



Marvin Niekamp cut apart a 16 hp Gilson lawn tractor to make this picking rig.

Picker Makes Veggie Harvesting Easier

Thanks to his veggie picker, Marvin Niekamp picks acres of vegetables in relative comfort. He has shade, stereo surround sound, and even cup holders for coffee and water.

When Niekamp and his wife, Beatrice, decided to sell vegetables out of a front yard stand, he cut apart a 16 hp Gilson lawn tractor to make a picking rig.

"I have a bad back," Niekamp says. "If I was going to have to bend over, it wasn't going to happen."

He cut the 4-speed tractor in two and welded an angle iron frame between the sections, dropping the seat to about 4 in. from the ground. He welded stirrups for his feet behind the front wheel axle.

"Stick steering is very important," Niekamp says pointing to a steering rod with a knob just above his left shoulder. He converted the push rod clutch system to a cable system using bicycle cables, so that he can operate the hand clutch between his legs with either hand.

After experimenting with a couple of engines, Niekamp purchased an \$800 8 hp Honda engine with a good electrical generator.

"I needed a lot of electricity to run the stereo system," Niekamp laughs, pointing to the speakers behind him and two speakers in front of him, safely tucked in metal boxes and cans.

Other than the new engine, he used scrap parts for his veggie picker. He used the tractor's original transaxle, running it through a 12-in. belt pulley so it creeps very slowly in low gear. Top speed is 5 to 6 mph. He took brackets off a cultivator and mounted it on the back of the tractor to hold up to four 5-gal. buckets.

With 300-ft. rows, he needs lots of buckets. Niekamp picks squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and black-eyed peas from his machine, using both hands. He plants the black-eyed pea rows 34 in. apart and exchanges his lawn tires for 16-in. tires and drives between the rows. Niekamp notes he plants peas because they grow high up on the plant and are easier to pick.

Other crops are planted 36 to 38 in. apart. "When I pick squash, I just put it in slow gear," Niekamp says.

The veggie picker's design accomplishes all Niekamp's goals - to be able to see easily, pick with both hands and have easy steering. It also allows him to set out plants, something he hadn't anticipated. He pulls a water tank behind when he plants.

"I'll spend four to seven hours a day on it," Niekamp says of his picker. "It's the most used piece of equipment on this farm."

To make those long hours more comfortable, he tops the tractor seat with foam mattress padding. His wife, Beatrice, jokes that if he could figure out how to add air conditioning, he would.

He can see easily and pick with both hands. Several 5-gal. buckets mount at back of rig.



Besides the row crops, the Niekamps have cantaloupes, three acres of sweet corn, plus raspberry and blackberry patches. They sell produce seven days a week from around Mothers Day through mid-July.

Niekamp says he would be happy to advise anyone interested in making a similar machine.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Marvin Niekamp, B-Mar Veggies, 309 Loop 265, Rosebud, Texas 76570 (ph 254 583-2713).

Plastic Barrel Goat Feeder

Plastic 55-gal. barrels can be converted into inexpensive sheep and goat feeders that are easy to clean and move around, says David Rottink, Clarksville, Iowa.

He buys the barrels from a local manufacturing plant for \$10 apiece and uses a chop saw to cut off both ends of the barrel. He also cuts the barrel in half a little more than half way down. He uses 2 by 2 boards to bolt the two halves together, leaving enough space for the animals to stick their heads through.

Each barrel holds one small square bale. "They work well and are cheap to build," says Rottink, who has built about a half dozen of the feeders for his meat goats. "My total cost



Tim Kelliher stores firewood inside 4-ft. long rings of 6-ft. dia. metal culvert. He uses his 3-pt. bale carrier or pallet forks to move the rings around.

"Culvert" Firewood Storage

After seeing a recent story in FARM SHOW about a big corrugated metal pipe being used for firewood storage (Vol. 31, No. 1), Tim Kelliher, Kearney, Neb., decided to send in his version of the idea.

He stores firewood inside 4-ft. long rings of 6-ft. dia. metal culvert that he bought from a local manufacturer. Each ring holds 7/8 of a cord of firewood.

"I like the benefits of keeping firewood off the ground and covered, yet have it exposed to the air for drying. I'm in the hay business and thought that by using smaller sections of pipe I could make 'firewood bales' that look similar to big round bales of hay," says Kelliher. "I can use either my 3-pt. bale carrier or pallet forks to move the rings around. Lets me take the ring to the firewood for stacking. And I can store it away from the house until it's needed."



Each ring holds 7/8 of a cord of firewood.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tim Kelliher, 9460 Ave. N., Kearney, Neb. 68847 (ph 308 237-3639).



Two halves of 55-gal. plastic barrel are bolted together with 2 by 2 boards, leaving enough space for animals to stick their heads through.

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