Wood Chipper Converted To Leaf Vac-Shredder

Ron Byelich turned a used, 2-wheeled wood chipper into a trailer-mounted leaf vacuum-shredder. He uses the machine, along with a 20-ft. long, 6-in. dia. flexible hose, designed for lawn vacs or garden tractors, to suck up leaves from flower beds and around his house. The vac-shredder mounts on a small platform on front of the trailer and shreds the leaves and blows them into it. Byelich uses his Deere garden tractor to pull the 8 by 4-ft. trailer, which has 4-ft. high plywood sides and a plastic floor. The tongue sets on a homemade, 2-wheeled dolly.

He uses a backpack blower to blow leaves into big piles, then pulls the trailer alongside them and uses the hose to vacuum them up. Once the trailer is full, he shovels the shredded leaves out the back.

"It saves me a lot of work and time. I own a 1 1/2-acre lot with lots of trees, so cleaning up leaves every fall is a big job," says Byelich. "I use the ground-up leaves for compost or haul them down the road to our county recycling center. The machine grinds the leaves into small pieces, and can convert 2 or 3 square yards of leaves down into just a couple of bushel baskets. If I want, I can also grind up small branches and blow them in with the leaves at the same time. I carry all my yard tools, including a shovel, manure fork, rake, and broom, on front of the trailer."

This is the fourth leaf vac-shredder Byelich has built over the years. "I saved a lot of money because new commercial vacuum trailers cost $3,000 to $4,000. I spent about $600 including the cost of the trailer, which a friend built for me. Also, commercial vacuum trailers can't be used to shred branches like my converted wood chipper can."

He bought a 15-year-old MTD, 2-wheeled wood chipper powered by a 7 hp. gas engine for $75. It came with a small hopper for grinding small brush and leaves, and a bigger hopper for grinding tree branches. He removed the wheels and axle as well as the machine's discharge chute, and replaced the chute with a homemade steel sleeve that extends through an opening on front of the trailer. He also removed the large hopper for grinding branches and bolted the hose and cone in its place. The machine still has its original small hopper.

Converted wood chipper shreds branches as well as leaves and blows the material into home-built trailer.

"Old yard-style wood chippers are easy to find and they're cheap," says Byelich. "I chose the MTD model because it's easy to service and to work on and always starts on the first or second pull. I bought the hose and cone from Tractor Supply Company for $100."

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Multi-Purpose "Power Bar" For Skid Loaders

The list of jobs that Howard Popp can do with his home-built, skid loader-mounted Power Bar is impressive - everything from breaking up packed snow and ice to digging trenches, moving trailers, and plowing snow.

The patented Power Bar quick-taches to the skid loader and consists of a 45-in. wide, 18-in. high rectangular steel frame made from 1/2-in. thick steel. A 24-in. long, reinforced 3 by 6-in. rectangular receiver tube extends 24 in. forward, and is designed to accept a wide variety of attachments.

Each attachment comes with a welded-on sleeve that pins on outside the receiver tube. A T-handle with bushings at each end runs through the receiver tube and is used with a cotter pin to secure the sleeve, which weighs about 20 lbs.

"It saves money because there's no need to spend money on a separate quick-tach plate for each tool," says Popp, who plans to manufacture the Power Bar as orders come in. "I came up with the idea because the large dairy farm I work for needed something to break up packed snow and ice to keep cows from slipping and falling. I built the Power Bar frame and a 1-ft. square ice spade for it that digs into ice instead of sliding over it like a loader bucket would. It worked so well I decided to build other attachments for it," says Popp.

Here's a summary of those attachments.

Sand bedding leveler - Designed to level the sand in a free stall, it consists of an 8-ft. long, 4-in. wide rectangular steel bar with a series of welded-on metal teeth. The bar pivots on a 20-in. dia. steel hub. A hydraulic cylinder can be used to adjust the angle of the bar by up to 90 degrees.

Mini bucket/grapple - This small toothed bucket works great for moving tree stumps and logs, and for digging trenches, says Popp. A hydraulic cylinder opens and closes the jaws. "It works great to dig out small trees and stumps and then haul them away. It also can dig trenches up to 4 ft. deep," says Popp. "My brother has used it to dig out tree roots up to 18 in. in diameter."

Fifth wheel hitch - It consists of an upright tube that fits over the ball and coupler on an RV or camper trailer. You can also hook it up to a pull-type camper.

Forage fork - It's designed to break up frozen or tightly packed silage stored in tube-type plastic silage bags and consists of five 3-ft. long tapered steel forks spaced about 4 in. apart. "The forks are made from 1/2-in. thick steel so they won't get bent up," says Popp.

Snow blade - Hooks up to the mounting bracket on a standard pickup-mounted snowplow. The existing hydraulic cylinders are used to change the blade's angle.

Drawbar hitch - This setup allows you to move farm implements and trailers, or switch the attachment to a ball hitch and move utility or gooseneck trailers.

Receiver tube on "Power Bar" accepts a wide variety of attachments, including the forage fork shown at right. "It eliminates need for a separate quick-tach plate for each tool," says inventor Howard Popp.

Other attachments include a sand bedding leveler for free stall barns (left) and a mini bucket/grapple for moving tree stumps and digging trenches.

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"Skid Tines" Make Tiller Dig Deeper

Marcus Siegrist tills deeper since he added tines to the skids on his compact tractor-mounted rototiller. Too shallow rototilling had been a long-term problem for the produce farmer. The add-ons let the skids settle a little deeper into the soil.

"We had an older tiller that came without skids, and it sank into the soil more than tillers with skids," explains Siegrist. "We like the added tillage, but over the course of 5 years, our abrasive soils wore right through the gearbox."

When Siegrist bought a new tiller for his produce business, he wanted the deeper tillage without the wear. His added tines do the job. He suspects the angled tines also provide some pull or suction on the tiller.

"The tines are cut down from salvaged field cultivator teeth," says Siegrist. "They were originally about 12 to 14 in. long, and I cut them in half."

He created a mount by welding pieces of angle iron to one end of each tine and drilling 2 holes in the face of the angle iron perpendicular to the end of the tine.

"I drilled 3 holes with the same spacing as the 2 on the tines in the upturned portion of the skids," says Siegrist. "Initially I mounted the tine to the first 2 holes, but the tiller didn't go in as deep as I wanted."

Siegrist moved the tines back, bolting them to the second and third holes. Because of the angle of the skids, this gave the tines a deeper bite, loosening the soil to a little more depth and letting the skids settle deeper.

"With a project like this, there is no engineer to tell you what to do, so you just try things," says Siegrist. "I knew that with the skids angled up, I wanted enough length that the tines would be pointing down at an angle."

Siegrist also wanted the tines angled in toward the path of the tiller. "I didn't want to create furrows to the side of the tilled bed," he says.

Siegrist added tines - cut down from old field cultivator teeth - to the skids on his compact tractor-mounted rototiller to let it dig deeper.

Sizing and placement of the tines has been just what Siegrist had hoped for. The tiller now goes deeper than its original 2 to 3 in., but not deep enough to bring up a lot of rocks.

"It is perfect for our potato beds," says Siegrist. "We make a second pass, and it digs down until the bar across the front of the tiller is almost hitting the dirt. It takes a little more power, but really mixes up the dirt."

Siegrist admits that if a field had heavy residue, the tines might be a problem. In that case he would opt for a disk blade to cut and loosen. As they disk fields in the fall, there is not much residue when spring tilling.

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