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Old Van Converted Into A Delivery ‘Truck’

When Seth Eberhardt’s 1999 Ford E-350 van became so rusted in the rear end that he couldn’t open the back doors, he turned it into a “truck.”

The extended frame van still ran well, so he thought it would convert nicely.

“The front end was still good, and it had a 7.3L diesel engine, which is a great motor, so I thought I could cut it in half and put a flatbed on the back end,” Eberhardt says.

He cut through the van body and decided to fasten a new 8-ft. long flatbed floor made of treated lumber directly to the frame. He ran 4 by 4s crosswise and used new deck boards to finish the floor. He added a 6-in. edging around the perimeter to keep tools and implements from falling off.

“When I do things like this, I don’t normally have a good plan in mind,” he laughs. “I just kind of tear into things, and hopefully,

it comes together properly as I go.”

Eberhardt mainly uses the converted truck to haul lawnmowers as he’s a mechanic for farm equipment. He also often pulls a single-axle trailer behind.

He originally paid \$500 for the Ford van and estimates the entire conversion cost about \$300 in extra materials. He still needs to close the 2-ft. wide hole where he divided the van body as it’s open to the atmosphere.

“It works great, and I don’t regret it one bit,” Eberhardt says. “It gets plenty of attention as everyone around town knows me. People even take pictures of it when I’m driving on the 4-lane highway. It’s the best 500 bucks I ever spent.”

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The eWeeder uses a pto-driven generator that creates high-frequency AC power fed to pairs of electrodes applied to the ground.



British Companies Combine Tillage And Electrical Weeding

Garford and RootWave, two British precision agriculture companies, have partnered their tillage and electrical weeding technologies to create an eWeeding implement.

“We had an interest in taking electric weeding to both the crops and vegetable sectors,” says George Hall, Garford Export Sales Manager. “We already have great camera technology, and this partnership creates an excellent option for both conventional and organic producers.”

The machine will be marketed in North America through the existing Garford dealer network.

The eWeeder uses a PTO-driven generator that creates high-frequency AC power fed to pairs of electrodes applied to the ground. Electricity moves into the electrodes and through the soil, destroying the above-ground weed and its roots while keeping the crop safe. This feature is unique among competitive electrical weeding technologies.

“We can efficiently guide a steel share between rows by cameras, so the addition of RootWave electric weeding makes an extremely productive unit,” Hall says.

Studies haven’t shown any negative impacts on other soil biology, such as microfauna, fungi, bacteria or nematodes.

The unit’s 18-kilohertz, high-frequency

AC power reduces the safety risk should a person accidentally touch an energized electrode. While electricity passes through the skin, it won’t affect internal organs or create a cardiac event like DC or lower-frequency AC power.

Weed growth and time of application are key to the amount of energy used. As power is limited, this relationship determines the maximum machine width. Early weed growth will allow larger units for higher productivity.

The company offers 60 kW models, but plans for 90, 120, and 180 kW units on wider toolbars are underway. Research is also being conducted to advance the software and make it capable of proactively estimating biomass to match electricity demands rather than continuously running at full power.

Plans are underway for a 3 m. (10 ft.) front mount with a rear generator, followed by a 6 m. (20 ft.) rear mount with a front power pack.

Hall estimates the cost of their 3 m. model will be approximately \$216,000, while the 6 m. will retail for around \$347,000.

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“People can’t believe the splitter. They look at the hit and miss and can’t believe it can run or how the railway jack works to split the wood,” says Higginbottom.

Hit-And-Miss Log Splitter Rides On Combine Frame

Herb Higginbottom didn’t like splitting wood with an axe, so he built a wood splitter. He used a hit-and-miss engine he found in the weeds about 50 years ago. Initially, he planned to hook it up to a pump. Instead, he used it to power the splitter he made with an old railroad jack. Then he mounted it all on a stripped-down Massey-Harris No. 17 combine.

“The engine is a 1 1/2-hp. Fuller and Johnson from the 1920s,” says Higginbottom. “It was seized when I found it, but I got it unstuck with some diesel fuel, transmission oil and a little heat. I got the rings loose without breaking them, so it still has the original rings. All it needed was two spark plugs.”

The splitter uses a piece of 2-in. thick steel tapered and stepped down from 8 in. to 6 in. to 4 in. in length. A cloth belt runs from the engine pulley to an IH tractor clutch pulley.

“A cam on the pulley oscillates back and forth to ratchet the railway jack,” explains Higginbottom. “It ratchets two teeth at a time, pushing the wood into the stepped wedge.”

The entire affair rides on the combine, which retains its engine, operator station and axles. Higginbottom notes that Massey-Harris No. 17 combines with their 4-cyl. engines were made from 1939 to 1942 and still had magnetos. He found one at a scrap yard, and at \$50, the price was right.

“The engine was seized, but all I wanted were the drive wheels,” says Higginbottom. “However, the scrap dealer wanted the same price for the entire combine as for the wheels.”

Mini Baler Makes 1-Ft. Bales

Ivan Lapp of Ronks, Penn., sells mini balers for making small-scale hay bales for pet shops, ornamental purposes and more. “Esch Hay Equipment originally made the balers,” says Lapp. “I purchased the company in 2016.”

While other small balers exist, they can’t tackle automatic tying and require users to tie each bale by hand. “This is the only self-tie model, which cuts down the work,” says Lapp. “You can easily make several hundred bales in an hour.” Standard bales measure 4 1/2 in. by 6 in. and are 12 in. long, though the bale length is adjustable. The baler itself measures 8 ft. by 8 ft. by 5 ft. high.

Lapp sells the mini baler locally but will also ship nationwide. Pricing per unit is subject to change, so call for up-to-date information.

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Higginbottom stuck a bar in the engine and broke it loose. Realizing he could mount the splitter to it, he stripped the combine of everything and brought home what he needed.

“I put diesel fuel in the engine and cranked it over until rust quit coming out of it. I plugged it up, and it has started on the first crank ever since,” says Higginbottom. “When it won’t start, my wife whispers that it’s out of gas. I fill it up, and it starts.”

Higginbottom put the mobile wood splitter together many years ago when he heated with wood. He also drove it in local parades.

“It was beautiful to drive in parades,” recalls Higginbottom. “I would take it to our fall fair and split wood for the steam engine demonstrations.”

While he no longer burns wood nor brings it to parades, he still pulls it out to demonstrate at Deep Creek Tool Museum.

“People can’t believe the splitter,” he says. “They look at the hit and miss and can’t believe it can run or how the railway jack works to split the wood.”

The museum houses his collection of more than 3,000 old tools, engines, household items and equipment, which dates back to the early 1900s and includes a giant 4,000-lb. push lawnmower (Vol. 46, No. 6), which he built as a roadside attraction.

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