

## Tree “Fork” Digs Out Trees, Bushes

Paul Ezra made a heavy duty tree “fork” for his loader tractor that makes it easy to pull out problem trees or bushes.

The Winamac, Indiana, farmer got the idea after he lost more than 100 windbreak arborvitae because of a fire and needed to dig out the dead trees and burn them. He mounted five old chisel plow tines on a rectangular metal frame that quick-taches to the loader on his Deere front wheel assist tractor.

“Since the trees were growing on sandy ground, I’m able to use downpressure on the loader and curve the tines under the tree roots until I can lift out the tree. I usually dig about 12 to 14 in. deep with the tines. A few shakes with the loader and most of the sand falls out of the roots. Then I carry the tree to a burn pile,” says Ezra.

“American arborvitae don’t have a tap root, just a big mass of hairy roots so even a 16 to 18-ft. tall tree can be pulled out of the ground relatively easily. I don’t think the same idea

would work as well in heavy soil because the dirt wouldn’t shake out. In heavy clay you might not even be able to work the tines into the ground, although it might help if you used fewer tines. I think the same idea would also work to dig out rocks.”

He bought the chisel plow tines at an auction for \$5 apiece. Each tine measures 1 1/2 in. by 2 1/2 in. and has a digging length of about 3 ft. He unbolted the points but otherwise didn’t modify the tines in any way. He used 1 by 4-in. steel plate to make the mounting frame and mounted the tines on it, spacing them about 10 in. apart.

“I used scrap metal to build the mounting frame so my total cost was less than \$30,” notes Ezra.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul Ezra, 9341 S. State Road 39, Winamac, Ind. 46996 (ph 574 278-7219).



Tree “fork” was made by mounting five old chisel plow tines on a rectangular metal frame, which quick-taches to the loader on Ezra’s Deere MFWD tractor.

## Ford Van Converted Into Longbed Pickup

“It was relatively inexpensive to build and has design features that eliminate many of the problems with factory-built pickups,” says Bruce Mossbrucker, Sewell, N.J., who converted a 1985 Ford E-350 1-ton van into a pickup equipped with a 10 1/2-ft. long bed.

He cut the body off about 12 in. behind the driver’s seat and made a new back for the cab. He also designed and built the bed, fenders, combination rear bumper/tow hitch, and spare tire mount. The bed has an upper floor on both sides and a lower floor in the middle. Stake pockets allow adding 2-ft. high wooden extensions.

“I was looking for a used 3/4-ton pickup but nothing was available in my price range. It took two years to build,” says Mossbrucker.

The bed’s length really comes in handy, he says. “A standard 3/4-ton pickup has an 8-ft. bed. You wouldn’t believe the difference the extra 2 1/2 ft. makes. Also, the van I used is wider than a pickup so the bed is also wider.”

He paid \$600 for the van, which was equipped with a 351 cu. in., 5.8-liter V-8 gas engine. After cutting the body off, he made a wooden frame to fit the back of the cab and bolted a 16-ga. steel plate to the back of that. He cut a hole in the middle of the plate to

install a sliding window.

He used 14 ga. steel and 2-in. sq. tubing to build a frame for the bed and bolted it onto the van’s frame. Metal cross pieces spaced 24 in. apart form a grid that supports the floor which is made from 3/16-in. thick steel.

He also used 14 ga. steel to build the fenders and sheet metal to build a one-piece tailgate. The tailgate pivots on a 1-in. dia. steel rod that rides on sealed roller bearings.

The truck now has about 160,000 miles on it but still has the original engine, which gets 8 to 9 mpg. “I plan to replace it with a more fuel efficient engine. I also plan to mount toolboxes on both sides between the cab and rear fenders,” says Mossbrucker.

The wheelbase from the front wheels to the back is 138 in. compared to 128 in. on a factory pickup. The extra length allowed Mossbrucker to build the longer bed.

He says his conversion also leaves more room behind the seat. “On the standard E-350 cutaway series cab there’s just 2 in. of space behind the door jamb and the back of the cab, but on mine there’s 12 in. As a result, I was able to push the seat two inches farther back from the steering wheel. Also, I used the extra room to add a shelf for more



A heavy-duty pickup with a 10 1/2-ft. long bed. That’s what Bruce Mossbrucker got when he converted a 1985 Ford E-350 1-ton van. The extra long cargo box has a multi-level bed.



storage space behind the seat.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bruce Mossbrucker, 456 Center St., Sewell, N.J. 08080 (ph 856 468-6297; mcmoss@verizon.net).

## Van Converted To Sleeper Pickup

“It comes in handy and was relatively easy to do,” says Norman Foellmi, Sparta, Wis., who converted a 1985 Winnebago Centauri van into a “sleeper pickup” with a cargo box on back.

Foellmi collects Oliver garden tractors and often takes them to shows. The truck has a 6-ft. bed that’s big enough to haul one garden tractor at a time. The cab is big enough to have a bench seat (located behind the van’s two front bucket seats) that folds down into a bed, and a small vanity with a water pump for washing up. Both the folding seat and vanity were already part of the van. There are two big darkened windows on the sides of the van and one on back. A homemade tailgate doubles as a loading ramp.

Foellmi already had the diesel-powered Centauri van, which had high mileage but was still in good shape. It has a wheelbase of 158 inches and is 20 ft. long from bumper to bumper.

He cut a 6-ft. long section out of the back of the van and then moved the rear panel forward, with windows intact, and fastened it back in place. He removed an air stream cap

from the back end of the van and remounted it. He added the tailgate on back and also screwed stainless steel rails along both sides of the bed. The rig still has its original tail-lights.

“I had been using a pickup and trailer, but it’s much easier to get around without having a trailer on back,” says Foellmi. “It gets a lot of second looks wherever I take it. When I stop at our local coffee shop people often walk over to look at it. If someone says they’ve never seen one of these before, I tell them that’s because there aren’t too many of them around.

“Most people are familiar with the old Winnebago Lashero and Phaser motorhomes, but many don’t know that Winnebago ever made a van. In fact, when I applied to the state for a van license, instead they mistakenly gave me a motorhome license. I couldn’t convince the authorities that my Winnebago Centauri is a van, not a motorhome.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Norman Foellmi, 10929 Co. Hwy. B, Sparta, Wis. 54656 (ph 608 269-3028).



Norman Foellmi converted a 1985 Winnebago Centauri van into a “sleeper pickup” with a 6-ft. cargo box on back.

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