



Bob Manzke demonstrates how he uses add-on steps and handrails, built by son Russ, to climb onto mower deck.

Son Built Steps To Keep Dad Mowing

Bob Manzke feared he wouldn't be able to climb onto his zero-turn mower this past spring, but his son Russ made it possible. Manzke's health was failing rapidly as winter came on.

"I told him that if he took care of getting better, I would take care of the mower," says Russ, a mechanical engineer.

Russ took measurements of the Troy-Bilt zero-turn and shared sketches with his dad.

Bob had some specific needs in mind. He wanted to be able to get off the mower by himself anywhere he mowed should he run out of gas. He also wanted good visibility. But the biggest things were stable steps and 2 handrails.

"My dad mows a lot of road ditches, which meant there couldn't be anything too low ahead of the mower," says Russ.

After making a couple of revisions, he came up with a simple set of plans for a frame that includes handrails, posts and steps. Russ used 1 1/4 by 1 1/4-in. steel tubing for everything but the steps. They are fabricated with angle iron, providing a flat surface and less chance of a boot getting caught. He tack-welded the frame together at the farm as his parents watched.

"The steel tubing ensured my dad would have the visibility he wanted," says Russ.

The math worked out that two 7 1/2-in. steps would get Bob up to a height that he could step over the front panel and on to the deck of the mower. The lower of the 2 steps is mounted inside the first posts for the hand



Bottom step is pulled up with a rope to rest on step above it.

railing and pivots on the upright.

"I ran the bottom rails of the framework back to the rear of the deck and drilled holes to bolt them in place," says Russ. "I used U-bolts to attach the frame to the front wheel mounts on the mower."

Bob's health improved, and when the grass began to grow, he was ready to mow. He climbs up between the railings, turns around and lowers himself into the seat.

"We tied a rope to the bottom step and ran it through a couple of eye-bolts," says Russ. "He can pull it up so it rests on the second step. When he is ready to get off, he backs up to it and kicks it back into place."

Although several people have suggested he patent the design, Russ would rather others use it for their own friends and relatives.

"If we can help someone continue to do what they want, we need to do it," he says.

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Wilson removed the feeding platform, reel and drum from haybine, then built a stationary hitch and mounted a wheel rake assembly on each side.

V-Rake Built On Old Haybine Frame

Tennessee farmer Rich Wilson says the V-rake he built on the frame of an old busted up haybine works just as well as a new rake. "Best of all, I don't have a lot of cash invested," Wilson adds.

Wilson first removed the feeding platform, reel and drum from the old haybine. He cut the swing hitch apart and used the pieces to build a stationary hitch mounted at the center of the frame. He says the rectangular tube steel made a real sturdy hitch so he could mount one wheel rake assembly on each side,

supported by the tongue and the axle of the old haybine dolly.

"I used an old 3-pt. model rake that I had in the weeds and bought another one real cheap. The only parts I had to buy were 10 bolts with nuts and 10 ft. of flat bar to weld the lift arms and end links that mount the rakes to the dolly."

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Two 9-in. long sponge mop replacement heads bolt to metal plates on to a pair of giant tongs.

Easy-To-Use "Weed Eliminator"

Instead of using a sprayer around his yard to kill individual or small patches of noxious weeds, Paul Miller made up a "weed eliminator" that wipes herbicide directly onto plants.

Miller uses two 9-in. long sponge-type mop replacement heads bolted to metal plates. The plates attach to the ends of two 36-in. long pieces of 1-in aluminum channel that are pinned together at the upper end so they act like a pair of giant tongs. The sponges bolt to the metal plates at a slight angle on the bottom sides to keep them from being torn off by weeds.

To use, he just reaches down around the plant base, squeezes, and then pulls up to the top of the plant. Every few plants, Miller sprays the sponges with herbicide from a spray bottle.

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To use, Miller squeezes tongs around base of plant and then pulls up.



Smith cut the end off a 2-in. dia. leaf blower nozzle at a 20 degree angle. The curvature of the pipe works like a shoehorn.



Plastic Pipe Shoehorn

You can make a heavy-duty "standup" shoehorn for work shoes by using a piece of thin-walled plastic tubing, says Tom Smith, Sturgis, Sask.

He used a discarded 2-in. dia. leaf blower nozzle because it had the thin wall and rigidity necessary. He simply cut the end off at a 20-degree angle. The curvature of the

pipe wraps around the heel and sock for easy use.

One benefit is that you can make the pipe as long as you want so you can put on shoes easily while standing up.

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