

“Polyplanter” Lays Plastic, Then Plants Into It

The Polyplanter from Ferris Farms lays plastic over beds, opens up holes for seeds, and places each seed precisely where you want it. Frank Ferris started building the planters in 1987.

“The first one was a little crude,” says Ferris. “We’ve changed it a lot since then. They are being used to plant everything from peppers to cocoa beans.”

Ferris designed the planter around a circular planting head with up to 15 removable points and a variety of seed plates. With the 80-in. circumference, changing seed plates and removing one point from a 2-point head produces an 80-in. spacing, while a 15-point head places seed every 5 1/4-in. Changing the planting head takes about 15 min., while removing points takes even less.

One key to the Polyplanter’s success is the way it punches holes in the plastic. “It cuts more than tears, with the flap usually tucked under,” says Ferris. “You do need to keep the knives sharp so they go into the ground straight and wear less.”

Seed is then planted in the middle of the hole with the depth adjustment regulated by the packing wheel and down pressure regulated by a tension spring.

One of the secrets to precision planting is the seed unit used. Ferris went with the Monosem vacuum seed unit. It provides

accurate singulation of seeds from pepper seed size to large seeded lima beans. It even singulates odd shaped seeds like super sweet corn.

The Polyplanter comes with a variety of rows and heads. One to 3 rows are most common, but even 6-row units can be ordered. Pricing varies accordingly. A single row, 2-point head is priced at \$8,874.48. A 3-row with double units and a 15-point head sells for \$51,187.91.

Ferris says the planters have proven to be economical for vegetable producers and market gardeners of all sizes. “I have a customer in Florida who has 3 or 4 of them and other guys with as few as 15 to 20 acres who have one,” says Ferris. “I had one guy 93 years old who bought one.”

The planters can be sold with or without a plastic layer. Ferris notes that producers using drip irrigation like to lay their drip lines and cover them with plastic before coming through with a planter. He notes that planting through plastic continues to grow in popularity.

“One of my customers, Otis Bray, is 80 years old and just wrote a book called ‘Plasticulture, Farming for Everybody’, which is available to be downloaded free,” says Ferris. “Plastic is being used for lots of crops from cucumbers to squash, sweet



Polyplanter lays plastic over beds and opens up holes for seeds, then plants into them. Circular planting head has up to 15 removable points and a variety of seed plates.



Ferris Farm also makes the Polyplanter Junior, a mini seeder that can be used by one person. You can plant seeds as small as lettuce and as large as lima beans. Comes with 10 seed discs that allow you to adjust spacing in the row. Current model is being phased out. New model of mini seeder will be out by August, 2017.

corn and green beans. Green beans are being double cropped in the same plastic after tomatoes and melons or whatever have been picked.”

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They Help Transform Wheeled Equipment To Tracked

Right Track Systems can help you turn any off-road wheeled system into a tracked one. The company offers customized tracks for wheeled equipment up to 6 ft. in width, such as duals on the largest tractors. They also offer replacement tracks for OEM tracked equipment. Applications include trucks and trailers, skid steers, Snowcats, agricultural equipment and even telehandlers and aerial lifts. Tracks are also available for ATV’s, Argos and even custom-designed equipment.

“We started with track systems for skid steers and have expanded from there,” says Tom Zaleski Jr., Right Track Systems, Inc. “Over the past decade, we’ve added tracks for almost every type of off-road equipment.”

The biggest question when adding tracks is clearance. Is there room between the tire and the fender or wheel well? Zaleski explains that a standard track adds about 4 in. to the radius of a tire and about 3 in. to the width. An extra inch beyond that is needed.

“We do offer solutions for tight spots, such as recommending a smaller diameter tire or modifications to the machine,” says Zaleski. “Some customers have moved fenders or even a gas tank or step. A spacer can also be added between the hub and the wheel to move the hub farther from the vehicle.”

One attraction of the Right Track system is customization. Selecting the right track requires knowing the width of the tire tread, width of the tire from sidewall to sidewall, circumference of the tire and the axle spacing (center to center). In the case of duals, the overall width of tread (including space between the tires) and the space between the tires is also needed.

Once the appropriate length and type of track is stretched out on the ground, the equipment is driven on. Zaleski recommends attaching a length of chain around the ends of the track and using a come-along to pull them together for linking. Simply reverse the process to remove the tracks, or even easier, let air out of the tires and release the end links.

“It is a very simple process,” says Zaleski.

“The track ends come together like a tandem hitch. Once you’ve done it a few times, it takes between 30 and 40 min. to mount tracks and just a few minutes to remove them.”

The tracks themselves can be modified for the type of surface to be traveled. Hard surfaces call for lower profile grousers (treads) and less gap between them. Urethane grousers can be slippery on ice and snow, so Zaleski recommends adding an ice cleat to the grouser for the winter and removing it for the summer. Grousers are available in a variety of types, patterns and depths. In addition to low-impact 1-in. polyurethane, they are also available in aggressive 2.5-in. UHMW poly grousers. Grousers can be interchanged for different seasons and ground conditions or quickly replaced if damaged or worn.

The UHMW poly wear bars on the inside of the track add tire grip. The 1-in. height of the wear bars also keeps the tires away from the belting and keeps the inside free of mud.

Mild steel saddles guide the tracks over the wheels. In the case of duals, a ridge in the middle of the saddles keeps the belt centered.

Grousers are mounted to heavy-duty conveyor belting that has 5 times the strength of standard ag tires. The 1,200-lb., 4-ply belting originated in the mining industry. This ensures virtually no tire damage.

One set of tracks can even be designed for use with a second piece of equipment with the same size tires but different axle spacing. A spacer section of track is used to lengthen the track at the splice points.

Right Track Systems are available direct from the company as well as from several distributors, such as Nesco in the utility market. Prices vary by type and size. Tracks for a skid steer with 10-16.5 tires run from \$4,000 to \$4,500.

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Right Track Systems offers customized tracks for wheeled equipment up to 6 ft. in width, such as duals on the largest tractors.



Photos show how ends of track are joined together using a come-along to insert a steel rod through interlocking teeth.

“Plow” Installs Invisible Fence

Nick Werth of Bowman, N. Dak., says the simple plow he built to mount on his garden tractor makes it easy to install underground dog fence wiring.

He got the idea when a friend had to install a fence for his dog and planned to do it by hand.

The plow was made of 3/16-in. steel plate and is similar to a trencher used for laying communications cable, just on a smaller scale. It mounts directly onto his Deere 318 lawn tractor. He made a flat blade that welds to a piece of channel iron that bolts to the bottom of the tractor hitch. “A small piece of pipe that curves slightly at the bottom is welded to the back of the blade,” says Werth.

“The wire goes through the pipe into the 3 to 4-in. deep trench as the tractor moves forward.” Werth hangs a spool of wire on back of the tractor.

“I’d like to add hydraulics for raising and lowering the blade,” says Werth. “With the current design I drive the lawn tractor onto a pair of wooden ramps to mount or dismount



Garden tractor-mounted blade makes it easy to install underground dog fence wiring.

the plow. Once it’s in the ground, it’s in, and there is no raising or lowering the blade. It rips right through tree roots, so at least I don’t need to raise or lower it for those types of obstructions.”

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