all four sides, as well as a small wood stove to take the chill off a cold morning. "The stove only cost \$10, but the insulated stove pipe cost me \$120," he says with a laugh.

McCabe also tinted the picture windows so deer wouldn't be spooked by movement inside the rig. The final step was to give it a camouflage paint job, something his wife



To make this slick hunting blind, Jerry McCabe joined a cargo van body to an old wagon running gear.



Hunting blind is complete with a couple of 4 by 5-ft. picture windows and shooting windows on all 4 sides, as well as a small wood stove.

suggested and helped with.

"I won't have \$1,000 in it when I'm all done, and it will last for years," says McCabe. "Some of those hard-sided blinds cost even more, and they barely hold two people. We can have an entire hunting party in this."

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Deer Stand Made From Chopper Wagon

David Hallada's old H&S chopper wagon has found a new life as a mobile deer stand.

The "wagon deer stand" has windows on 3 sides and a door on front, with a new metal roof on top. It's completely self-contained with a kerosene heater, a port-a-potty, and a propane gas stove. It's also insulated and has carpeting on the floor.

"It makes a great wildlife viewing spot," says the Coleman, Wis. farmer. "I can move it wherever I want and stay warm and comfortable. The windows slide up out of the way for shooting. One advantage is that when deer hunting season is over I don't have to tear anything down like I would with

a commercial deer hunting stand. In fact, in the winter it can also be used for ice fishing.

"I got the idea from my wife, when I told her that if I sold the wagon at an auction I would only get about \$200 for it. She asked if the wagon could be converted into a deer stand. I liked the idea and the challenge."

He first removed the entire front end including the beaters and conveyor and framed in a door. He also removed the back end and framed in the windows. The wagon's floor was rotten so he replaced it with a new one. To make a new roof he first made a wooden frame and then screwed metal roofing material onto it.

"My son-in-law, Rob used it during last year's deer hunting season and really liked it," says Hallada. "He slept in it overnight using a mattress on the floor."

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David Hallada's "wagon deer stand" has windows on 3 sides and a door on front, with a new metal roof on top.



Vacuum Harvests Apples Fast

Phil Brown, Mike Rasch and Chuck Dietrich are nearing completion of their apple vacuum. It speeds picking, reduces labor fatigue, and results in less bruising of picked apples.

"Apple picking isn't an easy job," says Brown. "You have to know what you're doing, plus it's strenuous carrying a bag up and down a ladder. With our apple vacuum, we feel a picker can work 25 percent faster and get 30 to 50 percent less bruising than with hand picked."

The partners are in their final year of testing prototypes. They have one at the Penn State University Research Center and another one being evaluated by Michigan State University. Researchers will be gathering data on speed and bruising with different varieties. The Penn State unit will be tested on different self-propelled, orchard work platforms. Meanwhile, the Michigan State unit will be tested on a Brownie, a self-propelled work platform manufactured and marketed by Brown's company, Phil Brown Welding.

The picking unit consists of a self-contained vacuum running off a 20-hp Honda engine. A picker standing in a bucket on the boom of a work platform picks an apple and drops it into a tube that carries it to bins below. Slippery neoprene lined tubes speed

flow, yet protect apple quality. A device called a "singulator" keeps apples from bumping into each other as they approach the end of the hose.

However, it's the decelerator at the bottom of the hose that is key to preventing bruising. The rotating foam rubber wheel catches fast moving apples and rolls them onto a distribution disk with canvas blades. From there they roll gently into the bin. The decelerator unit has an electric eye that gauges the level of apples in the bin and constantly adjusts its own height accordingly.

The picking unit mounts on the popular Brownie workstations. There are more than 800 in use around the country. The Brownie uses planetary drives for its three-wheel, swing boom bucket workstation. Pedals provide hands-free control of the workstation while the operator swings the bucket 12 ft. side to side and up to 12 ft. in the air.

However, Brown says the unit will work with a wide variety of workstations in use around the world. In its Brownie configuration, one worker walks ahead with a tube and picks low hanging fruit. A second worker in a basket picks higher fruit.

Brown and his fellow inventors are confident the unit will work well with any type of



Inventors of the apple vacuum say it lets pickers work 25 percent faster, and results in 30 to 50 percent less bruising than with hand picking.



Pickers drop apples into a vacuum tube (left). Rotating foam rubber wheel at bottom of tube catches apples and rolls them onto a distribution disk with canvas blades (right). From there apples roll gently into a bin.



round fruit or vegetable. While the Brownie by itself sells for about \$15,000, a price has not been established for the picking unit. Phil Brown Welding will be manufacturing and marketing the unit along with about 35 other machines for orchards.

"We are not yet selling to growers," says Brown. "We have had interest from growers

around the world, but we're making sure we have the best materials for longevity."

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