

## Self-Propelled “Double Vertical” Log Splitter

You’ve never seen anything like this self-propelled log splitter built by John Steciak, Jr., of Dolgeville, N.Y.

“It lets us split wood twice as fast as a conventional log splitter,” says Steciak.

The one-of-a-kind unit is equipped with a 33-ft. long, home-built conveyor on back that leads up and over the truck cab. Two work stations on either side are equipped with two hydraulic-operated, hinged log lifters and with vertical, hydraulic-operated splitting units, which can be operated independently of each other.

Hydraulics are provided by the truck’s front pto-driven hydraulic pump that was originally used to raise and lower a snowplow. The conveyor is hinged at the middle, just behind the truck cab, and is raised and lowered by a scissors hoist for highway transport.

“It makes splitting firewood an enjoyable job. There’s no need to bend over while splitting wood, and no need to lift any big blocks of wood at all. There’s even a roof over the operators to protect them from rain,” says Steciak.

The 1982 GMC 5-ton snowplow truck was equipped with a 6-cyl., 238 hp Detroit diesel engine. He built two big H-beam work stations on back that bolt to the truck’s frame just behind the rear wheels. Each H-beam work station is equipped with a pair of 30-ton hydraulic cylinders that extend or retract a pair of star-shaped wedges. The operator stands at either of the waist-high platforms and uses a pair of hinged, L-shaped log lifters to raise logs onto the platform. The wedges

can split the wood either two ways or four ways, depending on how the operator positions the log. Each wedge extends 1 1/2 ft. from the vertical I-beam and has a single knife edge at one end and a double knife edge at the other end.

A new Prentice 120 2,500 psi tandem pump, mounted on the truck pto, allows each splitter to work independently of the other. “I can use either one or two splitters all day, separately and with equal effectiveness,” says Steciak.

Each log lifter is raised and lowered by a hydraulic cylinder that mounts horizontally underneath the platform. The operator places the log horizontally on the log lift, then pushes a lever to bring the log lifter - and the log - up to a vertical position. To extend the cylinder down to split the wood he steps on a foot treadle. As soon as he takes his foot off the treadle, the cylinder automatically returns to the top of the I-beam.

To build the conveyor he laid a 33-ft. long I-beam flat, then had heavy duty chain and steel paddles made for it. A Charlyn hydraulic motor at the top is used to pull the conveyor up.

“When people first see it they can’t believe their eyes, but it really works well,” says Steciak. “I just drive it into the woods, back up to a pile of logs, and raise the conveyor. Then I back a dump truck under the chute and start splitting wood. Sometimes our two daughters roll the big blocks onto the log lifts for us. My wife operates one splitter while I operate the other one. We guide the split wood



“It splits wood twice as fast as a conventional splitter,” says John Steciak about his self-propelled log splitter. It has two splitting wedges and two work stations on either side.

into the conveyor and it’s loaded into the dump truck. The wood falls through a cement mixer chute, which slows down and guides the fall of wood.

“The operator uses the same lever that originally was used to raise and lower the snowplow, to raise and lower the conveyor.

“I paid \$100 for the truck and bought new cylinders, pumps, and valves. All together I spent only about \$5,000 for the entire unit.

“The truck was originally equipped with a sander on back and a variable speed dial in the cab to control the speed of sand ejection.

I hooked the conveyor up to the dial so that I can easily adjust the conveyor’s speed.

“My only regret is that I didn’t buy a used truck in better condition. This one is pretty rusted out.”

The lifters are adjustable for uneven terrain via bolts that go through the hinge point, so no matter how uneven the ground is, the lifters will always reach the ground.

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## Made-It-Myself Gator Built With Car Parts

John Thuerauf was looking for something a little more sporty than a factory-built Deere Gator, so he decided to build his own.

The “IntimiGator”, as he calls it, is built largely from car parts. It’s powered by a fuel-injected, 1.6-liter Toyota Corolla car engine with about 110 hp and also has the car’s 5-speed manual transmission. The steering wheel is off a Chevy Lumina.

“Most people who see it think Deere built it and only realize it’s unique after they take a closer look,” says the Plum City, Wis., man. “It’s slightly bigger than a real Gator. I finished building it two years ago, with about 90 days of construction time. I built it because I wanted something a little more fun to drive. I regard it as a cross between a dune buggy and a farm utility vehicle. It has quick acceleration with a top speed of up to 70 mph.

“The only parts from Deere are the plastic pieces on front, the hood, fenders, grille and dash.”

Thuerauf says his model is a little larger and has more power than a conventional Gator (the factory Gator has only about 20 hp.) It also has 4-wheel power steering. The rear wheel steering is operated independently by a 12-volt gear drive electric motor. It’s controlled by a toggle switch mounted between the seats. If I want I can turn both axles in the same direction, or crab steer. It’s a neat feature but is mostly a novelty, as most of the time I just use the front wheel steering.”

His rig has larger tires with more aggressive tread, better suspension, and rear wheel drive instead of front as on the Gator. It rides on 24-in. high, 12-in. wide lug-type wheels off a Kubota compact tractor. The seats are out of the Toyota and are fully adjustable. He got his mother-in-law to recover them in yellow vinyl.

Thuerauf says he built the machine because he was looking for a farm utility vehicle with

a little more “get-up-and-go”, and at the same time save money. “I spent only about \$3,500 to build it. That compares to about \$9,000 to \$12,000 or more for a new Deere Gator, depending on options,” he says. “In the Midwest, it’s fairly easy to find inexpensive cars with good drivetrains because their values depreciate substantially as the body begins to oxidize.

There is a 2 to 1 chain reduction drive between the differential and each of the two rear axles. This results in a much better low-end speed, allowing the machine to be much more maneuverable in tight places and at the same time doubles the torque.

The rig has a homemade dump box that’s designed to be manually tilted back, providing easy access to the engine. The tailgate has a pickup-style latch and lever. The radiator mounts under the hood and is cooled by a 12-volt fan.

“It was fun to build and is even more fun to drive,” says Thuerauf. “It has proven to be very reliable. I use it for projects around our farm as well as to entertain visitors. It has 4-wheel independent suspension which gives it a smooth ride on my grass waterways and buffer strips. The wheel spacing is 60 inches so it works well for checking my crops. When my two young daughters, ages 6 and 2, hear it start up, they’re always quick to run outside, looking for a ride.

“I set the engine on a stand and started building a steel frame around it. The gas tank, which I bought new, mounts behind the engine. I mounted a high pressure fuel pump inside the gas tank to supply fuel to the car’s fuel injected engine.”

Thuerauf paid \$100 apiece for the four wheels. “I had to modify the rims to fit the car’s brake assembly,” he notes.

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“It’s really fun to drive. I regard it as a cross between a dune buggy and a farm utility vehicle,” says John Thuerauf, who used mostly car parts to build his own Gator.



The “IntimiGator”, as Thuerauf calls it, has a homemade dump box that’s designed to be manually tilted back, providing easy access to the rig’s Toyota Corolla car engine.