Photos courtesy No-Till Farmer

Jeremy Henry uses scaled-down fertilizer spinner spreaders to seed cover crops with his combine headers. One hopper installs on each side of header.

Simple ground drive unit on this soybean header ensures that seed is only spread when the header is down and moving through the field.

Super Simple Seeder Spreads Cover Crops At Harvest

Jeremy Henry seeds cover crops with his combine headers. On the soybean header system he uses ground drive, while the corn header uses a hydraulic drive. Other than that, the systems are nearly identical. Henry described his system in detail in an article in No-Till Farmer (www.no-tillfarmer.com).

"They are really just scaled-down fertilizer spreaders with one hopper on each side of the header to spread out the weight," says Henry. "Even full of seeds, they only add about 700 lbs. to the weight of the header."

The seed hoppers are fertilizer boxes from Deere planters. Each has a small spinner spreader mounted beneath it, adapted from ATV-type spinner spreaders. Augers in the fertilizer box deliver seed to the spreaders.

The simple ground drive unit on the soybean header ensures that seed is only spread when the header is down and moving through the field.

"Whether you slow down for tough beans in the evening or are going full speed during the day, the seeding rate stays the same," says Henry.

The corn header, with its heavier trash environment, is equipped with a hydraulic motor.

"The ground drive with its chains and wheels would just be a problem in the corn stubble," says Henry. "The hydraulics let me speed up or slow down the augers that deliver the seed as needed."

Henry says the low-cost system has paid off well. When the summer turned dry in 2016, part of a cornfield planted into annual rye the fall before produced 30 bushels more per acre than the part without the cover crop.

Getting the seed to emerge is aided by the residue spread after the seed is in place. Henry notes that while it was dry with no rain prior to harvest, the cover crops are doing well.

"We hadn't had any rain for 3 weeks when we started shelling the corn, but there was enough moisture in the corn residue that it helped the cover crops take off," says Henry. "A lot of people said it wouldn't work, but it did. With the corn head, I can get magazine-cover type cover crop stands every time."

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Modified detasseler spreads cover crop seed between corn rows, mulches it with chopped stalk tops, and opens up row centers for more light, all in one pass.

Cover Crop Planter Also Chops Stalk Tops

Dan Shelliam spreads his cover crop seed between corn rows, mulches it with chopped stalk tops, and opens up row centers for more light, all in one pass. His 9-row, modified detasseler does it all.

"The stalk tops protect the seed and hold moisture, but once it germinates, more sunlight is let in on the seedlings," says Shelliam. "I go into a standing corn crop about the first of September, which gives the cover crops a longer window to get established before we get a hard freeze."

Shelliam got the idea after driving by a farm where a detasseler had been parked for several years. Driven by hydraulic wheel motors, it was still in good shape for being an older machine.

"It was ideal, both height-wise and row-wise," says Shelliam.

The detasseler had a front boom with cutter boxes to remove tassels on female seed corn plants. He kept the cutter boxes, but added seed delivery tubes and a Gandy air seeder. By the time he was finished, he estimates having invested from $15,000 to $20,000 in the machine.

Shelliam replaced the weighted framework on the rear of the machine with a new framework to hold the Gandy system. The 4 by 5-ft. platform was fabricated from 1/2-in. by 4-in. angle iron. Initially he tried using the detasseler's hydraulics to also run the Gandy, but he needed more flow.

"I bought a remote drive pump and crankshaft from Northern Tool," says Shelliam. "We sized it up with pulleys to run it off the motor's driveshaft. Northern Tool provided the pulley sizes for the needed flow."

The Gandy air system required a slight downward angle in the tubes delivering seed to the front toolbar. To ensure the correct angle, Shelliam split a length of 6-in. hard plastic water pipe to make a trough for the tubes. This was mounted alongside the cab between the Gandy and the diffusers.

To make full use of the finished machine, Shelliam had to adjust field boundaries. "We made all the fields square, even if that meant running some end and beginning rows uphill," he says. "In some places, we eliminated end rows, replacing them with cover crops or alfalfa."

He also has to take care to adjust the cutter box heights above ears. He begins work with the unique system when the kernels reach dent stage. So far he doesn't believe the change has had a negative impact on yields.

Use of the cover crop seeder in 2015 and 2016 paid off this past summer. After a very dry spell with only 1 in. of rain in 29 days, the area was hit with 9 1/2 in. of rain on July 22nd.

"I walked the fields afterwards, and we had no runoff, no erosion," says Shelliam. "Some neighbors had ditches washed so deep they couldn't cross them."

He notes that trying something different like his system can require a thick skin. "Every neighbor who drove by while I was using it that first year was thinking I had lost my marbles," says Shelliam.

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Half circle design of Myron Isaacson's Dream Bucket makes it easy to dig a ditch, level a pile, or fill a hole.

Trench, Ditch Or Fill Like A Dream

Myron Isaacson's Dream Bucket is a slick way to dig or backfill with a skid steer loader. Designed to be used in either a push or pull fashion, the half circle design makes it easy to carve a swale or ditch, level a pile or fill a hole. Just change the pitch to dig as shallow or deep as your power allows.

"It works great for any kind of ditching or excavation," says Isaacson. "It is ideal for feathering the sides of a trench or swale or making a ditch for laying culverts."

Isaacson sells and services feed and manure handling equipment. In between he dreams up devices like the Dream Bucket and his Dream Steps (Vol. 39, No. 4).

The patented Dream Bucket is fabricated from 1/2-in. steel with 50,000-lb. tensile strength. It works with the standard skid steer quick-tach connectors and can be used with any type of loader, including tractors with front-end loaders, payloaders or backhoes.

"When it is used to pull backwards the down pressure is transferred to the rear of the skid steer or other carrier, providing increased traction," says Isaacson. "We've used the 6 1/2-ft. model to go down a foot and a half without a problem. We do concrete work, and thanks to the great visibility, it is perfect for pushing dirt in around forms."

Isaacson changes the pitch of hydraulic cylinders on skid loader to dig shallower or deeper.

Isaacson is currently making Dream Buckets in the 6 1/2-ft. width and pricing them at $740 plus freight. He says they can be fabricated in sizes from 4 ft. to 12 ft. wide.

"The Dream Bucket also does a great job pulling large stones out of a field," notes Isaacson. "You can use it to dig out around the stone before hooking it and pulling it out. Then you can use the Dream Bucket to push dirt to fill in the hole."

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