

Inflatable Barriers Protect Against Flood Damage

After severe flooding hit a French town in 2019, the inventor of the FlowStop Barrier was inspired to create a portable, practical flood defense. Three years of development led to a successful product that won awards and expanded rapidly across Europe. In 2026, FlowStop opened a U.S. factory in New Hampshire.

The FlowStop Barrier stands out for its innovative, air-filled, double-partitioned design. Users inflate the device to 15 psi with a hand pump while monitoring pressure with a built-in gauge. The double-chamber design is key.

"For flood protection to be efficient, we need a force to press the gasket down on the ground to make sure no water goes underneath," explains Alex Cammarano, CEO and Managing Director. "To press down, we need it to push against something. To avoid making them all the way to the ceiling each time, we created a double chamber with the top chamber larger than the bottom. The top is inflated first, making sure there isn't quite enough space for the bottom compartment. When the bottom fills, it presses upward and downward, forming a firm bottom seal ensuring water can't seep beneath, even on uneven surfaces."

Cammarano says the inflatable adapts to every groove and hollow, filling gaps up to 1/3-in.

Durability is central to FlowStop's engineering. The barriers are made from durable PVC that resists debris, temperature fluctuations, wind and heavy impacts. Drop-stitch technology, borrowed from paddleboards and inflatable boats, keeps the inflated barrier in shape, preventing the ballooning common in



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"If they're too long, they tend to warp when inflated, so we add straps to hold the shape and help them press down."

Units can span up to 78 in. without additional attachments or straps.

Designed for reusability and ease of use, the FlowStop Barrier is lightweight for one-person transport and folds neatly for storage. Most barriers are custom-sized to meet specific needs, though a few popular sizes are kept in stock for quick delivery.

Independent tests show the barrier holds back up to 43 in. of water, though a 36 in. limit is recommended for residential safety.

FlowStop Barriers are available throughout North America, with pricing starting at \$90 per square foot or \$700 for a standard door.

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Auger Pro stacks and secures attachments vertically to maximize square footage.

Mobile Rack Organizes Attachments

For contractors, landscapers and equipment operators, daily challenges often stem not from the machine but from the portable attachments. Auger drives, flighted bits, buckets, forks, breakers and hand tools can quickly turn a trailer into a cluttered mess.

In 2021, Bucket Bunker launched the Auger Pro to solve this common problem by consolidating loose attachments into a single, organized, mobile system.

Invented by husband-and-wife co-founders Silas and Holly Clark, Bucket Bunker began with a straightforward idea: create a better way to manage multiple attachments for operators who move from yard to trailer to job site.

"What started as a solution to solve a single pain point for a local contractor has grown into a lineup of 13 unique models tailored for different attachment configurations across three machine categories: full-size skid steers, mini skid steers and mini excavators," says Head of Sales Coleman Scott.

The Auger Pro is a heavy-duty mobile attachment rack that allows operators to store, transport, and access essential tools in a single compact unit. It might carry an auger drive or a hydraulic breaker, up to three 36-in. dia. auger bits, two skid-loader buckets, and a set of pallet forks.

"Standard deck space gets consumed quickly when attachments are scattered across a trailer floor," Scott says. "Instead of wasting valuable deck space, the Auger

Pro stacks and secures them vertically to maximize square footage, helping operators make better use of limited room."

Its Load and Go™ design makes it useful in shops, yards, rental settings and active job sites. Built from high-strength American steel and finished with a durable powder coat, it's built for demanding work environments. Interchangeable pockets accommodate dirt and rock bits, while two 47-in. internal shelves provide space for tools, accessories and gear. Safety chains and ratchet binders are included for secure transport.

"The entire system is fully mobile and easily loaded on and off trailers or moved around job sites using standard pallet forks or a skid loader bucket slot," Scott explains.

Manufactured in Kansas and Indiana, the Auger Pro is priced at \$4,850 plus S&H. It's available online and from authorized dealers across North America, depending on regional availability.

"Unlike traditional fixed storage racks, the Auger Pro is a mobile, heavy-duty solution that allows operators to literally 'bring their shop to the work.' It turns loose, awkward job-site gear into a single, organized, load-and-go unit," Scott says.

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Salt-Tolerant Crop Research May Offer Drought Help

"Water scarcity and soil salinity are among the greatest challenges facing agriculture today," says Devinder Sandhu, a research geneticist at the U.S. Salinity Laboratory, USDA-ARS. "Recurring droughts, declining snowpack, and increasing competition for freshwater are forcing growers to rely more on lower-quality irrigation water, including saline groundwater and recycled water. At the same time, millions of acres of farmland worldwide are affected by salt accumulation, which reduces crop productivity and farm profitability."

This reality makes the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural

Research Service scientists especially urgent. Sandhu believes that if farming is to remain productive in water-limited regions, crops must become part of the solution.

His research focuses on developing crop varieties that maintain high yields under saline conditions.

"Salt-tolerant crops will allow farmers to make productive use of marginal lands and alternative water sources, helping conserve high-quality freshwater for crops that are more sensitive to salinity," he explains. "Ultimately, this research will improve the sustainability and resilience of agriculture while supporting food and forage production

in water-limited regions."

Sandhu's approach blends traditional plant breeding with modern molecular genetics. The scope is broad, as researchers screen thousands of genetically diverse plant lines in greenhouses, growth chambers, outdoor lysimeters, and field trials. They identify lines that naturally perform well under salt stress and then study the physiological responses, genes and biological pathways behind the performance.

Promising plants are crossed to combine complementary tolerance traits, and their offspring are tested over several generations under increasingly saline conditions.

"Over the past decade, we've investigated salinity tolerance of 20 plant species, including cereal crops such as wheat, oat, barley, quinoa and maize; legume crops such as alfalfa, beans and guar; vegetable crops including spinach, tomato, pepper and eggplant; and fruit and nut crops such as almonds, avocados, passion fruit, strawberries and grapes. The knowledge gained not only helps improve each crop but also provides insights that can be transferred across breeding programs to accelerate the development of more resilient varieties," Sandhu says.

Practical progress is already notable. In alfalfa, researchers have developed an experimental breeding line with exceptional salinity tolerance through repeated selection, capable of surviving salinity levels approaching sea-

water. In almonds, a range of commercial rootstocks has been screened, and promising candidates are now in advanced evaluation for California orchards.

The work also reaches deep into plant biology. Key salinity-tolerance genes from *Prunus*, spinach and alfalfa have been identified and functionally validated by introducing them into *Arabidopsis* mutants, confirming their role in helping plants withstand salt stress. This knowledge gives breeders more precise tools and shortens the path from discovery to field-ready varieties.

"One of the most encouraging outcomes of our research is that we've shown there's tremendous untapped genetic variation for salinity tolerance within crop plants," Sandhu says.

"In the future, I expect this research to result in improved crop varieties, rootstocks and breeding tools that'll help growers make better use of salt-affected soils and lower-quality irrigation water."

Sandhu continues, "The broader impact will be greater flexibility in where and how crops are grown, reduced pressure on high-quality freshwater supplies, and more reliable production in regions where salinity is already a major agricultural challenge."

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