

## Front Mount Makes Cultivating With ATV Easy

With all his plants on 48-in. centers, Norm Sieting has plenty of room to cultivate with his ATV. Mounting the cultivator on the front of the 4-wheeler gives him all the visibility he needs.

"I bought a yard rake from Sportsman's Guide online store, but the tines weren't heavy enough, and the tines bent," recalls Sieting. "I built a heavy-duty one but found a use for the one I bought as a garden cultivator."

Sieting took the tine bar off the tow-behind carriage and mounted it on his ATVs modified front end. He had previously replaced the ATV's snowplow push tube with a receiver hitch with a riser hitch on it.

"I mounted a cargo rack on the riser and still had the lower hitch available for the cultivator bar," says Sieting.

After removing the center tines, he welded the flat toolbar to a hitch shank made from 2 by 2-in. steel tubing and slipped it into the receiver hitch. Initially, the tines tended to dig in too deep.

"I added mounts for a set of wheels from an old rototiller to the bar, giving the tines about a 1 1/2-in. depth," says Sieting. "I also added galvanized aluminum shields inside the wheels to keep from running over plants. It works great on the tilled garden, and with the shallow depth, the tines don't bend like they did as a yard rake."

Sieting's cultivator is just one way he uses the ATV in the garden. He also uses it for marking rows. He added 2 by 6-in. shoes at 48-in. intervals to a 10 ft. pine board. The shoes are angled, and when the board is pulled through the freshly tilled garden, it leaves trenches. Pulling the marker board in a perpendicular direction creates a



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checkerboard effect.

"The trenches are deep enough that I can walk along and drop in seeds and then fill in the trench," says Sieting. "With transplants, I put the seedlings at the intersections of the row marks and cross-cultivate as they grow. I could cry when I think of all the years I used stakes and twine to make garden rows."

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## Mobile Coop Has Wooden Wheels

With a mobile coop made of treated wood down to the wheels, Alvin Reaux plans to keep his chickens safe and happy for a long time so they'll provide eggs for him and a neighbor who provided material for the coop.

"The 3/4-in. treated plywood wheels save the cost of wheels, and they'll last a long time," he says, adding the wood wheels from a coop he had for 12 years are still good. The coop, however, was damaged when Hurricane Ida hit Louisiana.

Though it's heavy, the coop pushes easily on dry ground. However, when the ground is wet, the narrow wheels dig in, Reaux notes. He uses his lawn mower to push against the boards on the ends of the coop. The boards line up with the mower's bumper, and he can push slowly as the chickens move with the coop.

He designed the portable building to be easy to maintain. It's tall enough to walk inside, but he has outside access to the roosting box to clean it out into a wheelbarrow. The water bucket hangs slightly above the ground, so it doesn't have to be removed when he moves the coop each day.

"The feed bin is covered, so no rain gets in. The roof is 3/4-in. plywood covered with sheet metal," Reaux says. "My eggs are always clean." Screened openings allow airflow to prevent mold and keep the bedding dry.

The 4 by 10-ft. coop for his six hens cost about \$350. To protect it from heavy winds and hurricanes, Reaux parks it near his home and secures it with ground stakes and straps.

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**Reaux designed the portable building to be easy to maintain. It's tall enough to walk inside, but he has outside access to the roosting box to clean it out into a wheelbarrow.**



## Power To Go...Wherever Needed

Randy Johnson provides power to go with solar panels loaded on trailers. Johnson and his partners got into the business when they bought 400 12kW trailers with 2,500 watts of solar panel capacity. Demand proved strong enough that the company is introducing its own design later this year.

The trailers quickly proved ideal as remote power sources for construction sites, farm and ranch needs, disaster recovery, and more.

"We have about 90 units for sale with new units deliverable before the end of the year," says Johnson. "The new units will have panels that automatically track the sun. They'll also automatically sense the wind, and if it's too high, they'll store the panels to reduce the chance of storm damage."

The concept of a solar panel-covered trailer had been patented by a former auto mechanic in California. Later manufacturing rights were picked up by a distributor in Indiana near the factory where the mobile solar units were assembled.

In some cases, Johnson upgraded systems to make 16kW and 20kW systems with 4,940-watt capacity. The standard 12kW (\$25,500) and high capacity 16kW (\$32,500) systems are mounted on 22-ft. by 8-ft. by 8 1/2-ft. trailers.

The 20kW (\$48,500) systems are mounted on 22-ft. by 8-ft. by 9-ft. 3-in. trailers. They include a central control color touchscreen for monitoring and control with alert notifications to cellphones or laptops.

All three models are equipped with two 510 aH flooded lead-acid industrial batteries, a backup propane generator, and at least 1,000 watts of battery storage.

Four 30-lb. propane tanks stored on the trailer are easily removable and refillable. The generator features auto-start and shutdown.

"The backup generator only kicks in if the battery storage drops to 50 percent of full charge," says Johnson. "Then it turns on and runs for 3 hrs. until the battery bank is back up to 90 percent."

In the 3 years since starting the business, they've sold 275 mobile solar generator trailers from New Hampshire to California and Florida to Minnesota.

More than 100 systems have been used in northern California, where big fires have



**Solar powered trailers can provide power to remote locations or be used when regular power is out.**

taken a toll. "One customer brought theirs into the local fire department and police station so first responders would have power," says Johnson. "Other customers find the systems more economical than hooking up to the grid. Our record was a customer near Lake Tahoe who was told it would cost \$75,000 to hook her home up to the grid."

Another customer was a cattle rancher with an 1,800-sq. ft. home with three barns spread out around his 1,500-acre property. The home and the barns have wells, pumps, and storage tanks, but no grid-based power.

"About every 2 weeks, he unhooks the trailer from his house and drives to the three barns, fills the storage tanks, and returns home," says Johnson.

In addition to panels that track the sun, the new systems will be more efficient and will be available with a more powerful set of specifications if the customer wants them. Another change is that the new solar panels will be made in the U.S. Within a year, Johnson expects to be able to source batteries and inverters domestically as well.

"Our systems qualify for the same 30 percent tax credits as non-mobile solar," says Johnson. "However, our systems cost 30 to 40 percent less for the same solar panels and batteries than rooftops because our installation happens on the factory floor."

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**Steelmaster buildings are ideal for farm shops, machinery storage and livestock production.**

## Metal Building Kits For Any Application

Whether you're a hobby farmer, a full-time crop and livestock farmer, or just someone who needs space for projects, Steelmaster has metal building kits that can be designed around your needs. The company will design a building for equipment storage, livestock production, heated shop space, bulk storage, a car or truck port, an airline hangar, or even a full-size cover for shipping containers. From small sheds to barns, garages, and commercial buildings, the company has buildings to fit any budget.

Steelmaster buildings have arched and rounded roofs with end walls that can be fully enclosed with garage and man doors, even decorated entrances. Buildings can be

insulated with spray foam or batts. Windows, doors, skylights, and ventilation can be added as needed. They're made of 12 to 22 ga. grade 80 steel with Galvalume Plus coating that's 55 percent aluminum, 43.4 percent zinc, and 1.6 percent silicone. Buildings are rated to withstand winds up to 190 mph and carry a 40-year warranty.

The typical Quonset hut cost ranges from \$14 to \$20 per sq. ft. depending on building size and options.

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