Planter-Mounted Baskets Roll Perfect Seedbed

RowBaskets from L&B Mfg. turn a planter into a final tillage tool and improve planting, too. Rolling baskets behind a field cultivator can break up clumps in dry conditions, notes Brian Meldahl, L&B Mfg. However, they do less well in freshly tilled, wetter soils. In a worst-case scenario, they ball up with damp soil.

"Some farmers will run through the field with the field cultivator and then come back for a second pass after the soil has dried down," says Meldahl. "We mounted rolling baskets on the row units, just ahead of the openers. Air bags provide the down pressure. They eliminate that second pass and leave a perfect seedbed for planting."

Meldahl, a design engineer, and Lloyd Van Buskirk, a neighboring farmer and friend, came up with the design in 2009. They wanted a rolling basket that could be raised and lowered separately from the row units. They also wanted to be able to vary down pressure by soil type and condition.

"We didn't want it plowing into light, fluffy soil, but it needs extra down pressure on hard clumpy fields," says Meldahl. "Plus if the planter hits a wet area, we need to be able to raise the RowBasket up so it doesn't ball up with mud."

They went with proven durable air bag and compressor technology to control pressure and provide lift for the basket. Two compressor models are being offered. A manual control system is currently priced at $3,500. An in-cab control with pressure monitor is priced at $7,000. The in-cab unit lets the operator raise and lower the baskets and adjust down pressure on-the-go as conditions change in the field.

Row units are priced at $600 each. Adapters have been developed for 7 different styles of planters covering all major brands for the past 15 years.

"We bought one of every row unit going back to the mid 1990's for Deere, Case IH, Kinze and White," says Meldahl. "We are confident we can mount our RowBasket on almost any type of planter."

Over the past two years they have tested it in varying conditions, including planting soybeans following peas. It has worked as hoped, breaking up clumps, but the results have been better than expected.

"If you watch a planter unit going through a field, it's constantly bouncing," says Meldahl. "However, the planter units following our RowBaskets aren't bouncing. As a result, seed depth and spacing are more consistent and more accurate."

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Rolling baskets can be raised and lowered separately from planter row units, just ahead of the openers. Air bags provide downpressure.

Feed Wagon Shoots Out Cattle Bedding

Joel Smiley can spread bedding in 108 dairy stalls in five minutes, thanks to an old feed wagon he and his cousin, Brian Waydo, modified nine years ago.

"We built a new freestall barn in 1998, and needed a good way to spread bedding," says the Berlin, Penn., dairy farmer. At first he used a forage wagon, but still ended up shoveling.

So they started experimenting with a feed wagon.

"We took off the conveyor extension and built a framework out of channel iron," Smiley explains. The frame supports an old fertilizer elevator belt at the front of the feed wagon, which is sprocket and chain-driven by a hydraulic motor.

The feed wagon auger moves the wood shavings to the front of the wagon where they drop down on the belt and are shot out of the side.

"The shavings shoot up to 6 ft.," Smiley says. "It works perfect and shoots nice even layers."

He added board extensions on the wagon and can bed the barn twice with one load.

He has also used it to spread ground soybean stubble and hasn't had any problems with it. It's fast, easy and a lot less expensive than purchasing a side shooter for a skidsteer, Smiley says.

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Conveyor belt on front of wagon is chain-driven by a hydraulic motor. Wood shavings drop down on belt and are shot out the side.

The Whatcom mulcher has a variable speed discharge belt that pours mulch material into rows. Deflector slats can be adjusted to vary row width.

Side-Unloading Mulch Spreader

This side-unloading mulcher is designed to be used with sawdust, shavings, manure, solids, etc.

The Whatcom mulcher is available in multiple sizes with numerous options. The standard front unload E model uses the tractor pto to operate the discharge belt, and tractor hydraulics to operate the floor chain.

The H model is all hydraulic-driven. The tractor pto operates a pump that feeds fluid from the wagon's hydraulic tank through flow control valves, allowing you to independently adjust speed of the discharge belt and floor chain.

The rate of application and spreading distance is fully adjustable regardless of the machine's ground speed, which results in uniform ground coverage with little waste. The variable speed discharge belt pours mulch material onto rows, and deflector slats can be adjusted to vary width of the row.

Other models are also available with capacities ranging from 3 1/2 to 12 cubic yards. Options include tandem walking axles, rear discharge, reversible floor chain with a discharge at front, and opening rear door for stockpiling.

The E model sells for about $17,000; the H model for about $20,000.

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To split tractor, Gustafson installed a bale spike on the 3-pt. hitch, lowered it down to floor level, and put a weighted wood pallet over it.

Clever Way To Split A Tractor

When the clutch went out on Paul Gustafson's 255 Massey tractor, he realized he was going to have to split the tractor to repair it. But he didn't want to have to build a cradle to hold the two ends of the tractor up, and he didn't want to rent any equipment to get the job done.

"Instead, I installed my bale spike on the tractor 3-pt. hitch, lowered it down to floor level, and then put a wood pallet over the top of it. Then I put some weight on top of the pallet to hold it in place. Once I took the tractor apart, the weight held the transmission up.

"To hold the front of the tractor in place I used a chain hoist. After putting the new clutch in, I used the 3-pt. hydraulic top link to raise and lower the back end to line up the clutch shaft with the clutch, and then used a come-along to pull the two parts of the tractor back together again."

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