

Cart Platform

someonesdad1@gmail.com 15 Aug 2011

Updated 3 Jun 2020

Nearly 20 years ago we got one of the little \$70 yard carts from Harbor Freight:



The current model number at Harbor Freight is 38137 (it's \$85 as of Jun 2020) and it's rated to hold 1000 pounds (450 kg). I recently made a simple platform for the top from 1/2" plywood. Here's a picture of it holding a couple of cubic feet of dirt:



I needed to raise a sprinkler up a couple of inches, so I dug out this hole (there's a valve in the hole, which explains why the hole is wider than it looks like it needs to be). The nice thing about the platform is that it can hold two or three cubic feet of dirt and I don't have to put the dirt on the lawn. A side benefit is that if I have to leave the hole open for a few days, I can move the cart if I wish. If I need to use the cart, I can unload the dirt onto a concrete patio and it's easy to put back on the cart when needed.

That piece of plywood came from a waterbed my wife bought about 40 years ago. I coated it with some Olympic water-based acrylic waterproofing coating. I also screwed some bosses to the bottom (made from some of the excess plywood I cut off from the sheet) to allow it to index on the top of the cart:



Update 21 Sep 2011: I have used this cart with this platform over the last month or so a number of times and find it quite useful. I gave the top side three coats of a good exterior latex paint when I was painting an outbuilding of ours, so I plan to leave the plywood outside all the time. I used it to unload and haul 11 sheets of 3/8 plywood from my wife's van and it hauled the normally-cumbersome load of plywood quite well. This simple addition makes the little green cart almost as useful as our Garden Way cart (which we've used for 24 years).

Update 10 Aug 2012: I added some sides to the platform earlier this year:



Figure 1

The boards are surplus 1.5" thick stuff that my wife bought from a waterbed place going out of business (we got quite a bit of useful wood from that purchase). The sides are held onto the bottom

with some 3/8" lag screws. The corners have some 4" long bugle head screws holding them together.

I've used this 3-sided platform numerous times to hold the dirt when digging a hole. In the last few days, I've dug down to a sprinkler line 18" down to attach two new sprinklers. The hole had to be roughly a cube 1.5 feet on a side (actually, a bit bigger) and the cart/platform held the approximate 4 cubic feet of dirt that came out of the hole. I do have to put bricks under the far side to keep it from tipping over, as the platform is wider than the cart.

Update 21 Jun 2018: I made outrigger wheels for the above 3-sided platform from "2 by" wood and the worked well. A few years ago I used some 1 inch diameter steel tubing to make a rear axle assembly that widened the track of the rear wheels, reducing the tendency of this cart to tip over when going around corners with heavy loads. This was worthwhile. Finally, I cut the handle off and made an extension with a cross pin and hitch pin that allows me to tow this cart behind my lawn mower. I use this frequently for hauling loads around our property.

Update 3 Jun 2020: Last year we bought another of these carts, as our first one has been used so much the holes in the metal are wearing out. I happened to have a piece of 3/8 inch plywood that was exactly the same size as the top of the car, so I screwed four chunks of 2x4 to the bottom to index it in the recess of the top of the cart and added three 2x4s to make sides analogous to the sides in Figure 1. This won't hold as much dirt as the plywood piece shown in Figure 1, but it's more convenient, as I can pick up an edge and dump the dirt or sand like a side-dumping dump truck. I have used it to move many loads of sand around the house in couple of brick projects.

The wooden structure shown in Figure 1 has sat outside for so long that much of the paint is gone and the wood is rotting. But it's still useful and I used it in the brick project yesterday to move two big loads of dirt to the back yard.

Cart criticisms

These carts have their wheels too close together (i.e., the track is too narrow as shown in Figure 2).

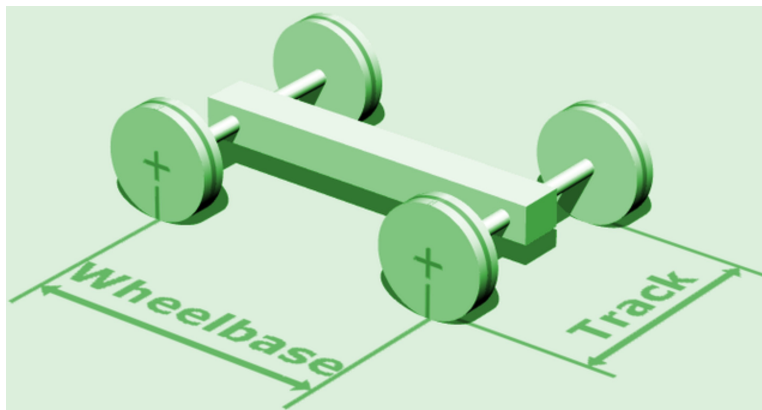


Figure 2

A heavy load like a big log can cause the cart to tip over if it isn't exactly centered and you're moving over rough ground.

Another weakness of these carts are the pneumatic tires: things like puncture weed can damage the tire. You can pay a local tire place to fill them with a material that makes a flat less likely.