

Great Way To Stake Vegetables

Galvanized cattle panels work great for raising vegetables, say Ken and Sharon O' Brock, North Benton, Ohio, who came up with a labor-saving vegetable staking system for growing tomatoes, cucumbers, pole beans and other "climbing" vegetables.

"It's ideal for small scale vegetable farmers and pick-your-own operations, as well as home gardeners," the O' Brocks say. "It works great with tomatoes and crops such as cucumbers and green beans, which are usually grown in rows on the ground. There's no need to tie the crop to the panels, and no need to stoop down. It also avoids tramping on and damaging the vines."

For tomatoes, panels are set up down each side of the row. The panels are spaced about 1 ft. apart down the row and tied with twine to steel T posts about every 7 ft. The tomato plants grow out through the panels, "staking" themselves. "Growing tomatoes this way works better than using cages because the

panels are stronger and can't fall over when the plants get big. The large squares in the panels make it easy to reach through to pick the tomatoes. And by keeping the tomato plants off the ground it's easier to mulch to prevent weeds and conserve water," they say.

For cucumbers, the panels are installed the same way. "The cucumber vines climb up the panels, making the cucumbers that are hanging down easy to find and pick," say the O' Brocks. "By keeping the vines off the ground there's no danger of stepping on the vines and damaging them, and the cucumbers are cleaner and more uniform in color. There also seems to be fewer problems with insects."

For pole beans, a single row of panels is placed down each row. "We've found varieties of pole beans that are stringless and tasty at any growth stage and also yield more than bush beans. Raised off the ground, the pole beans stay clean and are easier to pick," they say.



Panels are spaced about 1 ft. apart down the row and tied with twine to steel T posts about every 7 ft. Plants grow out through panels, "staking" themselves.

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Net Wire Fence Stretcher Works Fast, Won't Slip

"My new net wire fence stretcher works great on 8-ft. tall high-tensile fences as well as chain link fences. It works fast and pulls the fence tight without slipping," says Russell Everett, D'Hanis, Texas.

Everett lives in an area with a lot of wild animal farms, where they put up 8-ft. high game-proof high-tensile fences.

The fence stretcher consists of two long metal bars - a pulling bar made from 2 by 2-

in. metal tubing, and a gripping bar which has a series of metal prongs on it. A chain hooks to both ends of the pulling bar and to the back of a pickup or tractor.

"The puller attaches in a way that allows the wire to automatically lock into itself. It won't slip," says Everett. "The harder you pull on the wire, the harder it pulls against itself."

"It's simple and goes together quickly.



Net wire fence stretcher consists of two long metal bars - a pulling bar and a gripping bar which has a series of metal prongs on it. Chain hooks to both ends of pulling bar.

Once a fence builder uses it he won't go back to using anything else," notes Everett. (ph 830 363-6133; email: reverett@maverickfencestretchers.com; website: www.maverickfencestretchers.com).

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High-Lift Grapple For Skid Steers

After hurricane Jeanne hit Florida last September, necessity proved to be the mother of invention for Bob Payne. He came up with what he calls a "Boom-Grapple."

Payne is president of Diverse Specialties. He discovered during the massive cleanup that there was nothing on the market to allow skid steers to grab debris and load it into dump trucks.

So he created the 8-ft. long Boom-Grapple that grabs debris and lifts it high to reach over truck boxes.

It fits skid steers and other loaders and works off the machine's hydraulics after attaching two pins.

The booms, made from square steel tubing, are 8 to 10 ft. The encased hydraulic hoses run along the boom's rib to the grapple.

The grapple's "bite" capacity is 3 sq. ft. and it weighs about 350 lbs.

How much weight it can handle depends on the machine it's mounted on. However, a standard 8 ft. Boom-Grapple on a Bobcat T-200 can handle about 3,000 lbs.

"The Boom-Grapple is as versatile as the skid steers themselves," says Sara Hand, marketing director, adding that the grapple can also be used to move debris, large pipes, steel stacks or other things.

Starting price is \$4,000 for a standard 3-ft. boom and grapple.

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Grapple grabs debris and lifts it high to reach over truck boxes.



Grapple's "bite" capacity is 3 sq. ft. and it weighs about 350 lbs.

"Wind diverter" attaches to building exhaust fans, directing air up and down. They save power by shielding fans from winds blowing directly into them.



Wind Diverters Boost Fan Efficiency

Add a "wind diverter" to your building exhaust fans and Charlie O'Kelley says you'll cut fan operating costs and help the fans do a better job of ventilating. On livestock buildings, the diverters also reduce the spread of odor and noise, something neighbors appreciate.

"I put them on a greenhouse in Canada, and they said the diverters paid for themselves the first year in reduced natural gas bills," says O'Kelley, who invented the diverters.

They work by shielding fans from winds blowing directly into them. Even a 5 to 7 mph wind can reduce fan efficiency by 25 percent, says O'Kelley. Increase the wind to 15 mph, and efficiency is cut in half. A direct hard wind can actually stall out a fan and move it backwards, spilling cold air into the building.

O'Kelley compared fans equipped with cones and grills against identical fans equipped with his housing in an on-farm test. With an 18 mph wind gusting to 25 mph, diverter-equipped fans used 30 percent less electricity and exhausted 30 percent more air.

O'Kelley says the increase in efficiency more than makes up for the additional cost of pushing air through the diverter on windless days.

To install the diverters, fan grills must be removed. "On poultry buildings, feathers and dust often freeze up on these grills," says O'Kelley. "We've had people tell us they can pay for the diverter out of the cost for brooms they have to use beating the ice off their fans."

Exhausted air is split into two streams, up and down. O'Kelley says this is the secret to reducing odors from confinement buildings.

The top current is shot out and dispersed, and the bottom half is dropped onto the ground where it settles.

O'Kelley offers diverters to fit 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 24, 36 and 48-in. fans. Prices for diverters range from \$39 for the 8-in. size fan to \$385 for the 48-in. model.

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