Paul King built this 2-man, self-propelled harvesting cart out of a Craftsman riding mower. Cart still has the mower's original engine, transmission, rear axle and wheels.

Engine and drivetrain mount 4 ft. off the ground, above operators. Both rear wheels are belt-driven.

Vegetable Crop Picker Built From Riding Mower

Paul King says harvesting fruits and vegetables is a lot more enjoyable with the 2-man, self-propelled harvesting cart he built out of a Sears Craftsman riding mower.

The harvester measures 60 in. wide and 48 in. high and contains a pair of cargo racks designed to carry boxes that hold harvested vegetables. The machine still has the mower's original 18 hp Briggs & Stratton engine, transmission and rear axle and wheels. The engine and drivetrain mounts 4 ft. off the ground on tall steel legs and is used to belt-drive the rear wheels.

"I'm a machine shop fabricator and built this unit for a customer who has a vegetable growing operation. He says it works great. The rig has 4 ft. of clearance so he can pick everything from strawberries to tomatoes. It took me 3 months to build because there was a lot of trial and error, but I think I could build another in 2 or 3 weeks," says King.

King used 2-in. tubing to build the machine's front legs and 2 by 6 tubing to build the rear legs. To drive the rear wheels he disconnected the mower's rear axle and wheels, lengthened each axle by 1 1/2 ft., and mounted a pulley on each one. Another pulley mounts at the top of each leg. Then he welded new material onto the mower's drivetrain housing and welded the top part of each leg onto it.

Steering is done with a remote control that's wired to a 12-volt winch mounted on a metal rack on front of the mower's hood. The winch cable is connected to the mower's tie rods. The remote control has 2 buttons, and pushing them causes the machine to turn either left or right.

The machine still has the original gearshift lever. A lever on back of the machine, connected by a metal rod to the mower's clutch, is used to propel the machine forward.

The rig's 2 swivel chairs are off a fishing boat, and each one is mounted on an arm that can be swung sideways and also up or down. The front cargo rack can also be adjusted up or down and swiveled from side to side.

With the steering mechanism there wasn't room for the mower's muffler so King relocated the muffler to the side on front.

King says he's willing to build the vegetable picker for about $2,900.

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Dry Well Spurs Water Level Detector Invention

The misfortune of two wells going dry and thousands of dollars spent on repair bills was the impetus for Steve Judd to find a simple way to check well water levels. His first-of-their-kind series of products are called Well Watch and Well Sounder. "I set out to invent something that would help my family and my farm, and it turns out the devices work for homeowners, businesses and communities across the globe," Judd says.

In 7 years Judd's company has sold professional grade Well Sounder devices to schools, cities, farmers and golf courses. Lower-priced Well Watch models, which range in price from $350 to $479, have been sold to homeowners, farmers and ranchers.

Judd's Well Watch device uses sound waves and adaptive sensor technology to detect the water level in a well. The Well Watch screws into the access hole for a well and provides a quick, accurate and constant reading of the water depth. The commercial Well Sounder 2010 Pro reads depths down to 4,000 ft. in seconds and has more than 20 settings. Output readings can be personalized for other settings including minimum and maximum ranges, well depth and well diameter. Data is easily viewed on the unit's monitor, or it can be downloaded to a computer.

Californian Michael Rowe uses well water and says, "I didn't want to manually measure water levels on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, so the Well Watch 600 is a cost effective and automated solution. Using the device eliminates the need of gauging water depth by lowering a manual detector into the well, which could damage well wiring." It also provides real time data that identifies when a well may be close to going dry.

Judd says the devices have widespread application because about 15 percent of the population, or more than 43 million Americans, rely on well water. His products have been used extensively in areas plagued by recent droughts. Residents in California and arid parts of the West are using the devices for personal and irrigation wells. The company's Australian distributor has sold dozens of Well Watch products to farmers who are legally obligated to monitor their wells. "By using a Well Watch, people can prove their water levels at any time. They always know what their supply is, and that's important," Judd says.

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Heavy Duty Pickup Step

If you could use a little help stepping up into your pickup – or working on the engine – you'll be interested in this new heavy-duty step that slips over the tire. It's built and tested to support up to 500 lbs.

It comes with a frame made from 3/4-in. sq. steel tubing and a fold-down step made from expanded metal. You slip the frame over the top of the tire and then fold the step down. A pair of small tabs welded onto the back side of the frame come in contact with the tire to keep the frame from damaging the sidewall.

"It adds convenience and safety, especially when there's mud or snow and ice around," says inventor Christopher McKay. "It's also designed for Jeeps and semi trailers.

"I came up with the idea after I tried to get a big 33-in. spare tire off the roof rack on my Jeep. The roof rack was 6 ft. 8 in. off the ground and I'm 5 ft. 11 in. tall. The tire weighed 97 lbs., so I knew that trying to lift it above my head wasn't all that safe. The steps I found on the market were good only for 350 lbs. so if you weigh 200 lbs. and go to lift something off the roof, you're getting close to maximum capacity."

The step's size depends on the size of the tire. "On a 37-in. off-road tire the step is 22 in. long and 6 3/4 in. wide," says McKay. "The arms that support the step can't fold down any farther than 90 degrees so the step will always stay flat and give you a firm place to stand on."

The step comes in red, gloss black or metallic blue or as bare steel if you want to paint it yourself.

The step sells for $84.99 painted and $80.99 bare steel, including S&H.

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Heavy-duty step has a metal frame that slips over the top of a tire. You then fold the step down.