"Half Track" Garden Tractor

Mike Hodgson, Fruitport, Mich., wanted a small "go-anywhere, do-anything" tractor so he built his own "half-track" tractor by mounting steel tracks on back of a Sears 16 hp. garden tractor. A manually-operated boom can be bolted on between the tracks.

"It's a real work horse. I built it for both work and play," says Hodgson. "With the boom I can use it like a wrecker tow truck to do everything from lifting engines and riding mowers to skidding logs. The machine is also fun to drive in the mud - I've purposely tried to get it stuck but so far have been unsuccessful."

The tractor is equipped with steel tracks that measure 10 1/2 wide. They ride over the tractor's rear tires and also over 2 heavy-duty, 10-ply tires connected by an axle that Hodgson mounted on back.

The tracks were made by modifying the tracks off an old Bobcat skid loader that he bought at an auction. "The half-bars on the tracks were spaced too far apart to provide good traction, so I made a homemade jig and mounted it on my log splitter to make more bars. I welded them on between the existing ones," says Hodgson.

A home-built steel frame connects the add-on rear axle to a steel plate that Hodgson bolted vertically on back of the tractor. A pair of 3-pt. top links are bolted to the plate, and a pair of big turnbuckles is connected to them and to the axle. "The turnbuckles work as track slack adjusters and also provide a pivot point for the frame, which allows the tracks to move up and down freely," says Hodgson.

The base of the boom slides into a subframe that bolts onto the main frame and is fastened with one pin. "When lifting heavy loads with the boom, I hook up a 3-pt. top link to the boom and connect it to the plate on back of the tractor. It makes the entire tractor serve as a counter weight, and prevents the load from lifting the back of the tractor off the ground," says Hodgson. "By removing the pin, I can quickly remove the boom and install a ball hitch or 3-pt hitch."

A pair of vertically-mounted spindles mounted behind the boom provide suspension when lifting big loads.

Hodgson also mounted barbell weights on front of the tractor. "The extra weight provides more traction to the front wheels, which makes it easier to steer when turning. The tracks turn great on pavement and gravel, but not as good on grass," notes Hodgson.

Mike Hodgson's Sears garden tractor will go just about anywhere, thanks to its home-made half-tracks. A manually-operated boom bolts on between tracks.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mike Hodgson, 4606 East Fruitport Rd., Fruitport, Mich. 49415 (ph 231 571-7497; hossfones4@gmail.com).

When drought hit his area last summer, Caleb Howerton decided to make his own hydroponic system which allows him to produce fresh fodder from seed.

Hydroponic Fodder System Helped Them Survive Drought

By Klaire Howerton

When his Springfield, Missouri area was hit by a bad drought last summer, Caleb Howerton knew he needed creative options to get his livestock through the fall and winter with limited hay reserves. He decided to build a hydroponic fodder system to grow grass and sprouted grains.

Caleb built a frame for the fodder system out of 3/4-in. pvc pipe and 3/4-in. pvc T and elbow connecters. Each of the 6 shelves holds 3 plastic trays for the seed to grow in for a total of 18 trays, each with holes drilled in the bottom to facilitate drainage. Half of a 55-gal. barrel under the shelf serves as a water reservoir, which cycles the water through an irrigation array made of 1/2-in. pvc pipe.

Water is pumped to the top of the system from a pond pump and provides overhead watering to the top 3 trays, which then drain through each layer until the water cycles back to the reservoir. A complete water change is done once a week to prevent the water in the reservoir from becoming stagnant.

About .4 lbs. of soaked seed (a mix of 50 percent wheat seed, 25 percent black oil sunflower seed, and 25 percent fall forage mix) is added to one layer of trays each day, and every day one layer is fed to the livestock for a continuous cycle. At the end of its 7-day growth period (6 days in the system, and 1-day soaking) about 30 lbs. of fodder per tray is produced. The fodder is fed as a pasture supplement to Caleb's rabbits, Idaho Pasture Pigs, dairy goats, sheep, chickens, and horse.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Caleb Howerton, 1008 E. Farm Rd. 54, Springfield, Mo. 65803.

Brazilian Corn Header Shreds Stalks In A New Way

A new stalk-chopping corn header from Brazil that features a simple, modular design and a unique stalk-shredding system was on display at the recent Ohio Farm Science Review show near Columbus.

The Vence Tudo header is being distributed in the U.S. by Vence Tudo U.S.A., Wakarusa, Ind. It's available in 6, 8, 12 and 16-row models on 30-in. spacing, and is also available in any row spacing down to 18 in.

"We're in our third year of testing the stalk-shredding rolls on this header and the results look great," says farmer and distributor Darrin Martin. "Compared to other corn headers, it does a nicer job of shredding stalks and distributes them on the row, leaving the dirt visible to the sun so you can get back in the field sooner after a rain. The shredding rolls eliminate the need to add separate stalk choppers to the head which greatly reduces the weight, cost, fuel and maintenance requirements."

There are 2 overlapping stalk rolls per row, one smaller than the other. "The rolls run at different speeds which results in shredding action that opens the pith of the stalk from top to bottom, compared to other stalk shredding rolls that rely on close tolerances between the rolls to make cigarette butt-type pieces that can only break down from each end.

"It really is a revolutionary design," says Martin. "The shredded and sized stalks will easily flow through deep tillage equipment, eliminating the need for a tillage pass to do further residue sizing."

The rolls are longer than on most other headers, says Martin, "which allows us to run them slower and results in less head shelling. Also, because these stalk rolls don't rely on close tolerances they'll stay sharp for a longer time before needing to be changed or rebuilt."

He says the Vence Tudo header runs at a shallower angle than others, allowing you to run the header low to the ground and do a better job of picking up down corn. "This header features a simple but strong design all the way around," says Martin. "You can change the clutches just by pulling a pin, and it takes only about a half hour to change out a row unit, instead of an entire day like on some other brands."

Vence Tudo header comes with 2 overlapping stalk rolls per row, one smaller than the other. Rolls run at different speeds to open pith of stalk from top to bottom.

The company is marketing limited quantities of the header for the 2018 harvest season. Cost, depending on your needs, starts at about $30,000 for a 6-row model and $70,000 for a 12-row.

You can watch the header in action on Facebook by going to https://www.facebook.com/Vence-Tudo-USA-2149669258378595/

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Darrin Martin, Vence Tudo U.S.A., 711 E. Waterford St., Wakarusa, Ind. 46573 (ph 574 862-1163 or cell ph 574 535-8464; darrin@wakarusaag.com; www.shredselect.com).