

Rare Wood Shovels, Forks Decorate Their Home

Olan Bentley and his wife Janie are running out of room to display their collection of wooden forks and shovels. They have about 60 of the old-time tools on walls in their house and in an outbuilding. The Bentleys have been collecting them since the 1970's.

"We were looking for things to display on our back porch, and I picked up a wooden spade," recalls Bentley. "Soon after, I picked up 4 shovels. We picked up more as we traveled. Like any collection, you see something, fall in love and buy it."

Bentley fell in love with the wood grain and the wear patterns on the handles. He says the wooden shovels and forks are generally thought to have been made and used through the 1800's and early 1900's. Most of the shovels are similar in shape and around 34 or 35 in. tall. However, the forks come in a wide variety of types and sizes from simply a branch split in two to multiple tines and cross supports.

"The shovels had many uses, as did the forks," says Bentley. "We have a large fork with a curved handle that was used to rake straw from the platform of an early reaper. A person would walk alongside and rake straw off the platform. This fork is a very rare piece from the 1800's."

The wooden shovels would have been especially useful anyplace sparks were a concern. Bentley has one that was found

unused at a black powder storage facility owned by Atlas Powder Co., Joplin, Mo.

Bentley notes that most were treated with some kind of oil or other protection. Most of the shovels appear to be made from light, but durable maple. Forks tend to be made with oak, he adds.

Although he has paid as much as \$150 for one of his shovels, he tries to keep purchases under \$100. He notes that the farm utensils can cost \$100 to \$300, depending on how rare they are.

In the case of forks, the number of tines has a definite impact on price. "The more tines, the better," says Bentley. "A 3-tine is the most common - 4, 5 and 6 are progressively less common, and 7 or 8 are very rare. We found our 7-tine in 2018, and our 10-tine is the only one I've ever seen."

Bentley says wooden shovels and forks can be found on eBay, often labeled as coming from Eastern Europe. He points out that shipping can cost as much as the item, due to the long handles.

"I found most of mine at antique malls and flea markets, but the rare forks are seldom found at affordable prices," says Bentley.

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Olan and Janie Bentley's collection of old wooden forks and shovels comes in a wide variety of types and sizes, with some forks having multiple tines and cross supports. The tools were made and used through the 1800's and early 1900's.

Carts Made With "Airless" Recycled Wheelchair Wheels

Gilbert Mayeaux, Denham Springs, La., uses old wheelchair wheels for everything from garden carts to tool caddies to solar ovens.

"We get the wheels cheap at thrift shops. Wheelchair wheels never go flat so we never need to air them up," says Mayeaux.

Garden Cart

At about 4 ft. long by 30 in. wide and with 16-in. high sides, his garden cart comes in handy for any kind of yard maintenance such as hauling leaves and grass clippings. The 2-wheeled cart has an axle made from 1/2-in. solid bar and a handle made out of EMT conduit. A pair of metal parking stands are located on front. "A cart like this is big enough to haul a couple of hay bales," says Mayeaux.



Gilbert Mayeaux's homemade solar oven, tool caddy, and garden cart all ride on old wheelchair wheels, which he buys cheap at thrift shops.

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Tool Caddy

Mayeaux kept the frame and wheels (including the caster wheels), then added homemade plywood shelves and trays to make a handy tool caddy. "I use it to carry everything from clamps and hand and power tools to a first aid box. It's easy to roll around our shop," says Mayeaux.

Solar Oven

His 3-ft. wide portable solar oven rides on wheelchair wheels and has a glass storm door panel, mounted on angled plywood sides, that absorbs sunlight. There's also a metal rack below the oven and a thermometer on one side.

"Most of the time we use the oven to heat up food such as smoked sausage, biscuits, and bread. But if we get 6 to 8 hrs. of continuous sun the oven will heat up to 300 degrees which is hot enough to cook a meal," notes Mayeaux.

Big Concrete Weight Mounts On Garden Tractor

"My friend kept getting his Deere garden tractor stuck on his concrete driveway while operating a snowblower. He didn't want to use tire chains because they would mark up the driveway. After checking out the price of wheel weights, we came up with a different idea," says Larry Wood, Waldo, Ohio.

The 2 men ended up making a tractor weight using an 18-gal. Rubbermaid plastic tub filled with concrete. "It's a concrete block that weighs 320 lbs. It cost just under \$50 to make," says Wood.

They made an angle iron bracket to hang over the back of the tractor, then welded some rebar rods onto the bracket that extend out the back. Then they filled the 20-in. long, 14-in. wide, 16-in. high tub with concrete, and pushed the rebar part of the bracket into the concrete.

"The next day we pulled the tub off, and then used a floor jack under the concrete block to lift it into place," says Wood. "The bottom of the weight is the same height as the



Garden tractor-mounted weight was made by filling an 18-gal. Rubbermaid plastic tub with concrete.

tractor's pin hitch. Works great and looks good."

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