Kesslar has a large social media following for his off-road lawn tractors.

Lawn Tractors Modified For Off-Roading

Ryley Kesslar of Kelowna, B.C., builds custom-fabricated off-road mowers that he highlights on Instagram and YouTube. "We take them out rock crawling, snow wheeling, racing, drifting, mud bogging and more," Kesslar says. "We're taking lawnmowers to a whole new level. There are lots of videos of us riding, along with some build videos, tutorials, and how-tos. We're excited to show people what their 30-year-old rusty lawnmower can do if you put some time into it."

Kesslar found his passion for restoration early in life. "This all started when I was 15 and wanted something I could practice 'driving' on. A lawnmower was an obvious choice," he explains. "So, I bought one and watched a couple of videos on YouTube for pulley swapping it for more speed. While doing that, I noticed some videos about making them into off-road rigs. It was nothing crazy, but I watched guys putting off-road tires on the mowers and welding the transaxles to work in the mud. I was hooked."

Getting started on his own projects took a little more patience. "I'd spent all my money buying the mower and couldn't afford tires or a welder. So, I pulley swapped it for more speed and mounted a plow on it to plow snow to make money." This strategy proved effective. "Jump ahead a few years, and I got into 4x4 trucks and loved the idea of rock crawling. Late one night with a buddy, we started scrolling YouTube. Lo and behold, the old videos I'd found of off-road mowers popped up."

That was all the encouragement Kesslar needed to dive back into the hobby. "The next day, my buddies and I went out and bought three mowers. Since then, we've been building, modifying and riding the hell out of them."

The hobby resonates with a larger audience, as Kesslar has amassed 232,000 followers on Instagram and 18,000 subscribers on YouTube. "Right now, we don't make these mowers to sell, as we just don't have enough good candidates for builds. But we'd like to in the future. We build almost every part of these things from scratch, so we've learned a lot about what works. Eventually, we'd like to sell kits and parts so followers can build a mower with OKOM parts."

Kesslar explains that the build process remains similar between tractors. "We start with older models. Usually, anything before 1985 is good," he says. "We typically pick the mowers up for free or cheap. We always begin with a manual transaxle tractor with 1-in. axle shafts. They often come with bigger motors and better steering systems. A huge portion of what we do is having a lock transaxle either by welding or building a custom locker (both rear wheels will always spin). We also change pulley ratio and make them faster." Typically, the engine has a bigger pulley and a smaller pulley on the transaxle.

"Common swaps are 7-in. front and 5-in. rear," he explains. "With this, we build custom front axles and steering systems, put bigger ATV tires on, then add a foot throttle and governor bypass. And, most importantly, add hydraulic hand brakes with custom disk rotors. With new tires, pulleys, steering racks, bearings, belts, brakes, etc., we spend about $1,500 to $2,000 CAD."

The modifications tend to vary after this point. "We do a lot more than this to our personal mowers and the ones featured on the channel," says Kesslar. "We love customizing these rigs into something people have never seen before."

Ok Off-Road Mowers (OKOM) hopes to sell part kits in the future.

Overall, Kesslar has found this restoration hobby rewarding and appreciates how it creates connections with viewers. "I'm very proud of the yellow mower and the grey/black mower magnum. And I'm proud of my crew, Tony, Nick and Gaby. But overall, we want our viewers to know that there's a lot you can learn from a mower. It's a lesson in small engine mechanics, welding, fabrication, wiring, gear ratios, etc. So, take that 30-year-old tractor out of the weeds and clean it up. Check out our YouTube channel to see how we build and modify ours."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, OK Off-Road Mowers (YouTube and Instagram: @okoffroadmowers).

Banana Peel Fertilizer Nourishes Plants

If you love bananas, consider keeping the peels to soak for a nutrient-rich plant fertilizer. It's flush with potassium, calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium, strengthening stems and roots. Best of all, this fertilizer is essentially free, assuming you'd eat the bananas anyway.

Banana peel water, or banana tea, is made by steeping banana peels in a jar or bucket for several weeks. The soaking process helps the peels break down, releasing nutrients into the water, which is applied directly to plants.

While banana water is mild enough for use on any plant, the extra potassium levels might be especially beneficial for those that fruit and flower. It may help prevent blossom end rot in tomatoes, a condition where the bottom of the fruit turns brown. However, banana water doesn't provide the fully balanced nutrient profile that plants need. It works well for supplementation but shouldn't be your primary fertilizer. Over-reliance on it might lead to nutrient deficiencies like yellowing leaves or stunted growth.

Another essential consideration is pesticide contamination. Conventionally grown bananas may have residues on their skin, which could be transferred to your liquid fertilizer. Washing the peels before soaking them can eliminate most of these residues. For extra safety, stick with certified organic.

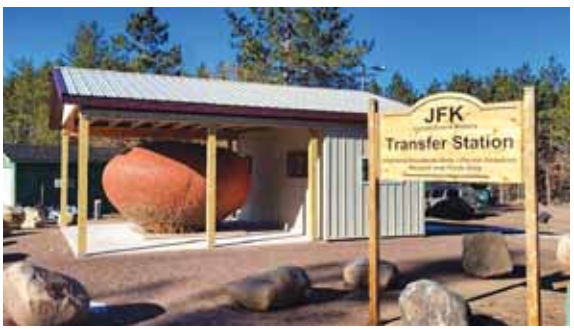
To make banana water, start by saving your peels. Chop them into 1-in. squares covered 2/3 of the way with water. You can also pulverize them in a blender to speed up the decomposition. Keep adding peels and water into a large container until you run out of space—ensuring the lid stays in place to prevent contamination and mold formation. Store it in a cool, dark place so the peels can continue to steep for another 2 weeks. The water is done once the peels turn black and the water is dark. A slight fermenting odor is normal. At this point, you can strain out the solids and pour the liquid into a watering can for direct use on plants. Any remaining banana peel remnants can go into the compost.

Banana peel water or "tea" is easy to make into an inexpensive plant fertilizer.

One study found that boiling the peels boosts potassium levels in water. Steep the peels for a few days, then add them to a saucepan and boil for up to 45 min. The mixture should be cooled and diluted before applying.

Use banana water once per week as part of your regular watering schedule. It's ideal for houseplants and outdoor beds alike. Pour water on the soil line to avoid soaking plant leaves and mold growth.

Banana peel water is easy to make, costs virtually nothing, and encourages the daily consumption of this nutritious fruit.



Wisconsin ball of twine weighs over 24,000 lbs.

Town Rallies to Preserve Ball Of Twine

"Having a ball" was part of every conversation with James Frank Kotera of Highland, Wis. He meant it literally as the creator of the "heaviest ball of twine" listed in the Guinness Book of World Records. Whenever people brought him twine, he weighed it before weaving it tightly into the ball growing in his yard to 24,100 lbs.

When he died of cancer in 2023, Terri Nelson, Kotera's neighbor and friend, began a mission to preserve his life's work, which had received national and international media attention and attracted people from 46 states and 15 countries.

"Jim was a character," she says. "He was awesome. He worked so hard." As the transfer station attendant, he packed the dumpsters tightly and saved the town money, she adds. Along with trash, people brought Kotera twine to add to his ball.

After discovering that his relatives didn't know what to do with it, Nelson got permission to start a GoFundMe account to raise money to move it to a site next to the transfer station, which the town approved.

"You can't let it go; it's history," Nelson says, and when donations for as much as $1,000 came in, Kotera's sister was shocked. After it was featured in several news outlets, donations poured in.

The first project was to pour a concrete slab.

"Then, we had to figure out how to get it out of the shelter without tearing it down," she says, adding that though the ball was on cement blocks, she also worried the bottom had rotted.

But other than a little dust falling out, the ball that Kotera started in 1979 remained intact and was loaded on a flatbed by a tow truck. Once secured with straps, it was safely transported and placed on the concrete slab. Volunteers covered the 22-ft. long by 10-ft. tall ball of twine with three tarps to protect it until a shelter could be built.

"We left the tarp on until February 2024 when we had a dedication with our town's skating party," Nelson says.

The twine ball project is nearly complete, thanks to volunteer help and more than $7,000 in donations. It's adjacent to a new shelter for the attendant at the newly named JFK (James Frank Kotera) Transfer Station.

Visitors are welcome to stop by any time and sign the guest book at JFK's Ball of Twine's new address: 9360 S. County Road S, Highland, Wis.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Terri Nelson (highlandvfd@gmail.com).