



To save on his back, Le Roy Neeper built this giant leaf bucket that attaches to the bucket on his loader tractor.



He uses his zero turn riding mower to blow leaves into a pile. Then he parks the tractor with the leaf bucket near the pile and pushes the leaves on with his riding mower.

Giant Leaf Bucket Makes Fall Cleanup Easy

“We are dealing with aging gardeners here,” laughs Le Roy Neeper, explaining why he built a giant leaf bucket to attach to his tractor loader. He and his wife, Shirley, take pride in the 4-acre “mini arboretum” with manicured lawn that they have created over the past 38 years. But with the many varieties of trees and shrubs they’ve planted, come huge piles of leaves to clean up every fall.

Neeper blows leaves into a pile with his

zero-turn riding mower. He used to pitch the leaves on a trailer with a fork to haul them away.

Last year he built the big leaf bucket for about \$100 out of 10-ga. metal and angle iron with load binders to secure it to his tractor’s bucket. The base is 6 by 6-ft. with 3-ft. tall sides. Three light angle irons support the bottom and slide under the bucket where they are tightened with load binders.

Neeper parks the tractor with the leaf bucket near the pile and pushes the leaves on with his mower. “Last year I carried out 25 packed loads of leaves.”

By spring, the 10-ft. tall pile of leaves shrinks to about 4 ft. on its way to becoming compost.

Neeper wasn’t sure if the bucket saves time – it still took 40 hours to remove leaves from his Medina, N.Y., lawn – but he knows

it saved his back.

“I’m quite elated about the way this works,” Neeper says.

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Michael Zimmerman buys used ag crawlers from farmers in the Northwest and rebuilds them in his shop for resale, mostly to Mennonites in the Midwest and East who still use steel-wheel tractors.

Demand Growing For Rebuilt Ag Crawlers

Michael Zimmerman likes steel belted ag crawlers from Caterpillar, and so do his customers. Zimmerman says the crawlers have better traction, compact soil less and use less fuel for the same job than wheeled tractors. Over the past 6 years, he and his sons have rebuilt more than 180 ag crawlers.

“We replace tracks, rollers, sprockets and rebuild engines, if needed,” says Zimmerman. “We also install rear pto units if customers want.”

He says they use mostly new parts on tracks, but may turn to the company salvage yard for other components. “We have 7 acres of used crawlers for sale and for parts,” says Zimmerman. “We ship crawlers and parts all over.”

The Zimmermans get their ag crawlers from a buyer in Washington. With the help of Ivan Zimmerman, a Pennsylvania friend with the same last name, they sell crawlers throughout the Midwest and the East.

Most of the units end up with Mennonite farmers who still use steel-wheel tractors. Zimmerman says slippage is even worse with them than with rubber wheeled tractors

in most conditions.

He recalls living in Pennsylvania in the 1960’s when many Mennonites used little ag crawlers with 3-bottom plows. Some used larger crawlers and 4 or 5 bottoms.

As they wore out, it was cheaper to buy a wheeled tractor than repair the crawlers. Much has changed since then, notes Zimmerman.

“Those little ag crawlers didn’t ride as well or have cabs with air conditioning like the ones we have available today,” he says. “These western ag crawlers have lots of power and ride smoother in a field than a wheeled tractor does. You can plow, deep rip, or disk with very little slippage and use less fuel.”

Prices on rebuilt ag crawlers vary from

\$7,500 to \$25,000, depending on size and features. Shipping alone can cost up to \$2,500 each from Washington to the eastern states.

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Simple “Step Up Box” For Tractor

“My homemade tractor step makes getting onto my old Massey Ferguson tractor a lot easier,” says Gale Hill, Muskogee, Okla.

His tractor step consists of a square wooden box, screwed and glued together and open on 2 sides. A 3-ft. long, angled metal “handle” with a hook on top attaches to one side of the box, and a short metal hook attaches to another side.

“I use it to get on and off my 1965 Massey Ferguson 65 tractor. It really saves on my knees,” says Hill. “I just set the box on the

ground under the tractor’s footrest and step up. Once I’m on the tractor seat, I reach down and lift the box up onto the tractor, attaching the short hook on the box to anything that’s convenient. The box is made out of 3/4-in. thick plywood so it isn’t very heavy.”

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Tractor step consists of a square wooden box that sets on the ground, with a pair of metal hooks attached to it.

