

GARDEN CARTS by Charlie Beck

Over the years I've bought many different garden carts. Some were more useful and durable than others and some of these carts had inherent design flaws. I'll share my experiences with you. Keep in mind none of these carts replace a wheelbarrow, which is designed for dumping. Even though these "pull carts" are easier to maneuver than a wheelbarrow none of them (except the power wagon) are better at dumping.



Figure 1

carts with this configuration.

Figure 1 shows a cart with a "v" shape poly tub. The shape of tub and its position of the tub relative to the wheels can cause the problem of tipping the cart backwards when loading. Even though it is stable when evenly loaded, off center loads might be a problem. I would steer clear of

Figure 2 shows an inexpensive cart which has a few flaws.



Figure 2

The short handle causes the cart to run up your ankles if you pull the cart directly behind you. It has small plastic wheels mounted on a steel tube axle. The steel tube axle quickly rusts away but can be replaced with a solid bar. The small wheels do not rotate on ball bearings so they are not meant to carry heavy loads. Larger wheels roll much easier. Another disadvantage of this cart is the shape of the front legs. These wide, stump legs can cause a drag when pulling this cart over tall grass or a meadow. The body of this cart has no seams and is quite durable when left outside. This cart is properly balanced over the wheels. Rubbermaid makes a larger version of this cart with 20" wheels. That cart still has the same wide stump front legs, so if high grass is not an issue for you, the larger Rubbermaid cart might work for you.

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Figure 3 is a well balanced cart with a handle of adequate length. The 16" wheels feature no flat tires and roll quite easily with heavy loads. The tubular steel frame glides through high grass, but it is not galvanized. If you leave this cart outside, the frame will quickly rust away. The poly tub is bolted to the frame. Cracks can form around the tub mounting holes which reduce its durability. This would be a great cart if you can store it inside out of the weather.



Figure 3

Figure 4 is a large capacity cart with a galvanized steel tubular frame and an exterior grade plywood box. It has 26" pneumatic tires and each wheel hub has two ball bearings. This cart has a huge 13 cubic foot capacity. This unit currently sells for \$389 on Amazon and requires assembly.

Smaller units with 20" wheels are also available. The advantage of a wooden box is that you can easily add provisions for holding shovels, loping shears, and other garden essentials. I even added hooks to the sides so I can overload the cart with trimmings and then use a strap to compress and secure the load. The large wheels are easy to roll with most loads. The weight capacity is 400 pounds. I even mounted a hitch to the cart so I could pull heavy loads with the lawn tractor. The end panel is hinged so that you can dump a load of soil or rock. The disadvantage of the hinged end panel is that it can leak the contents from the cracks at the joint. The large capacity is great but its size makes the unit less maneuverable. Because the box was made of plywood, I have always kept this unit in a storage shed. I doubt the plywood would last long if stored outside. As for balance, this cart is designed to never tip over.



Figure 4

Figure 5 shows a Muller's Smart Cart. It is manufactured in the USA. This cart has a 7 cubic foot capacity but also is available with a 12 cubic foot tub. Both sized tubs snap in place on the same sized frame (no bolt holes). The tub has a lip around the top edge so you can strap oversized loads down for easy transport. This cart has 20" wheels with ball bearing hubs. I first saw these carts at Lotusland in California. Even though the \$349 retail price seems high, everything about this cart is top quality. The best feature of this cart is the aluminum frame which has a lifetime guarantee. My cart has been stored outside year round for over 14 years and the frame looks brand new. The tub is UV treated but after 14 years in the sun it did develop a crack which I fixed with a fiberglass repair kit. Replacement tubs are offered for sale by the manufacturer. The only other repair I did was to replace the wheel bearings, which was quite easy to do. We have two bearing outlets in the WPB area so replacement bearings are inexpensive and readily available. Balance, durability, design and maneuverability are all highpoints of this cart and I repeat "made in America."



Figure 5

Figure 6 shows the DR Power Wagon sold by DR Industries. DR Industries offers a whole line of garden equipment which you might have seen advertised on TV or in magazines. Their products are made in Vermont, USA. I have bought many pieces of equipment from them and I can attest that their customer service is first rate. They keep record of all of your purchases and stock replacement parts for their equipment. They even have technicians which can guide you



Figure 6
(Continued on page 2)

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in diagnosis and repair of their equipment. I use this power wagon more than any other piece of power equipment. If I couldn't repair it, I would immediately replace it. This wagon is meant for large gardens. It has 6 cubic foot capacity and a removable stake side box. It is powered by a 6.75 hp motor and has an electric start and dump feature. It has an 800 pound load capacity. The front wheels are drive wheels and the swivel rear wheel allows zero turn radii. At times I have 2 tons of fertilizer delivered to our front gate. I can move 500# of fertilizer at a time with this cart. Any heavier loads are hard to steer on sugar sand. I can transport a dozen concrete blocks or 4x4 fence posts with this wagon. I transport 12 bins of mulch at a time with this wagon. You can attach an electric 25 gallon tank sprayer to its battery and motor around while spraying. It also has an optional poly tub that can replace the stake side box. I've owned this

wagon for more than 10 years. Of course you want to store this \$2600 wagon (retail price) inside.

In conclusion, weigh the following features before buying a cart: handle length, load balance, load capacity, rust or rot resistance, wheel size, wheel bearing type, and overall durability. My first choice is the Smart Cart for its light weight aluminum frame which can be stored outside. For a large garden the Power Wagon is a useful asset.