

He Kills Buckthorn With Plastic Bags

It took a couple of years and lots of experiments for Matthew Hamilton to refine his buckthorn-killing technique using plastic bags.

"It works on plants as small as a pinky finger up to 4 in. in diameter," he says.

He cuts the buckthorn off and then covers the stump with his patent-pending, 5 mil black plastic bag secured with a zip tie.

"Fanning out the bottom of the bag stops new sprouts," he adds.

He recommends cutting and bagging the buckthorn in spring when it blossoms and leaving the bag on for a year. Then the bags can be reused and placed on another buckthorn stump.

"We have a 100 percent kill rate with this bag," Hamilton says.

In 2014, Hamilton and his parents founded Buckthorn Baggies and started selling packages of 30, 100, 200 and 500 bags with zip ties and instructions. Every 10th bag has a Do Not Remove label that explains what it is, so that people don't "clean up" and take the bags.

Interest has grown for his bags since Hamilton started giving presentations to conservation and other groups. Some customers are using the baggies on other invasive plants.

The young entrepreneur notes that 10



Matthew Hamilton's buckthorn-killing bags are secured with a zip tie. "Fanning out the bottom of the bag stops new sprouts," he says.

bags are donated to nonprofit organizations for every 100 sold. Prices start at \$29.99 (plus \$5.99 S&H) for 30 bags.

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Robotic Sampler Offers Business Opportunity

AutoProbe robotic soil sampler lets you grab 40 soil cores in 40 to 45 sec. as you drive across the field. It always probes to the same depth and records the path sampled as it goes, promising uniformity and repeatability. Jeff Burton says those factors are vital to accurate soil sampling.

"AutoProbe was developed by a farmer for farmers," says Burton, AgRobotics, noting that it could be used to launch a soil sampling business. "It is leaps and bounds above hand sampling."

His father Jim, an Arkansas farmer and an engineer by training, developed the technology. He wasn't satisfied with the quality or the labor costs involved in intensive soil sampling. With precision agriculture, taking a handful of cores per field or even per 2 1/2 acres wasn't good enough. He wanted more samples, and that required a faster way to gather. The AutoProbe does that and more.

"We gather a core every 8 1/2 ft. for 40 cores per 2 1/2-acre density," says Burton. "We have gathered 1,200 cores across a 70-acre field in 39 min."

The AutoProbe is a tracked implement with probes built into the tracks. As it moves across the field, the probes penetrate and remove samples that are sent by auger to a hose and then to a bagging unit in the tractor cab.

"When the bags are full, the operator seals, tabs and replaces them," says Burton. "Eventually that will also be done automatically."

At first the soil would plug up in the air tube. The solution was to use a heat exchanger with hydraulic oil running through it at the air intake for the blower. The compressor adds heat as well producing 150-degree air to move the soil to the bagger. As the soil moves through the airlock, it is chopped and dried.

Initially the company leased machines, but



AutoProbe robotic soil sampler provides a faster way to gather samples, and more precise, says inventor Jeff Burton.



with recent improvements in the technology, the cost of building them has fallen. Burton suggests that the price now opens the door to farmers, crop consultants and others offering the robotic soil sampling as a sideline business.

"We have developed the technology to get the price down to \$74,500," says Burton. "Farmers can do their own and their neighbors, too."

Burton says the AutoProbe can be used with different, existing, precision software mapping packages. Sampling paths across the field can be laid out by grid or zone.

Check a video of the AutoProbe at FARMSHOW.COM.

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Kiddie Rides USA buys and sells old-fashioned kiddie rides such as these galloping horses. Rides can be custom painted in favorite team or school colors.

Old Kiddie Rides Back On The Market

If you remember riding on rocket ships, airplanes and galloping horses outside supermarkets or at amusement parks, you'll like Kiddie Rides USA, a company that buys and sells old-fashioned kiddie rides and more.

"Kiddie rides, in particular horse rides, are so popular that we will soon be building new ones to meet the demand," says Gary Mandarino, Kiddie Rides USA. "We will be the only company in the U.S. building rides with the vintage look. Unlike the old rides, these will be heavy-duty enough for adults."

The rides can and have been customized. Owners' initials have been "branded" on horse rides, and rides have been custom painted in favorite team or school colors and had company logos added.

Mandarino says the rides can be moneymakers as well, depending on where they are set up. He suggests charging 50¢ a ride for walk-by traffic and 25¢ if used inside

a store where second rides are more likely.

Rides are completely overhauled mechanically and rewired or reinforced if needed. Coin mechanisms can be adapted to specific coins or tokens or replaced by a push button for free play.

The vintage rides don't come cheap. A carousel pony was recently priced at \$2,495. Other rides vary from a big yellow duck at \$1,995 to a Harley Davidson Springer for \$4,995 and a 3-horse carousel for \$8,995. The company will mount the fiberglass bodies from kids rides to chair bases with hydraulic lifts. Kiddie Rides USA also sells train rides, soda machines and commercial arcade machines.

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"Memory Milk Cans"

Debbie Cornman doesn't just paint pretty pictures on milk cans. She captures memories of a favorite farm animal, pet, or rural scene.

"I grew up in agriculture and participated in 4-H. I won the state 4-H dairy judging contest in 1972, so painting dairy cows is my favorite subject," says the Boiling Springs, Penn., artist.

Keeping the proper perspective when painting on a round object is challenging, so she spends a lot of prep time drawing sketches based on customers' photos and their requests. Her husband, Steve, wire brushes rust off the can to prepare it for priming and painting.

Typically, customers bring their own milk cans. Many customers want favorite cows, but Cornman welcomes new challenges. She's painted six dogs in front of a waterfall for a New York customer, a sulky rider on a white can with flowers, and a can with several farm buildings and animals including oxen, horses and dogs.

"What sets my work apart is that most are painted black with gold trim," Cornman says. The freehand calligraphy accents the lid and bottom of the can and frames the subject, whether it's in an oval on one side or wrapped around the entire can.

Cornman studied at a Fresno, Calif., art studio and also does calligraphy and engraving for fair and agricultural awards as well as customized bottles, mugs and glassware. She works out of a studio at the Cornmans' rural home and often meets with customers at area dairy shows to pick up milk cans and photos.



Debbie Cornman captures memories of a customer's favorite farm animal, pet, or rural scene on milk cans.

She also has cans on hand for customers who don't have them. Pricing varies depending on the details; most run around \$400. Call for more information.

The artist's work can be seen on her websites and on Facebook (Debbie Cornman Studio).

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