



Homemade half-tracks on Galowitz's MTD garden tractor allow it to go "just about anywhere."

MTD Garden Tractor Fitted With Tracks, Skis

Adam Galowitz's MTD garden tractor will go just about anywhere, thanks to its homemade half-tracks. A pair of 3-ft. long metal snowmobile skis mount on front of the tractor, and there's a 3-ft. square cargo box on back. The tires are strapped down into steel "cups" on the skis, making them easily removable.

The cargo box can be quickly removed by pulling 2 pins.

"I built the machine for both work and play. The tracks stay on all year long. It's fun to drive and also useful in the field," says Galowitz. "I got the idea because I needed a small tractor to haul tools and logging chains out to an overgrown 20-acre field, where a large Deere loader tractor and bush hog is used to clear away heavy brush. The tractor gets stuck a lot, and I got tired of lugging chains and hoists out there by hand.

"I did a lot of research before I built it. I went on the internet to look at other half-track garden tractors, and tried to steal ideas from as many of them as I could. A design I saw at www.isavetractors.com was very helpful."

He started with a used 1994 MTD 12 1/2 hp. tractor that he bought on Craigslist for \$50.

To make the tracks, Galowitz cut 1-in. angle iron into 8-in. long bars, then cut slits 2 in. from each end and bent the bars around the tractor's rear tires to keep the tracks from slipping off. He then got some 3/8-in. chain and welded one bar to every fourth link, making sure the chain wasn't twisted and was in line with the chain on the other side.

He installed four 8-in. bogie wheels behind the tractor tires on a 3/4-in. dia. axle that's attached to the rear of the tractor. A pair of shocks, mounted between the tracks, keep down pressure on the bogie wheels to hold the tracks tight. The shocks were made from a pair of telescoping pipes, which hinge on metal brackets attached to the tractor's rear bumper. U-shaped pins hold the telescoping pipes in place.

"The shocks work as track slack adjusters and also provide a pivot point for the axle, which allows the tracks to move up and down freely," says Galowitz. "I use a threaded top link off a 3-pt. hitch to keep downward pressure on the axle."

He says the skis come in handy during the winter, and can be quickly removed by taking off a pair of ratchet straps that go over the tractor's front wheels.

He used angle iron to build the cargo box, which has 6-in. high angle iron sides and a polyurethane floor. "The sides are open, but if I did it again I'd enclose the sides to keep



A pair of telescoping shocks keep down pressure on the bogie wheels and allows tracks to move up and down freely. Tractor's front wheels can be fitted with snowmobile skis held on by ratchet straps.



anything from falling out," says Galowitz.

The front end of the tractor is equipped with an electric winch and an LED light bar. Galowitz welded the rear hitch off a truck onto the front bumper to make a receptacle for the winch.

According to Galowitz, part of the fun of the project was figuring out how to make the parts with the equipment he had available in his shop. "I spent only about \$250, using an old angle iron bed frame to build the box, and cutting up the rack on top of a plumber's van to make the shocks. I bought the skis, which are from a 1974 Chaparral snowmobile, on eBay for \$65. It's great when you can recycle old materials into something useful."

You can watch a video of his half-track tractor in action on www.farmshow.com.

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Just 13 years old, Luke Haak built this 4-wheeler sled out of scrap lumber and a pair of old skis.

4-Wheeler Sled Rides On Skis

Luke Haak, a 13-year-old from Pollock, S. Dak., says you don't need to spend a lot of money to make a cargo sled to travel on snow. He used scrap lumber and a pair of old skis to build a low-cost sled, which he pulls behind his 4-wheeler or snowmobile.

"I use it for trapping and for hauling newborn calves during the calving season," says Haak. "I used 2 by 4's and some

lightweight wood panels to build it. There's a compartment on front for storing tools, medicine, and blankets. A small hitch on back can be used to pull a second sled at the same time."

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Piglet's head rests inside a plastic cone to keep him calm, while a pvc restraining bar goes down over animal's rear legs.

Castration "Station" Keeps Piglets Calm, Saves Knees

By Klaire Howerton

After having knee surgery to stitch up a tear in his meniscus, Caleb Howerton, Springfield, Mo., knew he needed a way to hold his Idaho Pasture Pig piglets while castrating them that did not involve squatting or kneeling. After looking at several different styles of castrator boxes online, he came up with his own design using various parts he had laying around.

To build it, he used some scrap 2 by 6, 2 by 4, and 2 by 2 boards along with a piece of 1/2-in. pvc pipe, a heavy-duty half gallon plastic nursery pot, electrical tape, and a piece of fence wire. The base of the unit is 8 1/2 in. wide by 16 1/2 in. long and easy to move around the farm. Next, he took the plastic pot and cut off the base, then cut it lengthwise and taped it into a cone shape with about a 1 1/2-in. hole at one end, and a 4-in. opening at the other. He fastened this with a screw and fencing staples to the base, making a cone where the piglet's head rests during the castration process to keep them calm. On the back of the castration station, Howerton attached two "arms" made of 1-ft. long 2 by 2 boards with a screw loose enough to allow

them to freely pivot, and drilled several holes to slide in a small pvc pipe restraining bar in place. Having several sizing options allows him to adjust it for the size of the piglet he is castrating (up to 25 lbs.). A piece of fencing wire attaches to the pipe and once the piglet is laying in the castration station on its back, the pvc restraining bar goes down over the piglet's rear legs and the wire wraps around a screw at the top of the castrator unit to keep it secure during the process.

The whole process takes less than a minute, keeps the piglets calm and relatively quiet, only requires one person, and thanks to a portable Workmate table set at a convenient height, there is no bending or squatting awkwardly and no unnecessary strain on the knees or back. Since Caleb keeps the castration station attached to the Workmate table, he can simply fold up and store the unit without any hassle.

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