

They're Making Compost In Bags

Making compost is easy with the Miller/Ag-Bag compost system. Once the material is in the bag, the bacteria do all the work. The innovative system uses a machine similar to a silage bagger to push waste material into a plastic bag or "pod".

One or more air tubes, depending on the diameter of the bag, are laid in the bottom of the pod as it fills. When full and tied off, a small fan is connected to the air tube or tubes to pump in air that starts aerobic activity that turns the material into compost. In 8 to 12 weeks, depending on the weather, the compost is ready for a final mixing and curing.

"One of the problems with windrowed compost is that you lose four to five percentage points of moisture per day," says David Acres, Acres Equipment, and a sales and training agent for Miller/Ag-Bag. "If it gets below 40 percent, it affects the composting, and you have to add water. With the pod system and its adjustable air vents every 30 ft., you lose some moisture, but most of it stays."

Acres is managing a number of pilot projects for Miller/Ag-Bag using a CT5 machine and a Manure Monster dewatering machine for high water content material. The CT5 fills a 200-ft. long, 5-ft. dia. "EcoPOD" bag requiring a single air tube and a 3-in. fan. The CT5 feed hopper holds approximately 3 1/2 yards for each plunge of the hydraulic ram. A single 5-ft. pod holds approximately 76 tons of material or 250 cu. yds.

The high volume CT10 fills a 10-ft. diameter, 200-ft. bag, holding 200 tons or 500 yards of material. The larger pod requires two air tubes and a 4-in. fan. The feed hopper holds approximately 7.5 cu. yds. of material for each fill. A remote control unit allows the loader operator to run the system.

So far, Acres has used a CT5 on slaughterhouse waste, dead poultry, and municipal

solid wastes. He is also working with contacts in Mexico and Canada responsible for emergency response that might be needed if avian flu infects large flocks. He also reports interest from custom manure applicators dealing with manure management regulations.

One of the attractions of the system is its simplicity. "Other than monitoring the temperature once a day for the first two weeks, you fill the pod and let it go," says Acres.

Making compost in a pod accelerates the composting process. While windrow compost needs to exceed 131 degrees for 15 days, to control pathogens, the pod system requires only 3 consecutive days at 131 degrees.

The pod also eliminates odor problems and reduces the potential attraction for coyotes or other pests. The pod can serve as a storage unit for the finished material, and excess liquids are not a problem.

"With slaughterhouse and municipal solid waste, leachate is a big concern," says Acres. "We normally put the pods on a slight slope and any liquid just goes to one end. The most we've ever collected was five gallons."

Acres notes that windrows usually require 20 ft. between them. The compost bags can be placed as close as 4 ft. apart.

The CT5 is priced at about \$95,000 (Can.) with each pod including air tubes and vents running about \$1,200.

"A windrow system is less expensive to start-up, but costs of site prep and labor add up," says Acres. "The pod system can be laid down anywhere. The equipment is portable and to expand, you just add pods."

Soon a new machine from Miller/Ag-Bag may make composting even more attractive for custom operators and farmers. The company is introducing a combo machine that will be able to bag either feed or waste mate-



A 200-ft. long, 5-ft. dia. "EcoPOD" bag holds about 76 tons of material or 250 cu. yds.

rial for composting.

"It is a beefed up machine with case hardened shields and packing fingers to handle abrasive materials like manure," says Dale Mickle, field manager for the U.S. and Canada, Miller/Ag-Bag. "It will fill 10-ft. diameter bags and sell for approximately 5 to 10 percent over straight feed bag systems."

Mickle expects to see farmers go to the combo machine. He cites a Wisconsin dairy farmer with 850 cows and most of his fields already at their phosphorus limit. By composting the manure, the dairy will be able to sell it off the farm or use it for bedding.

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A machine similar to a silage bagger pushes waste material into plastic bags called "pods".

2262; davidacres@personainternet.com) or Dale Mickle, Miller/Ag-Bag, 511 E. Main St. St. Nazianz, Wis. 54232 (ph 920 773-2121 or 800 247-5557; fax 920 773-1200; dmickle@millerstn.com).

Machete Axe Makes Great Chopper

"I've never known anyone else who did it—and you probably don't either!" jokes a FARM SHOW reader from Florida who sent us a photo of a new-style cutting tool he put together.

The reader, who wishes to remain anonymous, attached a machete blade to the end of a 28-in. axe handle.

"You can cut limbs 10 ft. from the ground and it's especially good for those nasty sticker and thorn bushes. I made another blade, too, that's bent at a 45 degree angle for cutting low brush.

"To insert the blade I deepened the axe groove 2 in. and put a couple 1/4-in. bolts through the handle to hold the blade.

"This tool is light and effective. A redneck delight."



Chopper was made by attaching a machete blade to the end of a 28-in. axe handle

Swing Hangs From Bale Feeder

Long time FARM SHOW reader Gene Oates, Kenton, Ohio sent us photos of the "old folks" swing he made for himself and his wife, Sharon.

Oates found a swing on a trash pile but didn't have a tree to hang it on.

So he tipped a round bale feeder onto its side and attached a board to each side to keep it steady, then hung the swing from the top.

"It works great and you don't have to mow around it," he says. "You just roll it out of the way."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gene Oates, 6696 Co. Rd. 167, Kenton, Ohio 43326 (ph 419 675-1332).



Oates tipped a round bale feeder onto its side and then hung the swing from the top.



Mounted on a used payloader, auger is 18 in. in dia. and will dig 8 ft. deep. Boling uses it to set 12-ft. long corner posts in the ground.

How To Set Corner Posts Without Concrete

"I bought a hydraulic auger off a utility truck from a nearby city. The auger is 18 in. dia. and will dig 8 ft. deep. It has a lot more power and teeth that are a lot more aggressive than any tractor-mounted digger," says Allyn Boling, Lentner, Mo.

"I cut corner posts that are 12 ft. long and put them 8 ft. in the ground. The wire can be stretched immediately after the post is dropped into the ground, unlike a post set into

concrete. It's also a lot easier than mixing concrete.

"I bought the digger for \$500. Also, you can buy a used payloader like this one for about the same price as an add-on loader for a farm tractor and it's much heavier."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Allyn Boling, 2285 Shelby 418, Lentner, Mo. 63450.

Great Gift Idea For Christmas

If you've got a hard-to-buy-for farmer or rancher on your Christmas gift list this year, why not do your shopping right here?

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