Made It Myself
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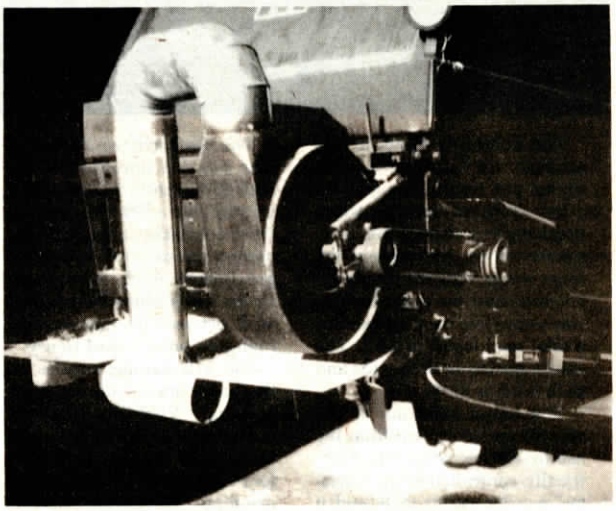

Straw Spreader Blower

"We need to spread out the straw from our no-till wheat when combining so we can get through with a drill. There's equipment on the market for spreading straw behind the combine but it can cost $3,000 and more. I decided there had to be a simpler way to make a blower," says South Dakota farmer, Don Perrion, of Ipswich, who says his straw blower can be built for less than $500.

Perrion rigged up an old 24-in. dia., 8-in. wide blower on the back of his 914 International pull-type combine that blows straw 20-ft. on either side of the machine. The blower turns at about 3,000 rpms and is belt driven off the straw chopper drive.

The fan shoots air through a 6-in. dia. stove pipe. A "T" at the end of the pipe diverts air to either side of the straw spreader. The flat plate above the spreader fins helps channel air out to the sides. Perrion spread the two inside straw spreader fins out so they now direct straw right into the air stream.

Perrion notes that the blower could easily be adapted to fit nearly any self-propelled or pull-type combine. At least one manufacturer is considering building the straw blower.

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"Chisel-Ripper" Plow

Add-on chisel plow shanks spaced between the ripper shanks on his big DMI tillage rig helped Clair Wilson, Winchester, Ill., solve a tough tillage problem.

The trouble was that in Wilson's dense bottom ground the deep-ripping DMI shanks — which tear down 16 to 20 in. through hardpan — leave narrow slots that plug up too easily from soil "fines" which quickly sift in and keep water from soaking into the ground. To solve the problem, Wilson removed the rear row of ripper shanks on the 18-ft. wide rig and replaced them with standard Deere chisel shanks that only dig down 9 to 10 in. Running down the center of the up-front row of ripper shanks, spaced on 30 in. centers, the shallower chisel shanks throw up a mound of dirt that covers the slot cut in the soil.

"It acts like a filter, keeping the slot from plugging up. Water soaks in much better and faster," says Wilson, who had to build brackets to mount the spring-tripped Deere shanks on the DMI machine. Once converted, there's 15-in. spacing between the shanks.

"There seems to be a real benefit to working the soil above and below the hardpan, especially on bottom ground," Wilson says.

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"Zero Turn" Hydrostatic Floating Deck Mower

Al Manternach, Cascade, Iowa wasn't satisfied with the performance and quality of commercial lawn mowers so he developed his own "zero turn" floating deck mower that's designed to have the benefits of both zero turn mowers and garden tractors.

The mower features an up-front 50-in. wide Deere mid-mount deck that rides on a free-floating subframe that also pivots back and forth on up-front wheels. The mower is equipped with a Briggs & Straton 18-hp. twin cylinder engine and mounts sideways to eliminate the need for gearboxes. The drive consists of two Eaton hydrostatic transmissions coupled to each side of the engine and then through chains and sprockets to the axles. Uses standard off-the-shelf parts.

"It's built strong with a 2-in. box steel frame that makes it much stronger than other mowers on the market. It does a better job mowing because it floats to fit the contour and also grass doesn't get compressed by the tires ahead of the mower deck as on many mowers," says Manternach.

The mower uses heavy-duty Eaton motors with built-in oil coolers. He built in a hydraulic lift to raise and lower the deck. "I wanted a mower that would last virtually forever," states Manternach. He's interested in building the mower and says he can build it for several thousand dollars less then existing commercial mowers.

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Add-On Pressure Regulator

"If you run your finger around the inside of your tailpipe and it comes out black, this idea will work for you," says Bob Stewart, Zillah, Wash. He puts in-line fuel pressure regulators on every vehicle and farm equipment engine he owns to boost fuel economy by more uniformly regulating pressure to the carburetor.

The pressure regulator simply splices into the fuel line about 4 in. from the carburetor and adjusts pressure from 1 to 8 psi. "Most car fuel pumps used on farm equipment run as high as 12 psi. I generally set the regulators to run at 2 to 3 psi," says Stewart. He notes that as engines age, higher fuel pressures force extra fuel through the valve seat in the carburetor, forcing fuel into the engine that's not needed.

"It practically eliminates flooding and other carburetor problems related to the flow of fuel," says Stewart. After installing the regulator the unburned fuel in the tailpipe generally turns from black to gray, adds Stewart. He's cut fuel consumption by many machines as much as half.

"My Deere 95 combine used to get just 8.3 hours per 40 gal. tank of fuel but it now goes 19 hrs. per tank with the regulator set at 2½ psi," says Stewart. Fuel pressure regulators are available in auto parts stores for around $20. Stewarts sets them by starting at a low setting and moving up until the engine runs without hesitation.

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