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Asparagus Machine Cuts Harvest Time In Half

Hand picking his four acres of asparagus used to be a four or five-hour job for Fred Knapp and two other workers. Now the Nicholasville, Kentucky, farmer says they can do it in two hours or less.

Unlike some vegetables, asparagus doesn't lend itself to mechanical harvest, but Knapp figured if a machine could carry pickers as well as the harvested asparagus, it would save time. While discussing his idea with other growers, Knapp learned of a former asparagus grower in Oklahoma who had already made the kind of machine he envisioned. Since it was no longer being used, Knapp was able to buy it.

It was made from the wide front axle off an Allis Chalmers G tractor and the rear end of a pickup, complete with differential and 16-in. wheels and tires. It's powered by a 12 hp Kohler single cylinder engine, with built-in alternator and electric starter. The engine is coupled to a three-speed transmission by a V-belt and pulleys, with a belt-tightener

clutch. A chain and sprocket drive connects the transmission to the differential.

The machine has seats and foot rests for three pickers. The center picker operates the machine, using hand levers for the clutch, engine throttle and brakes. He steers it by pushing on the left footrest to go left or the right footrest to go right.

It has a canopy to keep the rain and sun off workers. "We pick into plastic grocery store type bags. When a bag is filled, we put it on a rack behind us," he says.

"It even has lights for night picking," Knapp says.

"We had to modify the machine a little, but it was almost exactly what I was looking for," Knapp says. "We widened the wheel spacing to make it more stable. And we beefed up the steering so it turns quicker and shorter."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Fred Knapp, 2407 Vince Road, Nicholasville, Ky. 40356 (ph 859 887-2582).

Drawstring Covers Have Many Uses

Duke Rorer, Cynthiana, Kentucky, got tired of picking up trash when wind or stray dogs knocked over cans before the garbage man arrived. And if he left the lids on the cans when he put them on the curb, wind would blow the lids away before he could retrieve them.

With his wife, Gina, Rorer designed and made new tops for their garbage cans. They're made from vinyl-reinforced nylon with a nylon rope inside the outside seam of the cover that they cinch down. To make sure they wouldn't blow away after the garbage man emptied the can, they added an anchor strap that fastens around the handle.

Once the neighbors saw what they'd made, they all wanted some too, so the Rorers formed a company called "Curb-Top" to make and market the covers.

The Curb - Top cover fits any size trash can, round or square, with up to a 24-in. opening. They'll also fit a 55-gal. drum. Curb - Top Jr. fits 5-gal. buckets and Curb - Top Mini covers anything that has an opening ranging from 2 to 6 in.

"People have found all kinds of uses for them," Rorer says. "They can also be used to cover broadcast seeders, fans, exhaust pipes, and more."

Prices range from \$4.95 (plus shipping) for Curb - Top Minis, to \$9.95 for Curb - Top (up to 24-in. dia. size). They'll custom make covers up to 48 in. in diameter. Rorer says if you call with dimensions, he'll be able to quote a price for a custom top.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Curb-Top, 146 Jill Lane, Cynthiana, Ky. 41031



Garbage can tops are made from vinyl-reinforced nylon, with nylon rope inside the outside seam of the cover.



Tops can also be used to cover broadcast seeders, fans, exhaust pipes, and more.

(ph 859-234-4420; toll free 866 320-4757; fax 859 234-4420; E-mail: curbttop@kih.net; Website: www.curbtop.com).



Silage defacer was custom-built for an older skid steer loader that didn't have enough hydraulic capacity to run most commercial units.

Custom-Built Silage "Defacer"

"We custom-built this silage defacer for an older skid steer loader that didn't have enough hydraulic capacity to run most commercial units," says Leon Leinbach, Blue Mountain Equipment, New Tripoli, Penn.

"It cuts a 4-ft. swath about 3 in. deep. We took heavy flail knives and bent them to a 90° angle and bolted them solid to the beater head. This cuts a smooth tight face on the silage pile that seals off the air. It's so effective that after a couple hours, you can actually feel the difference in temperature between the shaved surface and where silage was scooped away with a bucket."

"The defacer is powered by a 4.5 cu. in. hydraulic motor and the beater head is chain-driven at 75 percent of motor speed. It has

four rows of 12 knives each. The knives are spaced on 4 in. centers. Two rows have the knife edge turned to the left and two to the right. This offsets the knives so there is a knife cutting every 2 in. across the face. The knives cut about 2 1/2 in. wide so there is some overlap. We made the frame 4 1/2 ft. long so we can reach the top of a 14-ft. pile.

"We designed the machine and did the hydraulic work. A local machine shop did the fabrication and lathe work. Total cost was around \$1,800."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Leon Leinbach, Blue Mountain Equipment LLC, 7280 Borman Road, New Tripoli, Penn. 18066 (ph 610 298-3483).

Reproduction Seats Look Like Originals

Finding a replacement seat when restoring an older tractor has always been a problem. That's what prompted K&M Manufacturing, Renville, Minnesota, to get into the business some 45 years ago.

"We specialize in Farmalls but we also have seats available for John Deere, Massey Ferguson, Allis Chalmers, Case and Oliver," says Kevin Mulder, K&M's marketing manager.

He says you're not likely to find better reproductions anywhere.

"We use seat cover material that has the look and feel of the original. We recently started making Farmall pan seats in the original silver and black canvas-like material which was used in the early Farmalls. Many of the original seats had embossed pleating in the vinyl and we have been able to duplicate that as well."

Not only do they stock frames and cushions, but they can also custom build just about any seat. For example, one frequent customer owns a number of rare Co-Op tractors.

"We make all our own tooling and patterns," Mulder explains. "With our laser cutting and forming capability, we're able to make hard-to-find parts by copying the original."

Even if the old part is worn, rusted out or broken, there's a good chance they'll still be able to make a replacement in their custom shop.

The company's Internet site has photos of most of the seats they stock. Check there or call their toll-free number to find whether



Farmall pan seat cushion has a steel core and a brass drain hole.



Deluxe utility seat and back cushions have a pleated covering.

they have what you need or to ask about custom-built seats and cushions. Mulder says they keep the tooling and patterns for custom jobs, so even if they don't stock the seat you want, they might be able to make one quickly.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kevin Mulder, Sales Manager, K&M Manufacturing, Renville, Minn. 56284 (ph 800 328-1752; Website: www.tractorseats.com).