

Raking leaves never the same

As I drove to work this week, the streets were lined with brown paper bags.

You know, those huge paper bags the urban populace uses to gather up their fallen leaves, and leave 'em along the curb to be taken away. That system works in town, but it wouldn't be practical in the country.

A couple weeks ago, The Sidekick had one of her ambitious spells.

"I'm gonna rake some leaves," she said. "There's quite a few around the house."

I'm always leery of someone raking the leaves around the farm house. They collect into a huge pile, then are left for me to get rid of.

A few years ago, when my nephew was a landscaper, he brought in an industrial-strength leaf blower. It was mounted on wheels and had a 10 horsepower Briggs & Stratton motor on it. I tell ya, leaves were no contest with that little monster.

Of course that leaf blower's no longer available, and before long The Sidekick had a mountain of leaves piled up.

"What are you going to do with them now?" I asked.

"Can't you just take them away with the front-end loader, or maybe the manure spreader?" she asked.

I agreed, but the leaves sat in a pile, only to be rained on that night.

I told that story to tell another.

Over the past few years, I've found my neck doesn't bend as well as it used to. And living on a farm with a long lane, using a rear-mounted snowblower on the farm tractor, where I back into the snow looking over my shoulder, all the way out the lane—well, it's become a bit of a pain in the neck, no pun intended.

Last spring, The Sidekick convinced me to look into other alternatives.

A front-mounted snowblower would be the ideal solution, but after pricing them, it simply wasn't in the cards.

After more research I came across another style of a rear-mounted blower. It's still mounted on the back of the tractor, but the tractor drives through the snow first,

Ted Brown



and the blower follows behind, blowing away the snow.

One can drive forward out the lane, and only need to look behind once in a while.

Some nay-sayers think driving through the snow first is going to cause problems, but my tractor has more than two feet clearance—that's one helluva snowstorm to have two feet of accumulation. Not only that, the blower's opening is more than 30 inches—like I said lots of capacity. And I still have the old snowblower should it become super-deep.

As most males know, when one acquires a new piece of equipment, it's a compulsory ritual to attach it and make certain it's going to work as expected. That ritual includes starting it, running it up and down the lane, to make sure the tractor and blower are balanced, the vantage points are visible and the whole package is esthetically pleasing, should one of the male neighbours see it while driving by.

As I tested the tractor and blower, I put it in gear. The throaty roar of the tractor was complimented by the powerful whine of the gigantic blower on the eight-foot wide snow blower.

Sigh—it was a beautiful moment.

As I sat there and savoured it, I noticed the blower had quite a bit of suction to it. Dry leaves on the ground were sucked into it like a vortex.

Okay, remember that pile of leaves?

I lowered the snow blower to a couple inches off the ground, and inched forward.

As the airborne leaves came to rest in the marshland, I thought to myself: raking leaves will never be the same.

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