



Based largely on parts from an old combine, Fairley's big rock picker has front drive wheels and a rear castor wheel that gives near instant response to changes in direction.

3-Wheeled Combine Rock Picker

Rockpicking is almost fun with Jim Fairley's big three-wheel machine built largely with combine parts. The home-built rock picker boasts great visibility, front drive wheels and a rear castor wheel that allows it to turn on a dime.

"We knew what we wanted, so we just built it," recalls Fairley, of Baldwinton, Sask. "The drive wheels came off the combine, as did the cab, while the rear wheel came off an old cement mixer truck."

Working from plans chalked out on the shop floor, Fairley and his son Blair gathered parts and put them together. They used a Schulte-type rock-picking unit, but doubled the length of it.

By extending the table of the picking bed, Fairley was able to reduce the pitch so it wasn't as steep. He mounted the cab right behind the picking bed so he has a clear view of the bed and the field ahead. Rocks are carried out of the picking bed by a side conveyor to a lift conveyor that carries them past the cab to a big rock box. All conveyers

were built on site. "Positioning the cab and the conveyers was the most work," says Fairley. "The conveyor that dumps into the rock box has to swing out of the way for the box to dump."

Hydraulics play a big role in operating the rock picker. A hydraulic pump salvaged from the original combine, powers one conveyor and the picker bed. A separate pump with a steering valve off an old Versatile tractor controls the rear wheel allowing the driver to turn 360 degrees with one turn of the steering wheel.

While Fairley is generally satisfied with his home-built rock picker, he would put a larger castor wheel on the back, if doing the project over. "The one that's on it is 4 ft high and about 16-18 in. wide," he says. "The picker gets so heavy that it sinks in the soft spring soil and leaves ruts from that rear wheel."

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Rock conveyor swings up out of the way when box is dumped.



Cab mounts right behind rock-picking bed so Fairley has a clear view as he searches the field for rocks.

Cat In The Rafters Keeps Shed Bird-Free

When Ivan Myers walked into his farm shop one day and caught his cat coming down a ladder from the rafters, it struck him that the solution to the problem of birds in his shed was right in front of him.

"We've had this cat around for awhile, and he stays in the shed most of the time," says the Oregon, Ohio, farmer. "And as long as I've had this shed, I've had bird problems. I've put up scare balloons and even owls trying to keep the birds away, but nothing worked."

Once he knew the cat, Felix, would go up and down a wooden extension ladder propped against a truss, Myers mounted a small plastic feed container in the rafters so he could feed him up there.

"Feeding Felix in the rafters encouraged him to spend more time up there. And the result was that birds didn't want to be around," he says.

While Myers' family was glad he found a solution to the cat problem, they were concerned that their 70-year-old father was

going up and down that ladder to feed the cat.

To solve that problem, Myers' son installed a self-feeder with a lever on it that, when pulled, dumps the cat's daily ration into the plastic container. A rope attached to the lever runs through a pulley and then hangs down almost to the floor, so Myers can feed the cat from floor level.

"Now whenever Felix wants to be fed, he runs to the ladder and up a few rungs and back to me again," Myers says. "I pull the rope and up he goes. He doesn't spend all his time up in the rafters, but he's up there enough to let birds know he's around. They still come in once in awhile, but they don't stay."

"I don't know whether other cats could be trained to patrol the rafters of a shed like this, but I'd encourage people to try it," he says.

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Rafter-mounted feeder dumps cat's daily ration into a small feed bowl. "Because the cat spends a lot of time up there, birds don't want to be around," says Myers.

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