



Harold Madison used a 50-gal. plastic drum to make a grass catcher for his MTD riding mower. "It holds much more material than anything I could have bought so I don't have to empty it as often," he says.

## Grass Catcher Built From Salvaged Parts

"I wanted to use a grass catcher on my MTD riding mower, but I didn't want to spend the money for a commercial unit. So, I decided to make my own using a 50-gal. plastic drum. It holds much more material than anything I could have bought so I don't have to empty it as often," says Harold Madison, Smiths Grove, Ky.

The grass catcher mounts on back of the mower with one 14-in. long pin. The 50-gal. plastic drum was split lengthwise and expanded with a pair of 1/2-in. thick plywood panels to fit the mower's chassis. It has a total capacity of about 95 gal.

"I built it entirely from salvaged parts. A comparable commercial bagger would sell for about \$400 and would be smaller and more difficult to mount and remove from the mower," says Madison.

The 7-in. dia. plastic tube that leads from the mower deck up into a hole in the hinged plastic cap was salvaged from an old grass catcher, as was the cap. The bin has a 13 1/2-in. wide sliding door on back of it that allows easy access for unloading.

He attached a metal frame to the front part of the drum and then used 1/8-in. steel plate to make 4 mounting brackets, 2 upper and 2 lower, that attach the bin to the tractor. Slots in the lower brackets fit over the 5/8-in. rod at the bottom of the mower chassis; holes in the top brackets are pinned to the mower chassis



A 13 1/2-in. wide sliding door on back allows easy access for unloading.

with a single 3/8 by 14-in. long pin, which allows for easy removal and reattachment of the bin.

"I didn't need to install a blower because this deck creates plenty of air flow and I used a 7-in. dia. tube off an old grass catcher. At first I tried 4-in. dia. pvc but it would plug up."

When not in use the tubing stores neatly inside the drum, notes Madison.

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## Student Invents "Kindling Cracker"

We spotted this idea in a report from the National Agricultural Field Days in New Zealand. The "Kindling Cracker" was invented by 13-year-old Ayla Hutchinson.

It consists of a rerod metal ring on 1-ft. legs welded to a base plate fitted with an upturned axe head. You place a wood piece on the axe edge and strike it with a mallet to split it into kindling. The metal ring holds the pieces in place.

Hutchinson designed the tool after she saw her mother accidentally cut herself when chopping kindling with an axe.

Her original design had the axe head welded to the base plate but no metal ring. She says it worked "really well", but after consulting with her dad, she decided to add the cage both for safety and to keep split pieces corralled.

Hutchinson priced the cutter at \$80 and needed a minimum of 50 orders to put the unit



Ayla Hutchinson invented this "kindling cracker". The metal ring holds the wood piece in place as it's driven onto an upright ax head.

into production. By the end of the first day, she had more than 150 names in her book. A production model is now on the market at: www.kindlingcracker.com.



Leaf catcher pins onto side of walk-behind mower and has a plywood frame that rides on two caster wheels. A 3-sided "catcher box" friction fits into the angle iron frame.



## Leaf Catcher Built For Walk-Behind Mower

"For years I've been trying to come up with a larger leaf catcher for my Exmark walk-behind, 48-in. mower. Thanks to an article in FARM SHOW (Vol. 36, No. 5), I was inspired to try the method shown in these photos," says Philip Whitmoyer, Leesport, Penn.

"The bagger I built has more than 3 times the volume of the commercial one that came with the mower and was made entirely from salvaged material I already had," says Whitmoyer.

He used 2-in. angle iron to build a frame and bolted two 5-in. rigid caster wheels underneath and added a plywood floor. A pair of pins welded under the frame fit into holes in the mower frame and are secured underneath with cotter pins, allowing the unit to move freely over uneven ground.

He then built a 3-sided "catcher box" that friction fits into the angle iron frame. The box measures 30 in. wide by 32 in. long by 19 in. high. He made the box as lightweight as possible – about 16 lbs. – by using a wooden frame, 6-in. wire road mesh, and some pieces

of 1/4-in. thick plywood. Screens from old storm windows on 2 sides "allow plenty of air flow which really packs the box full," says Whitmoyer. "Half of the top is also covered by screen, which provides an excellent view of how full the bagger is getting.

"To empty, I simply park next to my garden or over a tarp, lift off the box and fork the leaves and grass off the frame. I was amazed how well the unit pivots on tight turns, even with the rigid caster wheels."

Whitmoyer says he thought the leaf catcher might drag to one side, but that hasn't been a problem. He also thought he might need swivel caster wheels, but that hasn't been a problem, either.

"It was one of those projects where I was amazed how well it worked the first time. I didn't have to rebuild anything," notes Whitmoyer.

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## Combo Unit Sucks Up Leaves

Bud Roenigk turned his zero-turn mower into a leaf eater with his combo mower lawn vac. The Husky mower's grass catcher simply couldn't handle the volume of leaves Roenigk's many trees delivered each fall.

"I bought a pull-behind lawn vac and modified it to work with my Husky," says Roenigk.

The lawn vac was designed for its blower motor to be mounted on the tractor pulling it. Roenigk remounted it on the trailer, using angle iron to create a hanger. He ran an intake hose from the blower to the grass exit tube on the zero-turn.

"It had to be at just the right height so its discharge blower with its 90° elbow would match the hole on the trailer," explains Roenigk.

The new combo easily handled grass being clipped as well as light leaf pressure. When heavy leaf drop hit, Roenigk was ready.

"We have perhaps 75 trees on our lot, and we get leaves blowing into piles in corners," he says. "I took a head from another vac system and attached it to the intake hose. I lay it down on the ground and rake into the head, and it sucks the leaves right into the box."

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The grass catcher on Bud Roenigk's zero turn mower couldn't handle all the leaves he had to get rid of each fall. So he bought a pull-behind lawn vac and modified it to work.



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