Tomato Trailer Keeps Plants Healthy

Ken Reed was impressed by the tomatoes his neighbor grew in GrowBox™ planters. When he received six of them as Christmas gifts, he made them even better by mounting the boxes on a trailer.

"The sun is so hot in July and August; I can roll them in the shade or put them in a building in the fall when there's frost," says the Mississippi gardener.

He built the trailer for about $50 by repurposing a trailer used to haul propane tanks. Reed welded angle iron he received from a neighbor to make the frame to tie on 4 1/2-ft. tall galvanized 8-in. wire mesh he repurposed.

"I raised it above the tomatoes about 12 in.," he says. That proved wise as one plant soared more than 8 ft. tall.

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Reed added a jack to level the trailer and has a hitch he can use to move it with a ball on his tractor bucket. But even with mature plants, the trailer is balanced well enough to be moved by hand.

Reed kept the trailer in the full sun until temperatures soared, then moved it to an area with partial shade. He also moved the tomato trailer next to the east side of a shed to protect the plants during tornado and hurricane watches.

He says the GrowBox system works well because it includes fertilizer and soil. The watering system also avoids soil splashing on the plant to prevent plant disease. Early in the season, he only had to add water to the base of the box a couple of times a week. When the plants matured, he watered daily.

While Reed is overall happy with his tomato trailer, he notes that the plants developed end rot, which was also an issue for other gardeners in his area. However, that hasn't discouraged him, and he's thinking about trying other crops.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ken Reed, Booneville, Miss.

Existing sprayers can be retrofitted with the technology to apply herbicide to only the weeds rather than spraying a bare field or the entire crop.

Trimble Adds Spray Application To Crop Protection Portfolio

Trimble Agriculture, a precision technology company, recently acquired Bilberry, a selective spraying system company with real-time, green-on-green application technology that identifies and treats individual weed species within a crop.

Guillermo Perez-Iturbe, Trimble's senior marketing director, says the acquisition will help complete their application solutions, which are currently driven by their WeedSeeker technology, which uses a green-on-brown function to manage weeds in fallow scenarios.

Bilberry is based in France. Its technology uses unique artificial intelligence algorithms to identify numerous weeds in multiple crops, including canola. The company claims a 90 percent kill rate of broadleaf weeds in cereals.

The technology uses cameras and processors placed every 3 m. (about 10 ft.) on sprayer booms. Processors transmit information to a cab-mounted computer that analyzes the data and sends signals to open and close the desired spray nozzles. Crops are visualized on a weed density map to track the history of a field.

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The Bilberry technology's speed with which its algorithms identify in-crop weeds sets it apart. Twenty kph (about 12.5 mph) is possible while maintaining excellent weed control.

Perez-Iturbe points to case studies showing Bilberry can reduce herbicide use by 80 percent, lowering farmers' input costs and helping protect the environment.

By combining the Bilberry technology with Trimble's equipment, they hope to enable spraying solutions for farmers worldwide. Bilberry's AI and extensive weed database will extend Trimble's crop protection portfolio to the entire growing season rather than only pre-emergent applications.

Trimble uses dealers and partners worldwide to manage and distribute its equipment and technology.

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To secure the mower to the skid steer, Wampler mounted 2 1/2-in. square tubing under the main frame of the deck and to the loader bucket. He designed the mower to be pushed or pulled by the skid steer.

Homemade Mower Cuts Under Electric Fence

When the motor quit on his 4-wheeler-towed grass mower, Dave Wampler designed and assembled a skid steer-mounted alternative. He mows the tough vegetation beneath the bottom wires to keep his dairy pasture's electric fences from being grounded out in tall grass, shrubs and brush.

Wampler likes to mow under his fences rather than spray since chemicals create dried-out areas and washouts around the fenceposts.

To begin his project, he bought a Ferris zero-turn 52-in. mower without a transmission but a working 18-hp. Briggs & Stratton motor from a local club. He removed the rear end and drive wheels and relocated the gas tank, battery, and control panel with the key switch, choke and electric clutch switch. To secure the mower to the skid steer, he mounted 2 1/2-in. square tubing under the main frame of the deck and to the loader bucket. He designed the mower to be pushed or pulled by the skid steer.

"It's commercially built with a heavy deck and three big blades," Wampler says. "It does an excellent job eating grass, brush and small trees."

He says the most challenging part of the build was getting everything balanced properly. "We had to play with the tubing location and put it in right underneath the motor and behind the deck. That way, I could still see the outside wheel while mowing."

The skid-steer can raise the mower to head height for below-deck blade replacements or service.

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Citrus Product Kills Insects

Orange Guard insecticide checks all the boxes many consumers look for. It's natural, sustainable and may be used around food, humans and pets.

Those were the attributes Tor McPartland sought when searching for a natural way to eliminate ants in his California home. Through research, he learned that d-Limonene, an orange peel extract, dissolves insects' exoskeleton coating, which clogs their spiracles, resulting in suffocation. Formulated with water and other edible plant extracts, Orange Guard is a 100 percent natural insecticide, USDA Certified Biobased Product, EPA registered, and OMRI listed as allowed for use in organic production. All ingredients are also on the FDA Generally Regarded as Safe (GRAS) List.

"To kill bugs, spray them directly with the stream setting," says Will Kehoe, the company's Business Development Manager. After 3 min., use a warm, damp cloth to wipe up the excess. For use as a longer-term repellent for up to 2 weeks, it can be sprayed in cracks and crevices indoors and outdoors.

Orange Guard kills and repels hidden bugs, including ants, cockroaches, fleas and silverfish. It also kills garden pests (dilute with 6 parts water and 1 part Orange Guard), such as aphids, lace bugs, mites, white flies and scaled insects, while attracting pollinators.

The 32-oz. spray bottles typically sell for $15 to $19 on Amazon, through ACE Hardware and other retailers, and on Orange Guard's website. Larger containers and a sprayer attachment are also available. Orange Guard also has a product for fire ant control, Kehoe notes.

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Canadians can purchase Orange Guard through Upper Canada Organic Products.

"Our customers are eco-conscious and care about the environment and keeping their kids and pets away from harmful chemicals," Kehoe says. "It may be used around food, humans and pets."

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