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ATV Converted Into Self-Propelled Wick Wiper

Leon Perry, Addison, Maine, recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a 1985 Honda 3-wheeler he turned into a "high crop" 24-ft. wide wick wiper. It's equipped with a home-built boom that bolts onto brackets that he welded on back of the ATV.

He uses the wick wiper to apply Roundup to weeds on his wild blueberry farm, where he grows 60 acres of blueberries and also leases land from neighbors. "These are low bush blueberries that grow wild on fields that have never been plowed or tilled, so some of the ground can be rough. The blueberries grow only 10 to 11 in. high, and we needed a better way to control weeds that grow above the crop," says Perry.

"I had been using a commercial pull-type wick wiper behind an ATV, but it was only 6 ft. wide and my wife had trouble backing it up. My home-built wick wiper is built into the ATV, which makes it easy to back up. It has a lot of adjustable features on it, which is important because the goal is to get as close

as I can to the blueberries without touching them."

The boom is built from 1-in. box tubing and is designed in 3 sections that fold inward for transport. Gauge wheels at each end allow the boom to follow uneven ground contours.

Each section contains three 2-ft. long Smucker sponge wipers. A linear actuator is used to raise and lower each section, and manifolds are used to saturate the wipers in each section individually. The boom is equipped with a 15-gal. chemical tank and a 12-volt pump, as well as a foam marker tank. An electric winch is used to raise and lower the sections for transport, with a pair of garage door springs keeping tension on the cable in the field as the boom bounces up and down. A control panel located next to the ATV's seat controls all operations.

The ATV itself got a real makeover, as Perry widened, lengthened, and raised it. He removed the rear wheels from the ATV, and then bolted a frame made from box tubing

to the back part of the ATV frame. Then he remounted the rear wheels on the frame, spacing them 8 ft. apart and 2 ft. back from their original position.

He added a differential on back of the ATV that gears the rig down at a 5 to 1 ratio and lets him drive very slowly through the field. The conversion involved mounting a sprocket on the ATV's original rear axle, which is used to chain-drive the differential. "I use a homemade hand throttle to control the speed. Top speed is just 10 mph," says Perry.

He bought another set of front forks and welded them onto the original forks to raise the machine by 12 in.

"Raising the ATV keeps it from bending the weeds over before the wicks get to them. And widening the ATV reduces the number of tire tracks across the field and helps stabilize the wiper," says Perry.

The sponge wipers float individually, "which is important because the ground

these wild blueberries grow on is often quite hummocky," says Perry. Each wiper attaches to a pair of metal bars that are bent at the bottom to serve as skids. The height of each wiper can be adjusted by changing the position of a pair of light chains that fit into slots cut into the frame.

"Early in the season the blueberry bushes are lower, which is when I lower the wipers. Later in the season, I can raise the wipers in 1-in. increments."

Perry not only grows wild blueberries but also operates a processing factory, which allows him to sell boxes of frozen blueberries. "In 2011 we bought a former seafood processing factory that we equipped with freezers, coolers and space for expansion. We also removed boulders and leveled our fields. We even bring in bees to help the native pollinators," he notes.

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He Uses Salt To Control Weeds

Willem Ruitenbeek has been using a money-saving replacement for Roundup for years and says it works great.

"I dissolve 2 lbs. of salt and half a quart of liquid dish soap in about 2 1/2 gal. of boiling water," he says. "I spray it on a sunny, dry day, and it works fine."

Homemade herbicides using vinegar, salt and soap are fairly common. Ruitenbeek's was unique in calling only for salt. FARM SHOW decided to put his salt spray to the test. We started by downsizing his recipe to 1/2 lb. of salt, 2 1/2 quarts of boiling water and 1/2 cup of soap. For a comparison, we tried a fairly common vinegar recipe. It called for two cups of vinegar, one tablespoon of liquid dish soap and one tablespoon of salt.

Both solutions were applied to young, broadleaf and grassy weeds on a sunny 60° day. They were also applied to some larger broadleaf weeds. In addition, the vinegar solution was applied to some stubborn, invasive, small-leaved broadleaf weeds that we had been unable to kill with a general purpose broadleaf herbicide for lawns.

In the first 3 or 4 days, leaf edges on the broadleaf weeds began to dry and curl. Within about 10 days, the smaller broadleaf weeds had disappeared completely. The larger broadleaf weeds looked stunted, but hadn't died completely even after two weeks. Additional applications might have controlled them as well.

The vinegar solution had a faster impact on the broadleaf weeds, but it was no more effective than the salt solution. Grass blades sprayed with either of the solutions showed yellowing, and growth slowed. Supplemental applications would likely have finished the



Photo shows invasive small-leaved broadleaf weeds 4 days after an application of a common vinegar recipe.

job.

Both solutions were obviously toxic to weeds. Ruitenbeek's salt solution was simple and effective. The vinegar solution may be a little faster and slightly more effective.

Both solutions are desiccants, not systemics like Roundup. While they killed the small, newly emerged weeds, they appeared to only weaken or set back large, established root systems. Multiple applications are likely needed to provide permanent control of most larger weeds and grasses.

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Varmint-Proof Storage Container

"It keeps squirrels from eating my walnuts and also helps dry them out," says Donald Cumberland, Christiana, Penn., about the "squirrel-proof" storage container he made from a 5-gal. bucket and some wire mesh.

He started with a 5-gal. bucket that originally contained drywall compound. He cut it in half and rolled wire mesh used for plastering into the shape of a cylinder using baling wire to tie the ends together. Then he wired the cylinder to the two halves of the bucket.

Air is able to circulate through the wire, allowing the nuts to dry.

"It's a quick, easy way to make a varmint-proof storage container. Squirrels and rats can't chew through it," says Cumberland. "I keep the walnuts in my shop in order to provide a quick snack. In the past, chipmunks used to come in and steal everything. I usually keep husked walnuts in the container. The inside part of the plaster lath is sharp so if the walnuts are still damp I can set the container sideways on a bench and roll it around to clean the rest of the husks off."

"The same idea would also work to protect



Varmint-proof storage container was made from a 5-gal. bucket and some wire mesh.

root crops such as garlic, onions and other crops."

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