

Homebuilt Lift Kept His Dad Combining

At 80, LaVon Johnson still enjoyed helping out at harvest time but it was difficult for him to climb the ladder of the combine. When his son, Tim Johnson, saw a YouTube video of a lift another farmer made, he contacted the designer, who sent him photos and provided information. Now, the Wausa, Neb., farmer wants to pass the details on to others.

"The lift rides in two tracks that are bolted to the side of the combine ladder," Johnson says. He bought the sliding door tracks at a home improvement store and purchased a 12-volt winch with a remote.

He built the platform and lift with expanded metal, angle iron, and scrap metal. He mounted the winch under the combine's top step and ran the wiring to the battery so the

winch operates whether or not the combine is running.

"There was some trial and error. I cut the rails to length after I saw it was going to work. And with the platform I had to be careful to have clearance and not hit the tire," Johnson says.

Once the lift is up, the platform folds up out of the way and the ladder can still be used by drivers who don't need the lift.

Johnson moved the fire extinguisher that was on the ladder to the lift, which he painted green to match the tractor.

"Dad used it for a couple of years. It was fun to watch him ride up and down on it," Johnson says, noting his father died in 2020.

Johnson posted a video on Twitter (now

available at www.farmshow.com) and a Wisconsin farmer, who also had an elderly father, purchased it for Johnson's cost of materials, about \$500. He welcomes questions about the lift from readers.

"If I can help another older farmer keep running the combine, I'm more than happy to share information," he says.

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Bolt-on lift rides on a pair of tracks and is remote operated by a 12-volt winch.



Tschetter says the Harbor Freight Predator 6.5-liter engine he installed in his Deere 110 garden tractor "works great, and I saved a lot of money."

Garden Tractor Repowered With \$99 Harbor Freight Engine

The engine on Quinton Tschetter's old Deere 110 garden tractor was worn out, so he replaced it with a new Harbor Freight Predator 6.5-liter engine that he bought on sale for \$99.

"It works great, and I saved a lot of money," says Tschetter, of Oskaloosa, Iowa. "I don't use this tractor to mow my lawn. I use it to pull small trailers and to do odd jobs where I don't need a bigger garden tractor, so the engine should last a long time."

It wasn't the first time Tschetter had installed a Predator on a used machine. "I've installed Predators on a couple of different rototillers that were difficult to keep running, and those engines are still going strong. I'm impressed at how easy Predators are to start. Usually it takes just one or two pulls of the rope."

He says repowering any machine with a Predator is an inexpensive alternative. "Overhauling an engine usually costs \$300 or more. You can't even have a mechanic look at an engine for less than \$100."

Installing the Predator was a fairly simple job, he says. "I just unbolted the old engine and bolted the Predator on, maybe drilling one or two new bolt holes. I didn't have to modify the mounting brackets very much at all. The biggest challenge was to find the right belt that's needed to drive the Deere 110's variable speed transmission. It's one of the early ones where the pulley flexes back and forth to change the speed."

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Stake-Pulling Machine Saves Time, Labor



Two-wheeled Stake Puller uses a pair of hydraulic-driven roller chains (below) to pull stakes out of the ground and deposit them on a rack.



The Stake Puller from Burkholder Equipment makes post harvest cleanup of wooden support stakes easy for market garden operations. The offset tongue tows the 2-wheel unit down the row, pulling stakes out of the ground and depositing them on a rack at the rear.

"One customer pulled out about 5,000 stakes with it and told me he'd never do it by hand again," says Mervin Burkholder. "Everyone who has seen it likes it and loves to run it."

Burkholder operates a general repair and farm equipment shop, where he also manufactures Steinsammler grapples. With an employee who is a good builder, Burkholder decided there might be a market for a simple stake puller.

"There is a big commercial unit for use on large acreage farms," says Burkholder. "We wanted to come up with something for small acreage vegetable growers."

The all-hydraulic stake puller can be controlled from the tractor seat or from valves on the cart. A cylinder mounted to the axle and the tongue swings the cart from transit mode behind the tractor to field mode to the right of the rear wheel. Guide arms line up any errant stakes in front of the gathering chains. Hydraulic motors drive the roller chains that pull the stakes out, lifting them up and depositing them on the deck. A hydraulic cylinder underneath the rear deck tips it to release gathered stakes once the rear gate has been removed.

"The loose stakes can be dumped as is, or a strap can be put on them first," says Burkholder. "If a customer wanted, the Stake Puller can be customized. One suggestion was to mount a chipper on the deck with the stake chips blown back onto the field."

Burkholder is pricing his stake puller at \$6,800. This past year he and Martin's Produce Supplies have been renting units to

area farmers to build awareness and gather input.

"We've been charging \$100 a day for the exposure," says Burkholder. "I think it would be a nice rental unit for any owner. While they would only need it for a few hours a year

themselves, I expect they could rent it out to other growers for \$200 a day."

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