

Rock "Scoop" Attaches To Cultivator

"When getting fields ready for planting, there always seems to be some rocks that are just a bit bigger than what we can pick up by hand. And they're usually at the far end of the field," says Jill Duckett, Aurora, Iowa.

"We used to mark them with tile flags and return later with a loader to dig them out, which took a lot of time.

"Last spring, after finding one too many big rocks, my husband asked our inventor neighbor, Dick Rau, if he could come up with a hydraulic rock lifter that would attach to the field cultivator. Always up for a challenge, and a magician with steel, Dick went right to work. After several versions, he came up with a bolt-on rock

lifter that's powered by three hydraulic cylinders. It attaches easily to the front of our Deere cultivator.

"The rock lifter has two cylinders to raise or lower the basket and one to dump the rock. The up and down cylinder lowers the scoop below ground level to dig out rocks that are partially buried.

"The rock lifter mounts on the left side of the cultivator but could be placed anywhere. With this new tool, we're actually looking forward to finding rocks in the field. Best of all, Dick painted it Deere green to match the cultivator!"

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Richard Rau, P.O. Box 35, Aurora, Iowa 50607 (ph 319 634-3727).



Bolt-on rock lifter attaches to field cultivator and is operated by three hydraulic cylinders. Two cylinders raise or lower the basket, and one dumps.

"Super Dwarf" Trees Bear Sooner, But Require Extra Care

Research continues on making dwarf trees even smaller because they don't require as much space and the trees bear fruit as early as their second year. But smaller doesn't necessarily mean less work.

"You don't just plant them and walk away," says Dan Smith, one of the owners of TRECO, an Oregon company that produces 60 percent of U.S. apple rootstock sold to nurseries and orchardists, who graft and develop their own trees.

"The anchorage isn't as good as bigger trees, and wind or even heavy fruit affects them. They can easily get uprooted," he says.

Commercial orchards often use post and wire trellises, says Bruce Barrett, a researcher at Washington State University who evaluated rootstock for many years and is now breeding dwarf apple varieties. Growers who just have a couple of trees in the backyard can support them by tying the trees to a 2 or 3-in. stake pounded in the ground. Besides staking, dwarf apple trees need spraying, pruning and fertilizing just like larger varieties.

By definition, dwarf trees average 5 to 12 ft. tall, and researchers continue to work on new varieties for other fruits as well. Apple varieties are the most common, however, for commercial and home orchards.

Because the trees are smaller, it's easier to care for them and to harvest the fruit. And despite assumptions by some, dwarf trees can live as long as standard size trees, Barrett says. Apples from dwarf trees also are the same size and have the same characteristics as apples from larger trees. Barrett notes that because apples on dwarf trees tend to be shaded less, he believes the dwarf apple varieties can be sweeter because they get more sunlight.

Go to high-end nurseries in your area or search for dwarf trees on the internet, suggests Barrett.

One popular company is Stark Bro's in Louisiana, Mo.

Stark Bro's sends a tree care guide with each order with recommendations to not let the tree bear fruit until the third year to establish stronger roots.



Gene Yale grows about 100 dwarf apple trees in his back yard. He's a member of MidFEX (Midwest Fruit Explorers) which has a website, www.midfex.org, with information on how to graft and grow very small dwarf trees.

While dwarf and semi dwarf apple varieties are most common, Stark Bro's offers a variety of other dwarf fruits such as apricots, cherries, pears and plums. They also have mini versions of peaches and nectarines that fruit the second year, grow 4 to 6 ft., and are suitable for patio pots.

able for patio pots.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, TRECO (www.treco.nu); Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., P.O. Box 1800, Louisiana, Mo. 63353 (ph 800 325-4180; www.starkbros.com).

Reflector Helps Monitor Water Level At Night

Ken Brading, Atascadero, Calif., has two 2,150-gal. drinking water storage tanks that sit about 700 ft. up a hill behind his house, with no electrical power nearby. His problem? He wanted a way to see the level of water in the tanks - pumped from a well - after dark without having to climb up the hill.

Brading fitted the tanks with float-style level indicators that he made himself. Then he tried mounting ordinary spot reflectors on the indicators but, at that distance, they lacked sufficient reflectivity to be used with anything but a power spotlight.

"While working late one night I discovered that the DOT-C2 reflector tape on the back of our utility trailer reflected

extremely well at that distance with just an ordinary 3-cell flashlight. I put some of the tape on the level indicators and found that I could shine a light through the windows in the house and see it easily. What's more, the peel-and-stick tape is easy to apply and you can get it at any trailer and auto supply stores," says Brading, who notes the tape can be used in other ways, such as on a gate to see if it's left open, or on a pulley or sprocket to see if it's still running.

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Ken Brading wanted to see the level on his two 2,150-gal. drinking water storage tanks, which sit about 700 ft. up a hill behind his house (right). So he fitted the tanks with float-style level indicators, and then put peel-and-stick reflector tape on them.



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