

They Make Compact And Portable Chicken Coops

Pine Grove Structures in Pembroke, Ky., sells portable chicken coops that work for pet and poultry owners at all scales. The company got its start focusing on building lawn furniture. "Then, one customer asked if we'd be interested in building a certain style coop, one that was a 4 by 6 wood frame structure," says company representative Vernon Fox. "We did, and now call it our 'Free Range Style.'"

Word got around about Pine Grove Structure's custom coops, to the point that within a few years, the company stopped manufacturing lawn furniture altogether to focus exclusively on them.

Today, the company sells structured chicken coops that essentially operate as portable buildings. They are built with wood and have 4 by 4-in. treated wood runners under the floor frame. Sizes range from 4 by 4 ft. for the smallest frame, up to 10 by 12 ft. Says Fox, "We also offer the option of a custom style or size to meet a customer's needs." There's also an aluminum coop available that's better suited for broilers, as it's at a slightly lower height than the layer coop.

Each aluminum frame coop is designed for easy moving. They come with adjustable, flat-free wheels and a lightweight yet heavy-duty tarp for the roof, as well as bracing along the inside that serves a dual purpose as chicken roosting space. Despite their size, the coops are designed to be well-balanced and light enough that even children can easily move them on flat ground - especially when the optional four-hole nesting boxes are attached. These nesting boxes make it



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possible to gather eggs from the outside - no entering the coop is required. Feeders and waterers will become available in the near future as well.

The company believes they offer a versatile product. "There's a lot you can do with these coops," says Fox. "Just to give you an idea, one guy talked of putting a coop in his garden over winter and letting the chickens do the tilling and fertilizing." And while chickens are the natural choice for coop inhabitants, they've also been used for ducks, pigs, and in one notable instance, a miniature horse.

Pine Grove Structures ships nationwide. The best shipping quotes occur when your order is sent to a commercial address, as the price for residential addresses tends to be higher. To order, call the company directly and ask for Vernon Fox.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pine Grove Structures, 1375 Jeff Adams Rd Pembroke, KY 42266 (ph 270-890-0452).



Andrew Vincek built his own snow pusher around a 13.5-hp. engine and two hydraulic motors.

Home-Built Snowplow Pushes Lots Of Snow

After tiring of only pushing 4 in. of snow with his small garden tractor, Andrew Vincek designed and built his own hydraulically-driven mini skid-steer snowplow.

He began by welding a 3-in. channel iron frame and added 8 by 20-in. lawn tractor wheels. He already owned a 13.5-hp. gas engine and mounted it on the frame. A hydraulic pump was fitted under the engine.

Vincek bought two hydraulic motors and valves to drive the rear axles and connected roller chain to homemade sprockets on the front wheels to make the unit 4-WD.

To keep the transmission oil cool, he welded together his own large reservoir tank.

"For the reservoir, I mixed up some weld epoxy and smoothed it over the welds to help

seal everything. This helped to make sure there were no pinhole leaks," he says.

Vincek built the plow attachments from scratch but bought the 4-ft. blade for \$100. To operate the tilt and angle functions, he adapted old shock absorbers as hydraulic cylinders.

He estimates the snowplow cost about \$1,000 to build.

"It drives like a skid steer because you steer it with the valves," he says. "I can spin it right around in a circle and push at least 6 in. of snow without getting stuck."

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He No-Tills Veggies Into Cover Crops

John Ruzicka has made no-tilling vegetable crops a win-win. His crops are cleaner at harvest, and he has eliminated wind and water erosion. Like other farmers in his area who produce for canning companies, Ruzicka used to make multiple tillage passes before planting. A dust storm about 10 years ago made him question the practice.

"The dust storm was tearing up young corn plants," says Ruzicka. "I was setting up a center pivot to make a pass just to reduce dust, and I thought there had to be a better way."

Ruzicka started exploring no-till by planting sweet corn into terminated rye. When that worked, he decided to try planting green beans into terminated rye as well.

"I tried a few acres, and it worked well," says Ruzicka. "I was concerned the harvester would pull in corn stubble, but it worked better on the no-tilled ground than it had on dirt."

For the past 4 years, he has also no-till planted canning peas. Doing so required Ruzicka to invest in a Great Plains no-till drill.

"The contractor who buys our peas custom plants the other farms with a big air seeder and field cultivator," explains Ruzicka. "Tillage is a given with it, so we plant our own."

Shifting to no-till has improved planting efficiency as well as harvest. Along with cover crops, no-till planting has enhanced water infiltration. Previously a 1/2-in. rain would turn fields into a mudpie.

"Now when we get rain, it soaks in," says Ruzicka. "We don't have ponding because the water doesn't run off to the lowest area."

Like other no-tillers, Ruzicka cites increased earthworms in his fields. He also notes reduced disease pressure.

"I feel like we are seeing less white mold in green beans and less root rot in the peas, thanks to the cover crops," says Ruzicka.

One of his biggest challenges is timing cover crop termination. This is a bigger concern for canning crops, due to scheduled planting for a crop like sweet corn that can



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extend from mid-May to mid-June.

"I have to manage termination, so it doesn't compete with the crop I am planting," says Ruzicka. "I also have to do more scouting for insect pests like armyworms."

He advises going slow when making the transition from full tillage to no-till. He suggests trying a few acres and talking with other no-tillers about what they've learned.

"No-tillers love to talk about it, and they love to answer questions," says Ruzicka.

Ruzicka admits that some of his neighbors laugh at what he has done, while others ask questions and then try a little on their own. He doesn't care what others think, but he does hope others will try it on limited acres.

"It's taken time, but now it's working," says Ruzicka. "If you try it and struggle, don't give up. It takes a systems approach. One year doesn't change the whole program. It takes a few years before a field is really no-till."

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Hydro-Stacker vertical planter can hold up to 20 plants in a single unit and uses a fraction of the water conventional gardens need.

Tower Growing System Saves Space

The Hydro-Stacker Hydroponic Planter is a vertical organic growing system that allows for efficient growing in small spaces. You can buy a single unit for home growing or thousands of units for commercial growing using less space.

Hydro-Stacker uses a water-based nutrient solution to grow plants. The system is compact, allowing for different levels of growth in a small area. Plants are grown in special grow cups which are suspended in the nutrient solution.

The Hydro-Stacker is easy to set up and maintain. The system is designed to be

low-maintenance and can be used indoors or outdoors.

Hydro-Stacker is currently being used on large farms with more than 50,000 plants as well as homes with just a single-stack manual unit.

Single units that can handle up to 20 plants and come with a digital timer and electric pump start at \$380 plus shipping on the company website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hydro-Stacker LLC, P.O. Box 20729, Bradenton, Fla. 34204 (ph 941-322-9602; www.hydrostacker.com).