Skid loader-mounted tree shear has stationary, V-shaped guide arms on top with a pair of curved metal grapple arms below them. Cutting blades are at bottom.

After tree is cut off, St. John lowers it to the ground for stacking or to cut up with chainsaws.

Grapple-Equipped Shear Cuts And Carries Full-Grown Trees

Cutting and hauling trees away is a fast and easy job for Ross St. John, Ebenezer, Sask., who built a skid loader-mounted "V" cutter tree shear fitted with grapple arms. It lets him cut and haul away trees up to 45 ft. high.

"It works fast. We've cut up to 10 cords of wood in just 3 hrs.," says St. John.

The unit is equipped with stationary, V-shaped guide arms on top. Below them are a pair of curved metal grapple arms that overlap around the tree. The cutting blades are at the bottom. A pair of 4-in. cylinders are used to open and close the blades, and 2 1/2-in. cylinders control the grapple arms. All the cylinders are hooked up in series.

To operate, St. John closes the blades against the tree, which causes the grapple arms to automatically wrap around it. Once that happens the blades automatically cut the tree off at ground level. He then hauls the tree to an opening, where he lowers the tree and tilts the skid loader arms at the same time to lean the tree forward. Opening the grapple arms allows the tree to flop down onto the ground.

"It works slick. I've used it on poplar trees up to 45 ft. tall," says St. John. "Such tall trees can get a little top heavy, so when setting them down I have to be careful the skid loader's rear wheels don't lift off the ground. Most of the trees I cut only have a few dead branches on them, and flopping the tree down on the ground usually breaks them off.

"Commercial tree shears sell for $15,000 or more, but I was able to build mine for less than $5,500 using mostly scrap metal. I used 3 by 8, 3/8-in. thick box iron to build the base and old 1-in. thick by 2-in. wide field cultivator shanks to make the grapple arms. Each arm rotates on a 3/4-in. dia. pin that came with the shank. I got the steel blades from a welder friend who got them free from a local company. The blade was too long for my use so he cut it in half to make 2 blades. I used 1-in. thick metal to reinforce the edges of each blade."

St. John recently had a stroke, which has slowed him down a bit. "I can still build stuff but I'm not too good at using it any more, so my tree shear is now for sale," he says.

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He can cut and haul away trees up to 45 ft. high.

Chicken House Truss Bridge

Ron Wrisinger needed a shortcut to his mailbox, so he built a walking bridge out of chicken house roof trusses. Combined with recycled fence, highline wire and other salvaged parts, he built an impressive bridge, as attractive as it is strong. About the only new parts were native oak used for the flooring.

"It took a lot of donated parts and help from neighbors to complete, but we got it done," says Wrisinger. "Even with new lumber, I have only $250 in it. You could buy new trusses, and it would still be an inexpensive bridge."

Knowing he wanted to build a bridge, a friend offered him 40-ft. trusses from a chicken barn he was tearing down. Wrisinger needed two pair to make the 80-ft. span. He also got the angle iron that had run from the foundation to support the trusses. These he cut up for uprights on the bridge and for crossbars.

Wrisinger butt-welded each pair of trusses and welded the uprights to them about every 6 1/2 ft. He welded 3-ft. lengths of angle iron between the bottoms of the trusses at 4-ft. intervals. Where the span pairs met, he added braces at an angle to the spans and the upright, reinforcing the connection.

Pipes from a friend's recycled cyclone fence were welded to the bottom of the trusses and to the sides of the angle iron uprights to add more support. Longer lengths of pipe were screwed into standard fence connectors and welded to the uprights to form the handrail. To further reinforce the span, Wrisinger ran recycled highline cable through the uprights, end to end.

"I hooked the cable to the uprights at one end and put tensioners on the other end and tightened them up," says Wrisinger. "A friend who is an architect advised me not to go more than 3 ft. wide based on the strength and length of the trusses. He said the narrow width would help avoid side sway."

Wrisinger figured the narrow width would also keep ATV's off the bridge. "Some people down here would drive their ATV's on their mother's grave," he says.

Wrisinger bought native oak for the flooring and treated 2 by 4's for supports underneath the flooring and over the metal crossbars. Even the flooring was a good deal.

"It was reject flooring returned to the local lumber mill and only cost me 10¢ a board foot," he says. "I ran it through my planer to get it to size (1/2-in.). It wasn't kiln dried, but I plan on using asphalt sealer on it with sand sprinkled in it for grip."

"I did all the work in front of my shop and then with the help of a couple of friends, we moved it into place," recalls Wrisinger. "We centered a camping trailer under it and pushed it down until the trailer was in the creek. Then one friend set his truck up on high ground across the creek and hooked on to the bridge with his winch to keep the end up off the bank. At the same time, my other friend pushed it across with his backhoe."

One end of the bridge rests on a concrete stanchion that previously supported a car bridge. "I bolted it down to bedrock," he says. "Neither it nor the bridge are going anywhere."

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Needing a shortcut to his mailbox, Ron Wrisinger built this walking bridge out of two 40-ft. chicken house roof trusses.

Retired Farmer's "Wheelchair"

"I had a lot of antique stuff laying around. I decided to use some of it to make what I call a retired farmer's wheelchair," says Leo Kramper, Dakota City, Neb.

The 3-wheeled, all-steel chair rides on steel wheels and is painted Deere green and yellow.

"I use it around the fire pit in our back yard," says Leo. "We needed an extra chair when family members and friends gather around. It's a reminder of how we used to farm."

The 2-ft. tall wheels in front are off an old hay sweep that was used to feed hay into a stacker. They're connected by an old pipe, which serves as the axle. The seat is off a horse-drawn cultivator, and the small 8-in. wheel on back from a harrow carrier. A metal brace rod extends from the small wheel up to the seat.

"When people come over and I tell them what it is, they start laughing. But they all think it's kind of unique that I'm keeping these parts alive," says Kramper.

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Leo Kramper's 3-wheeled, all-steel chair is built from antique stuff and "is a reminder of how we used to farm."