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My original SteppIR antenna was the 3-element yagi with 6M passive element, 40-30M element with truss, SDA 100 controller, and several other options. I bought it in 2010 and erected it on a 40-foot tower beside our 2-story home, where it was a splendid performer until we moved from that home to a retirement community.

The retirement folks permitted me to have an inverted-vee wire antenna in the woods behind our cottage - unfortunately the wire antenna was high maintenance, being brought down by falling limbs on frequent occasions. The final insult, was the tree the wire antenna was attached to was struck by lightning, and the lightning arrester failed, diverting the surge to ground via the rig and causing much damage, but fortunately no fire.

I needed a new solution and received permission to erect a SteppIR ground-mounted vertical with a movable metal tape, which when fully retracted would not attract lightning.

At Hamvention I spoke with Mike K7IR, who happened to have a SmallIR with him – so I bought it on the spot, ordered the 80-60-40-30 coil box, and when I returned home, I took the SDA 100 out of storage.

With the help of friends and a paid contractor, we installed eighteen 16-foot radials in the lawn outside our cottage, which meant a much shorter coax run (30 feet) than I had to the wire antenna in the woods (110 feet), and the SmallIR was in service!

In order to satisfy the neighbors who have to look at the antenna, I planted 4 dwarf Alberta spruce trees (only a couple of feet high) in pots around the base of the antenna, over a bed of large gray pebbles, which makes an attractive attempt at landscaping. The dark green mast is perfect camouflage against the woods in summer, and not obtrusive in winter.

I marvel every time I complete a contact with a weak station! In the past two years since I've been on FT8 and FT4, I've made over 5,000 contacts, and I've worked and confirmed all states and over 100 DXCC entities on each mode. I love this antenna. It really works!

