"Cradle Lift" Brings Logs To Sawmill

"We needed a way to get medium-sized logs to our bandsaw mill, so we used scrap materials to construct a cradle lift that lifts and transports heavy logs from the ground onto the sawmill. It lets us position the logs accurately and rotate them as needed without having to handle them by hand," says Charles Pearcy, Weatherford, Texas. "It also can be used to lift riding mowers and engines and for other heavy lifting chores."

Pearcy and Jeff Meador operate a sawmill service where they make custom cuts to produce everything from fireplace mantels to lumber, flooring, posts and beams. They built their own bandsaw mill using plans from Bill Reeks, the creator of do-it-yourself wheel-driven bandsaw mills that have been featured in past issues of FARM SHOW. The sawmill head is designed to ride back and forth on steel tracks.

The cradle lift rides on 4 small wheels and rolls back and forth on the same tracks as the sawmill. Its heavy frame is made out of 2 and 3-in. tubing, with the uprights made from 2-in. tubing and the rest of the frame from 1 1/2 or 2-in. angle iron. An upper front cross member is used to attach a come-along or chain winch. "A screw in the bottom of the cross member prevents the hook from 'creeping'," says Pearcy.

To use, the operator positions the frame behind the desired bunks and wraps a short chain around the offside lower frame to prevent tipping. He then wraps a chain around the log, which can be easily lifted all at once or one end at a time onto the bunks. "By hooking the log off center, even the heaviest logs can easily be rolled for the best cut," says Pearcy. "Various hook and chain combinations can be used to increase the cradle lift's versatility."

Pearcy and Meador are selling plans for the cradle lift.

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Cradle lift can easily lift short, heavy logs onto sawmill bunk (left). It rides on 4 small wheels and rolls back and forth on the same tracks as the sawmill.

Rhoades used the cross braces off an old plow frame to build this 3-pt. mounted logging arch equipped with a triangle-shaped boom.

Arch's electric winch is used to pull logs out of the woods.

Logging Arch Made From Plow Frame

Cross braces on plow frames make great logging arches, according to Rodney Rhoades. The northern Alberta farmer spends winter months cutting trees, and his logging arches make the job easier. Using plow frame bracing helped, too.

"I needed a logging arch, but so many are big and complex," says Rhoades. "I was looking at my dad's old 5-16s plow and realized the cross members were perfect for a Category 2, 3-pt. logging arch. I prefer bolting to welding, and it already had most of the bolt holes I needed."

Rhoades took the braces off the plow and bolted them together in the classic V-shaped arch using spacers for the top link arm. He added pegs for the lower arms and a triangular boom to the rear, also fabricated from plow framework.

"I welded a piece of angle iron across the bottom of the arch and a 1/2-in. steel backing plate to the front of the arch," says Rhoades. "Steel plate welded to the boom tip and across the arms of the boom reinforced it."

Built nearly 20 years ago, the arch and boom functioned well on his Deere 4020 to raise one end of a log to pull it out of a stand of trees. Three years ago, he boosted tree removal capability by adding a winch.

"A friend found a 12,000 to 16,000-lb. winch at a farm auction," says Rhoades. "That changed my life! Previously I had to clear a trail to back the tractor in for a log I wanted to pull. With the winch, I can just pull it out."

He mounted it ahead of the arch between the 3-pt. arms, cutting holes in the back plate of the arch and in the cross brace on the boom. He replaced the hook with a snatch block for the cable.

The winch worked great for pulling out logs and for lifting log ends with the arch. The one negative was placement of the winch.

"I decided that if I did it again, I would mount the winch on the back side of the framework to give the winch more clearance," says Rhoades, who did just that recently when he built a second arch for his Deere 3320.

"The biggest challenge with both arches was cutting the steel and enlarging holes," says Rhoades. "Deere uses good steel, and it took a long time and a lot of cutting fluid to cut it with a bandsaw. It's all 2 in. by 5/8 in. Enlarging the holes wasn't easy either. I had to use masonry bits."

Rhoades reports zero problems with either arch, and he uses them a lot. He operates a Mobile Dimension sawmill to produce lumber, as well as 3/4-in. by 1-in. battens for board and batten-style buildings.

"I sell a lot of lumber to farmers for corrals and such, and the board and batten style is popular for rustic garden sheds," says Rhoades. "The Mobile Dimension sawmill with its 12-tooth cutting blade and 2 edgers does a great job. I paid $20,000 for it in 1989 and have very little maintenance. I'm still impressed with it."

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ATV Log Skidder Now Even Better

"A few years ago FARM SHOW published an article on my home-built, 2-wheeled log skidder that rides on a pair of 10-in. wheels (Vol. 38, No. 1). The front end of the log was chained to a cross member located just ahead of the wheels. I used my Suzuki 4-WD ATV to pull it. It let me haul big trees out of the woods with less damage than using a big tractor," says Eric Petrevich, Glen Gardner, N.J.

"I recently rebuilt the log skidder so that it works even better. All I have to do is back the skidder up over a log, then wrap a chain around the log and hook it onto the hook on the skidder. As I pull forward, the log will raise itself and automatically drop down to the ground when I stop. I don't have to lift, roll, hoist, or manipulate the log in any way. It's a simple design that works great."

Petrevich used 2 1/2-in. sq. tubing to fashion a V-shaped frame for the 2-wheeled skidder. He made a square arch from the same material. For the slider bar, to which the log is chained, he used 2-in. pipe. The slider bar runs from the tongue back to the top of the arch.

He mounted the skidder's original wheels on homemade weld-on spindles and matching hubs.

To use the skidder, he positions it over a log and wraps a chain around the end of it, then hooks the chain to a hook on the slider bar. As he pulls forward, the hook slides up the bar, lifting the end of the log.

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Petrevich wraps chain around log and attaches it to hook on skidder's slider bar. "As I pull forward, the log will raise itself and automatically drop to the ground when I stop," he says.