

# Rabbits Graze In Mower-Mounted Hutches

Michigan gardener and handyman Robert Moulder enjoys raising rabbits, but he doesn't like confining them in hutches. A few years ago he came up with the idea of attaching small hutches to old lawn mowers so he could move the critters around easily to fresh grass and weeds.

"The portable hutches are very easy to make and I use all scrap materials," Moulder says. "I picked up a bunch of old mowers and removed the motors. That leaves a nice platform to mount the hutch on a movable chassis."

For some of his hutches Moulder bolted an old metal filing cabinet to the top of the mower chassis. On others he built a simple box. He cuts an access door in the top so he can lift bunnies in and out and tend to feed and water. The hutches are bedded with dry hay and he also has a small feeder for pellets inside the hutch. An opening on front allows

rabbits to enter cages so they can "graze" on grass and weeds.

"If the bunnies get too warm in the summer, I shade the hutches and cages with canvas," says Moulder.

He moves the hutches once a day so the rabbits always have fresh grass and forage. That reduces feed pellet consumption 50 percent. Each mobile hutch holds 2 or 3 rabbits. They feed out 15 rabbits each summer.

Moulder and his wife are vendors at the local farmer's market and they often take one of their portable hutches and a few bunnies to their produce stand. "They're a big hit with the kids and adults," says Moulder. "It's a good way to get some attention and have people notice the produce we have to sell."

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Robert Moulder attaches small rabbit hutches to old lawn mowers so he can move the animals around easily to fresh grass and weeds.

## Small Planters Have Big Planter Features

Small acreage or hobby farmers looking for planters to meet their budgets and specific needs have a couple of sources that produce equipment using Deere and Kinze planter modules.

### David Behrends

David Behrends came up with the idea of building small 3-pt. planters while working for a company that built narrow-row bean planters. "We had spare parts around and wondered if there might be a market for a 2 or 4-row mounted planter, so we put a few together," Behrends says. In the past few years he's sold more than a hundred of them across the country.

Behrends builds the 2, 3 and 4-row units with Cat I, II and III 3-pt. hitch brackets welded to a standard 7 by 7-in. steel beam. Deere or Kinze row units bolt onto the beam and operate using a Deere 7000 planter wheel drive. Plant population can be set at whatever level the operator wants. Behrends says he originally thought row crop farmers would buy the units for re-planting, but lately farmers with small acreages are buying them, while vegetable farmers who raise sweet corn, hunters who have food plots, and companies that have small research plots for seed and chemicals are also buyers.



David Behrends builds 2, 3 and 4-row, 3-pt. mounted planters that accept Deere or Kinze row units.

The 2-row unit is priced at \$2,500 and the 4-row unit starts at \$3,600, with optional hydraulic markers available. Says Behrends, "There are other planters like these on the market, but I try to take the time and really build them right so they work well and look nice when they're done. I want my customers to be happy with them for many years to come."

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### KATS Company

Innovator Mark Wilson of the KATS Company builds single and double-row planters along with other specialized equipment. His single row 3-pt. hitch planter features a 7000 Deere row unit mounted onto a 3-pt. hitch frame. It's available with a Cat 0, I or II hitch, operates with a self-contained dual wheel drive system and is set to plant at 29,000 seeds per acre. Other populations are available on the unit, which is priced at \$995 plus freight. A two row 3-pt. model is available for \$1,395.

Wilson also produces a single-row unit no-till planter, with a larger frame that can be weighted to help the no-till coupler penetrate the soil. This unit sells for \$1,395 plus freight. For producers who don't have a tractor with a 3-pt., Wilson builds the single-row unit mounted on 2 wheels with a hitch and a cable-type lift. This unit also sells for \$1,395. The same cart setup with an actuator lift that operates with 12-volt battery power is also available. Call for pricing.

The company also builds a hydraulic dump kit for a Deere MC519 material collection system. Wilson says it's easy to install into a new or used cart without modifying the frame. Cost is \$395 plus shipping. A similar power dump kit is available for the older 1993



KATS Co. builds single and double-row, 3-pt. mounted planters. Photo shows a single-row no-till planter.

through 2004 4 by 2 and 6 by 4 Deere Gators. Cost is \$495 plus shipping.

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## Carbide-Infused Sweeps Run In Wheel Tracks

"The highest wear to field cultivator shovels occurs in the tractor wheel track, so we decided to design a product that would address that problem," says Loran Balvanz of USM Wear Technologies. "The result is a patent pending field cultivator shovel we call the 'Wheel Tracker'. It has a metal fin that extends 3 in. below the center of the shovel. The fin helps break up compacted soil and provides greater mixing action for better seedbed preparation and weed control."

Balvanz goes on to say that combining the new shovel design with the company's patented Caden Edge technology extends the useful life of a Wheel Tracker shovel by 3 to 5 times.

"There are a lot of people out there who tell you that coating the top of a shovel is all you need to do, but our research shows that shovels wear out from the bottom," Balvanz says. "That's the impact point that's traveling through the most compaction. We address that problem by putting a small Caden Edge on the bottom of the shovel, about 1/4 in. wide and just a few hundredths of an inch tall."

They also apply tungsten carbide to the front of the shovel near the cutting edge and to other high friction locations on cultivator sweeps. Balvanz says that when they first tested the Wheel Tracker, the farmer running the cultivator told them the shovels went in the ground easier and the soil was more uniformly tilled behind the wheels. "When we dug behind a normal sweep shovel in the wheel track we could easily find a compacted area to the side of where the shovel worked. With the Wheel Tracker, that compacted area was broken apart and definitely looser," says Balvanz.

Balvanz says the Caden Edge process is different than conventional hard surfacing. "We use a robotic welder that literally infuses the carbide particles into the base metal, making the edge much stronger than the other metal parts. We're using the technology on shovels, grinding hammers, tines for harrows and other products subject to severe abrasion."



Wheel Tracker field cultivator shovel has a metal fin that extends 3 in. below center of shovel. Fin helps break up compacted soil and extends shovel life.



In 2017 Balvanz will have 2 seed companies run independent tests using Wheel Tracker shovels on half of a field cultivator and regular sweeps on the other half. "Our goal is to validate what we saw in the field last year and determine how it carries through into plant growth and overall yield. Even if it's just a 1 to 2 percent increase, that's astounding, and certainly worth the added cost of these high performance shovels."

USM Wear Technologies has been applying Caden Edge technology onto conventional shovels used for primary or secondary tillage since 2014. "We've got more than 200,000 units in the marketplace and not a single complaint," says Balvanz.

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