

Mini Domes Extend Garden Season

Dan Koffler's plastic-covered mini domes let him add several weeks to the beginning and end of his gardening season.

"I put these together for my own use and they worked very well," says Koffler, of Salem, Oregon. "Other people were interested in them, too, so I've made more for sale. I've done some research into the design and am now putting together a patent application for them."

Koffler makes both oblong and round domes, using 1/2-in. schedule 40 PVC pipe for ribs. "I bought a commercial plastic seamer so I can make the cover in two layers," he says. Using the seamer, he welds pockets for the ribs in two sheets of plastic. "I use 60 mil plastic for the outer layer, and 40 mil for the inner layer," he says.

He heats and preforms the ribs, so they are rigid without putting too much pressure on

the plastic. The ribs fit into T-joints placed at intervals in a base, also made of PVC pipe.

So far, he's making only one size of round dome. It has 8 ribs and a diameter of 32 in. Like the ribs, the base for this round dome is heated and shaped.

He says the oblong dome looks like a small quonset hut. It's 4 ft. long and 32 in. wide, with 6 evenly spaced arches. He uses 6-mil plastic to seal the ends.

To keep the domes in place, Koffler uses big (32-penny) nails, inserted through a PVC pipe clip before they're pushed into the soil, with the clip over the base. "These hold the domes securely, even in high winds," he says.

"To open the round domes, you have to slide the clips off the base and pick it up. With the oblong dome, you can slip the clips off the base on one side and the clips on the other side act like a hinge, so it just swings open,"



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he says.

Koffler is in the beginning stages of setting up for marketing, but plans to have domes available sometime soon. He's still working out the price, but expects them to be easily affordable for both home gardeners

and commercial growers.

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Paul and Kurt Pierce use a homemade air pressure system to fill the hoppers on their bean planter.

"Made-It-Myself" Bean Filler

Paul and Kurt Pierce, Sullivan, Ill., were looking for a cheap way to easily fill the hoppers on a bean planter using air pressure to propel the beans. The big rig they built gets the job done fast and eliminates manhandling of bean bags.

To hold and transport beans, the Pierce's found an old wagon gear that was used to transport anhydrous. They also built a gravity hold box for it. "It holds 6,000 lbs. of beans in two compartments," says Paul. "A couple modifications had to be made, but it was mostly intact."

The key component is a Schurtzer Dura-Flow air compressor. "It's an ancient piece of equipment, but it was a good find," says Paul. The rotary air compressor mounts on the trailer hitch and is driven off the tractor pto by a large wheel and pulley. The air is then routed to the wagon hopper where it pushes the beans up and out 25 ft. to the bean boxes.

The boom that carries the beans to the boxes was also custom made. Instead of a typical dust collector cone, the Pierce's designed their own using "hardware cloth sides" on the drop box. A hydraulic jack is used to adjust the position of the boom.

The Pierce's built the whole thing for \$800 using parts they had around the farm.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul and Kurt Pierce, 18 Corey Ave., Sullivan, Ill. 61951 (ph 217 752-6727).



Gravity box mounted on an old wagon gear is used to transport beans.



Air compressor mounts on trailer hitch and is pto-driven off tractor.



Pierce-designed dust collector has metal screen sides.

His Business Is Rebuilding M-Series "Military" Trucks

Got an old M-Series service or military truck that's in need of an overhaul? Charles Talbert probably knows more about repairing and rebuilding than just about anybody around.

The Norwood, North Carolina mechanic calls his business M-Series Rebuild and Repair and that's just about all he does.

Not familiar with the M-Series service truck? If you don't have one, you may have seen them in use as fire trucks for rural fire prevention districts or in the forestry service. Others were used as wreckers, some as pickups, and some were used by the military as weapons carriers.

Talbert says his restoration business started in 1985 when he bought a 1963 Dodge M37B1 to use as a service truck in his grading business. He repowered with a diesel engine, and added better brakes, higher speed ring and pinion gears, and power steering.

Talbert says several different manufacturers produced the vehicles according to government specifications. "The original manufacturer was Reo, which made them in the late 1940's. The last ones were produced by AM General in 1987," Talbert says.

M-Series truck frames and bodies were generally over-engineered by today's standards and will probably last as long as anyone wants to keep them running, says Talbert. This longevity, however, has caused engines, transmissions and even cab fixtures to become severely outdated, particularly in the oldest of the M-Series trucks. This is the focus of Talbert's business. He can update any of them using new technology.

When one of the old trucks comes in to Talbert for updating, it is likely to get a new or rebuilt engine, transmission, transfer case, differentials, conversion to a modern electrical system, all new wiring, power steering, a brake system rebuild, new shocks, new bearings and seals, new hood latches, a new (comfortable) seat with seat belts, and more. You name it, Talbert can probably do it for you.

He's just finishing up an M-60 wrecker truck that will be shipped to Honolulu when it's complete. "I have another one from Ontario in to work on as soon as that's done," he says. "A lot of small fire departments, particularly those in rural areas, have older M-Series trucks. I can reprocess these for them, including engine rebuild, new suspension, power steering and brakes, and adding aluminum tanks, pumps and hoses for half the price of buying a new current production 4-wheel drive fire truck," he says.



Charles Talbert has a business repairing and rebuilding M-Series military trucks.



M-Series truck frames and bodies are built heavy and will last a long time, says Talbert.



Talbert can also help locate parts and even complete M-Series trucks.

Talbert can also help locate parts and even complete M-Series trucks. "There are a lot that were slated to be scrapped because they couldn't find parts or people to properly service them," he says. "Others sold theirs before they had seen what we can do to update them."

If you'd like to see Talbert's work, check his website at www.mseriesrebuild.com. If you'd like more information or a quote, you can send him a message there.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charles Talbert, owner, M-Series Rebuild & Repair, 4038 Shankle Rd., Norwood, N.C. 28128 (ph 704 474-4683; website: www.mseriesrebuild.com).