

## “Ugly” Tractor Is A Champion Puller

“A friend of mine found me an old Panzer garden tractor equipped with a belly-mount mower. It was all rusted and ugly. I decided to modify it for use as a pulling tractor, and it has become a real winner,” says Tom Demers, Bethlehem, Conn.

Demers has entered the tractor in numerous garden tractor pulling contests over the last 9 years, in which he pulls an old stone boat with 50-lb. increment cement blocks loaded onto it.

“No one thinks a tractor this small and ugly can win anything, but we like being the underdog. It’s like a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” says Demers. “I spent a lot of time thinking before I modified it and did everything I could think of to win. We pull 2,200 lbs. of weights on the sled. People are impressed to see such a small tractor pulling that much weight.”

According to Demers, the Panzer tractor was built in Maryland from the early 1950’s until 1970. It was powered by a 7 hp Briggs & Stratton engine and came with a narrowed-up Plymouth automotive rear axle, backing plates and brakes.

When Demers got his Panzer, the engine was shot and the tires were flat. He replaced the engine with a 9 hp Kawasaki engine off a Deere AMT utility vehicle. He installed new 23-in. high by 10-in. extra wide Titan rear wheels, and 8-in. high front wheels off another riding mower. He kept the mower deck, which weighs 150 lbs., for added traction. And he mounted a pair of 10-in. high wheelie bar wheels off a push mower on back of the tractor, instead of a traditional flat metal skid, to keep ground friction to a minimum.

“My family and I love this tractor and have taken it to many pulling tractor competitions. We’ve won a lot of ribbons,” says Demers. “My son would lean way back in the seat and push forward on the hand clutch, causing the tractor to stand up on its rear wheels, vibrate, and ‘walk’ slowly down the track as it pulled the sled.

“The tractors we compete against are gorgeous and painted, whereas ours is ugly and rusted. We’ve never painted the tractor



**Tom Demers turned an old Panzer garden tractor into a pulling tractor, adding a pair of 10-in. high wheelie bar wheels on back.**

so it doesn’t look pretty, but ‘pretty’ doesn’t make a tractor pull any better. The Panzer is built heavy, which is why it works so good for pulling. The rear axle was designed for a 3,000-lb. car with a 90 hp engine, so we can put all kinds of power through the rear end without damaging the differential. There’s no way you’re going to break a car rear end with a 9 hp engine.”

Demers says he added as much weight to the tractor as possible within the rules. For example, he installed a heavy weight over the mower deck and behind one of the front wheels. “When the driver does a wheelie, the opposite front wheel goes up in the air but the other wheel stays down on the ground so the driver can still steer,” he says. A heavy 1/2-in. steel plate supports the battery to add more weight.

The extra wide rear wheels have only about 4 lbs. of air pressure in them to achieve the biggest footprint possible.

“We kept the tractor’s original steel seat and didn’t want a backrest because then the driver can’t lean back to get more leverage on the rear wheels,” notes Demers.

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**Two-year-old Colton Schmitz rides in a child-sized ‘rat rod’ built by his dad. The plastic engine is actually a carrying case for Hot Wheels toy cars.**

## Dad Built Rat Rod Wagon For Young Son

FARM SHOW found Justin Schmitz pulling his 2-year-old son Colton around in what looks like a child-sized ‘rat rod’ at an antique tractor show near Albany, Minn. The plastic engine is actually a carrying case for Hot Wheels toy cars. It mounts on a subframe between the wagon and front axle.

The child hangs onto a chain link steering wheel and can play with a side-mounted

gearshift lever and a turn signal lever.

“It turned into quite a popular attraction,” says Schmitz. “At the show, I couldn’t go 50 ft. without someone asking if they could take photos. I built it because I like to build rat rods out of cars and pickups, and I wanted Colton to have something, too.”

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## They Train Dogs To Help Farmers With Disabilities

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Jackie Allenbrand knew how much time and energy dogs save at her family’s cow/calf farm. So after being inspired by a farmer with a partial leg amputation who continued farming with the help of his dog, the Missouri farmer created a nonprofit to train dogs specifically for farmers with disabilities.

PHARM® Dog USA (Pets Helping Agriculture in Rural Missouri) has paired 13 dogs and farmers since it started in 2009. Two volunteers, Bobby Miller in Missouri, and Don McKay in Iowa, donate and train dogs to herd for the 501C3 organization. Allenbrand follows up with service dog training to meet the specific needs of farmers.

The herding training with Border Collies is all that some farmers need.

“They save the farmer time and energy. He learns to farm differently, but doesn’t have to give it up,” Allenbrand says. One female farmer with lupus had problems with her sheep knocking her down. Now a border collie herds for her.

While the herding training is similar for all dogs, it is adjusted for specific needs. For example, a dog was trained to respond to just voice commands for a farmer paralyzed from the chest down. Another Border Collie responds to whistle commands from a farmer with paralyzed vocal cords.

“On the service side, we use Labs and

Lab mixes because of their temperament and barrel chest,” Allenbrand adds. With harnesses, the bigger dogs help people with balance issues, and can open gates and retrieve tools.

Allenbrand and other volunteers are not paid for their work, but there are costs for leashes, collars, wormer, transportation, etc. The biggest expense is travel. PHARM has paired dogs with farmers in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Allenbrand spends about a week at the farm to fine-tune training so the farmer and dog work together.

The grassroots organization has been funded through grants and private donations.

A recent media blitz, including a national television news story, has brought attention and interest from around the U.S.

Allenbrand would like to expand PHARM as funding and the number of volunteers grows. There is a waiting list in the Missouri area.

“Our biggest need is funding to help more farmers,” she says.

For more information, check out the PHARM website.

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