

World Class Expert Tractor Restorer

Wendell Kelch has been restoring tractors for himself for more than 50 years and doing it professionally for others for more than 30. When not working on old tractors with his five-man crew, he is doing color commentary for RFD TV coverage of Meacham Auctions of antique tractors.

"It's like sports commentary, except we're telling stories about old tractors," says Kelch. "I also have more than 800 videos on YouTube about tractors I've restored."

Kelch has more than 50 tractors in his own collection, including an F12 that was his first restoration in 1971. He also has a Farmall 300 that his dad bought new in 1956. Among his more uncommon tractors is a 1917 30-60 Titan he bought in 1998 at the historic Oscar Cooke's Dreamland Museum auction. He also has a 1908 International internal friction drive bought before the sale. He has a 30-60 Mogul as well.

Kelch has worked on hundreds of different tractor models and brands. Some are rare, like a Line Drive La Crosse that is one of only two in existence. The early tractor was designed to transition farmers from horses to tractors. The operator steered it with reins.

Kelch is currently working on one of three John Deere Dain tractors, a brand that Deere built before buying Waterloo Works. It was an autogas, 4-cyl., all-wheel drive, first experimented with in 1914. One hundred were built in 1917.

An even rarer tractor he worked on was the Bathtub D Waterloo Boy. It was an experimental precursor to the John Deere D with a bathtub-shaped main case. The main case had been buried near the original Waterloo Works tractor factory. It was one of a kind with no blueprints, only notes from

an early Waterloo designer. Kelch and Dan Thomas, who bought the main case and parts buried with it, used Waterloo Boy D parts to recreate the tractor.

Kelch had to fabricate a lot of parts for the Bathtub D. "If I have to make a special part for a tractor, I'll make extras to help cover the cost of engineering and fabrication," explains Kelch. "I had to make a special breather for a Rumley, so I made five or six extras and sold them. I've done the same with timers for 1913 International Auto Wagons with their high wooden wheels."

Kelch simply lists the parts on collectors' Facebook blogs. "I don't sell all of them as I may need an extra myself," says Kelch.

Kelch describes tractor restoration as a two-tiered business. One is the increasingly rare tractors collectors cherish. The other is what he refers to as dad's tractor.

"Dad's tractors have a sentimental value, and the restoration will cost more than what the tractor will be worth," says Kelch. "A customer may spend \$30,000 on a \$10,000 tractor."

He says the business continues to evolve. Where most customers once were farmers, now most are doctors and professional people with farming in their background.

"The technology has changed as well," says Kelch. "We have better materials to work with, and the standards are higher."

FARM SHOW readers interested in seeing Kelch's work and his collection can do so at his annual open house on the first Saturday in May. In addition to old tractors, there are also old cars and trucks, plus tours of the shops and work underway.

"We get a bunch of stuff out and run it," says Kelch. "We cook a bunch of hot dogs



John Deere Bathtub D being restored (above) and finished (below).



and smokies, and everyone brings a covered dish to share, and we make around 20 gallons of ice cream."

Kelch also offers private tours of his collection throughout the year. He encourages people to call ahead to schedule.

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Underground "Root Quencher"

It gets dry in Pasadena, Calif., and Robert Summers needed a more reliable way to get water to his trees. He wasn't able to find anything useful on the market.

"My wife and I designed the Root Quencher to take care of our trees and larger shrubs," Summers says. "We came up with an adjustable device you install underground."

Once installed in the ground, the cylinder-shaped Root Quencher will deliver water directly to the roots. It eliminates the evaporation you get with traditional sprinklers.

"Let's say you have a fruit tree growing in hard soil," he says. "Depending on how well you dig the hole and how far down the roots go, the unit will adjust to accommodate the different conditions."

The three telescoping chambers of each device make it easy to expand or contract depending on the depth needed for watering. The Root Quencher can expand from 9 in. long for watering shrubs to 22 in. long for watering large trees.

Summers says the Root Quencher will hook up to a drip irrigation system or a 2 3/4-in. irrigation system. "We're the only system on the market that has a valve that can adjust the flow of water," he says. "You won't accidentally flood a tree or bush that needs the moisture."

"You can also fertilize with our units," Summers says. "The closed bottom on each Root Quencher means easy fertilizer application and mixing right inside the unit. Plus, directional plugs are available to block the water flow in applications for single trees or bushes."

He points out that the Root Quencher is made in the USA.

"This would be great for fruit growers," Summers says. "Depending on the soil and



Three telescoping chambers of each device make it easy to expand or contract depending on the depth needed for watering. The Root Quencher can expand from 9 in. long for watering shrubs to 22 in. long for watering large trees.

how the trees are set up, you could put one between every two fruit trees. It would water them bi-directionally."

"Replacing one tree can cost hundreds of dollars, if not thousands," he says. "Spending between 40 and 50 bucks for a Root Quencher that hooks up to the irrigation line will be a big win."

The Root Quencher is \$49.95 on the company website. You can buy two of them for \$39.95 each, and eight units are \$34.95 each.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert Summers, Root Quencher, 1131 Church St., Pasadena, Calif. 91105 (ph 818-877-0751; robert@indeeppirrigation.com; www.rootquencher.com).



"When you make the cut, the blade will retract back into the arm at the same time hooks extend from the other arm and capture the net wrap," says Mitchell Scott, Director of Sales.

Automated Net Wrap, Twine Removal

Hillco Technologies of Idaho has created an automated twine and net wrap remover for both large round and square bales they called the Wrap Twine Remover (WTR).

The hydraulically-driven units are compatible with Euro, skid steer, and Deere 600 and 700 series front-end loaders. Hydraulic lines can be connected to a front-end manifold or the rear of the tractor. A pair of 4 or 5-ft. arms hold a serrated cutting saw in one and a series of hooks in the other.

A cab switch controls three separate functions.

A cut function extends the blade to slice the length of the bale, then retract back into the arm.

"When you make the cut, the blade will retract back into the arm at the same time hooks extend from the other arm and capture the net wrap," says Mitchell Scott, Director of Sales.

The bale can then be released from the arms while the hooks hold the loose wrap or twine. By using the cab switch, the cut cycle

can be reversed to drop the waste wherever desired.

"The double arms can also be rotated up and out of the way for regular bale handling activities," Scott says.

The units are manufactured at their Idaho shop, where components are fabricated and assembled in-house.

The WTR equipment isn't yet commercialized, but Hillco Technologies plans to put their latest prototype into cooperators' hands this fall for more testing. They expect to have approximately 10 WTRs available for purchase by late 2022 or early 2023.

Mitchell urges potential customers to contact them via the website or call the sales department directly for pricing and information.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mitchell Scott, Hillco Technologies, 1010 1st Ave., Nezperce, Idaho 83543 (ph 800-937-2461; sales@hillcotechtechnologies.com; www.hillcotechtechnologies.com).