Planter-Mounted Packer Made From Old Culti-Packer

Andy Robson, Millbrook, Ontario, used the rollers off an old Deere culti-packer to build a low-cost packer that he mounted on front of his 6-row planter.

"I used it last year for the first time and it did everything I wanted it to do," says Robson. "It does a great job of packing down small stones and rootballs, keeping them from jamming between the planter's gauge wheels. I only plant about 150 acres of corn and beans each year so I couldn't justify the money for a new packer."

His planter is actually a 6-row, 30-in. model with 5 inter-row units for planting 15-in. soybean rows. "The inter-row units on newer planters can be raised and locked up out of the way, but they can't on my old planter," says Robson. "As a result there are only small gaps between the gauge wheels, where stones and corn rootballs can easily jam up. I could have bought narrower replacement gauge wheels to widen the gaps, but I couldn't justify spending the money.

"The lack of a planter-mounted packer also created problems when planting beans into corn with our planter. After we finished planting we tried to make a pass with our 12-ft., pull-type packer. However, there was so much crop residue that the driver could hardly tell where the planter had been and had a hard time figuring out where to make the next pass.

"Then 2 years ago we forgot to use the packer on a small field of planted soybeans, and that fall we had a lot of trouble keeping stones out of the combine. We knew we had to do something."

The 12-ft. wide culti-packer came with 2 sets of rollers with a row of shanks between them. Robson unbolted the rollers from the frame. His planter is 15 ft. wide so he cut the roller shafts down to make two 7 1/2-ft. shafts, one on each side of the planter tongue, and then remounted the rollers and bearings. He used 1 1/2-in. tubing inside 2-in. tubing to make 4 mounting arms which are used to attach the packer to the planter toolbar.

"The 2 different sizes of tubing together make the mounting arms much stronger than just one tube," says Robson.

To attach the mounting arms to the rollers he drilled holes into 2-in. wide by 1/2-in. thick metal brackets and mounted the bearing hangers in them, then welded the brackets onto the shafts. The back end of each mounting arm is hinged to the planter frame, with a bolt serving as the hinge point.

He also used channel iron to make "stops" for each mounting arm that cause the rollers to automatically lift off the ground as the planter is raised.

Robson used the rollers off an old Deere culti-packer to build this low-cost packer for his 6-row planter. "It does a great job of packing down small stones and rootballs," he says.

Robson says his only expense was about $30 for the hinge material - thick-walled round steel tubing.

He says the front-mounted packer has another big advantage - the planter's weight is now much better balanced. "Even with a full liquid fertilizer tank my planter used to be back heavy, which made it difficult to unhook from the tractor with the planter locked in the up position. Now it always stays level whenever it's not hooked up," notes Robson.

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"Roller" Smoothes Out Jagged Barrel Rims

Barrel rims are smooth when Steve Morin finishes processing them with his barrel rim roller. Cutting a top off a steel barrel can leave rough and even jagged edges. The hand-crank roller rides the rim and leaves a smooth edge behind.

"We open about 15 barrels a month with a device like a giant P-38, and it leaves a jagged edge on the rim," says Morin. "The guys in the shop don't like wearing gloves just to roll barrels around, so I needed a way to smooth out the rim. I could have pounded on the rims with a hammer for 15 min., but I came up with my roller instead."

The roller consists of a 1-in. sq. steel tube with 2 steel rollers. One mounts on a shaft with a Thomson bearing. The shaft extends through the steel tube to a hand crank. A second roller (just above the first) is mounted on a bearing through a slot in the side of the steel tube. Inside the tube, it is fastened to a steel block at the end of a threaded rod. The rod extends through another threaded steel block welded to the end of the tube and is topped by a knob.

"I added a short length of 3/4-in. pipe to the other end of the tube to give me more leverage," says Morin. "I can hold it in one hand while turning the crank with the other."

Turning the threaded rod lets Morin adjust the space between the 2 rollers to fit them over the rim and make an initial pass.

"I knurled the roller on the crank to give it some grip," says Morin. "When I get to a seam in the barrel, the threaded rod lets me back off on the pressure to go over it. I can go around the rim once, tighten it down, and make a second or third pass to leave a smooth rim."

Hand-cranked roller consists of a 1-in. sq. steel tube with 2 steel rollers.

Morin says the roller has worked well. "If some one buys and sells opened barrels, it could be very helpful," he says.

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Rare Native Corn Varieties Making A Comeback

By Jackie Clay-Atkinson

When you think of northern Minnesota, you don't think of corn fields. After all, we're lucky to get 100 frost-free days up here. But centuries before Europeans traveled to their "New World", Chippewa bands of the north did, indeed, grow corn. This corn was eaten green as roasting ears, or ground for flour and cornmeal. But as is often the case, the old ways died out, bit by bit, and Bear Island Chippewa corn nearly disappeared.

About 20 years ago I was lucky to have been given a package of this wonderful corn by a friend. At the time I was living in northern New Mexico. I planted the corn and was extremely happy to discover how sturdy and prolific it was.

Bear Island Chippewa generally produces an ear about 8 in. long with 12 to 14 rows of large kernels which have a softer, flour center, making them easy to grind. The cob is strong, allowing for easy shelling. And the ears are contained tightly in sturdy leaves, providing good protection against corn earworms. We've never had to spray or treat our corn.

Also, those multi-colored flint ears have made a lot of corn flour and meal for us.

The short maturity date astounded me, as it will make dry corn in as little as 85 days! Add to that the natural, sweet nutty flavor and I knew I had to help save this corn variety.

We still grow Bear Island Chippewa and have sent some of the seed back to local Chippewa band members, who are now encouraging their people to re-connect with their heritage.

Just a few years ago I bought a couple seed packs of another native corn, Seneca Round Nose. This native corn is glistening white, with sometimes a bit of red on the kernels like someone rubbed lipstick along them. The ears are up to 11 in. long, and the kernels are large with a soft center for a flint-type corn. It matures in only about 90 days. And like Bear Island Chippewa, Seneca Round Nose makes a great roasting ear when in the milk stage. The roots are very strong, and even high winds have failed to knock it over.

I write a blog for a self-reliance magazine, Backwoods Home Magazine, and readers have been excited to discover these native corns. After all, if you can grow them in northern Minnesota with a maturity date of only 85 to 90 days, they will sure grow nearly anywhere.

Seneca Round Nose flint corn (left) is a glistening white color while Bear Island Chippewa is multi-colored. Seed Treasures is helping both varieties make a comeback.

We added Bear Island Chippewa and Seneca Round Nose flint corn to our small but growing homestead seed business called Seed Treasures, and have been shipping seed packs to all parts of the U.S.

We've started growing isolated fields of this corn and have eaten it as sweet corn when immature, in the milk stage and roasted as well. Although it lacks the super-sweet flavor of modern hybrid sweet corns, it has an old-time corn flavor that many of today's corn varieties lack.

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