



James Godwin built this 10-ft. long aerator for only about \$500. Twin 5-ft. gangs of coulters slice down about 2 in.



Two 55-gal. barrels mounted on top of aerator frame are equipped with faucets at their bottoms, making it easy to add or reduce weight by adjusting water levels.

## Home-Built Aerator Cost Less, Works Better

One look at a commercial \$2,300 pasture aerator was enough for James Godwin. Not only was it expensive, it was also only 6 ft. long. He knew he could do better building his own.

"I built one that was 10 ft. long and only cost me about \$500," says Godwin. "It works great aerating pasture ground. I even use it on my oats."

Godwin took a 4 by 4-in. frame from a twin rake and repositioned the hookups for the 3-pt. hitch. He fabricated twin 5-ft. gangs of coulters to hang in line from the frame.

"I hung 6 by 6-in. steel tubing to the bottom of the frame to support the coulters gangs," explains Godwin. "Old cultivator brackets were reworked with disc bearings to mount axles."

The gangs themselves consisted of discontinued coulters Godwin picked up at cost for only \$17 each. He mounted them on 1 1/4-in. square tubing axles. Steel plates that had been drilled to fit the coulters' bolt patterns and with square holes for the axles were mounted to the coulters. Spacers were cut to fit between the coulters.

"I picked up two support jacks at a salvage yard for only \$10 each and mounted them at either end of the front beam," says Godwin.

Two 55-gal. barrels mounted to the top of the aerator frame are equipped with faucets at their bottoms. Adding or reducing weight is a simple matter of adjusting water levels.

The low-cost aerator slices the field surface to a depth of about 2 in. Godwin says that is just the right amount. Previously he had tried using a subsoiler, but it left the

pasture and field a mess.

"It took me three years to level out the area after that," says Godwin. "This rig causes minimal disturbance."

To verify the effectiveness, Godwin did only half of a Bermuda grass plot before fertilizing. "You could see the difference in darker color where I aerated. I saw the same effect on oats."

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## They Specialize In Barn Owl Houses

There's no doubt how useful barn owls can be when it comes to rodent control. Type "barn owl boxes" into Google and you get more than 400,000 hits.

The reason is simple, says John Schuster, of Wild Wing Company. One adult barn owl can eat more than 350 gophers or rats a year. Put up a box for an owl pair to nest and they'll raise an average of three to five owlets. That will require the parents to hunt every night for gophers, voles, rats and mice. Studies indicate 48 pairs of owls raising three owlets each can consume 6.3 tons of rodents in one year.

From California vineyard owners trying to control gophers to Middle Eastern date growers concerned about palm rats, barn owl boxes are going up all over the world.

Wild Wing Company's favorite design is the Horizontal Barn Owl nesting box with Sun Shields, which is built out of 3/4-in. CDX plywood and is 12 by 16 by 24 in. with a 3 1/2- by 4-in. elliptical doorway.

"We have elliptic holes specifically designed to give barn owls a sense of security," Schuster says. Wild Wing boxes include a predator guard - a vertical wall inside the box between the hole and where the owls nest to help stop predators from reaching in. Sun Shields are exterior wooden pieces that protect the box from overheating.

Location is more important than size. "You want to find flight corridors, which are gaps between trees and buildings," Schuster says.

The door should face true east. A tree or other perch 30 to 50 yards southeast of the box offers owls a safe place to land when they leave the box. Boxes can be set up 100 to 200 yards apart. Since owls don't hunt directly near their own boxes, it's good to have at least three boxes to overlap hunting territories within each barn owl's 1 1/2-mile radius.

While boxes can be placed on trees, Schuster recommends putting boxes on



Perches above this barn owl box provide rodent-killing hawks and kestrels a place to hunt from during the day. Barn owls take over at night.

16-ft. long 4 by 4-in. posts, or better yet, steel poles to make the boxes more difficult for predators to climb. Boxes can be as low as 8 ft. but 12 ft. is a manageable height for installation and cleaning out the box once a year.

Barn owls live year round in most areas except in far north areas with lots of snow. Barn owls use hearing to detect rodents and can hear through 3 ft. of snow.

Wild Wing sells a variety of custom-made boxes starting at \$82. The Horizontal Barn Owl Nest with Sun Shields sells for \$107. They offer discounts for orders of 10 or more boxes.

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## Varmint-Proof Wildlife Feeder

"It's varmint proof, weather proof, never needs cleaning, and only has to be filled once a month. Best of all, it costs very little to set up," says Bill Green about his high volume "wildlife feeder".

Green lives in the woods of northern Wisconsin next to a lake, where there are lots of birds, including ducks and geese, and deer. Unfortunately, there are also lots of bear, raccoons, squirrels, and other animals that want to steal the feed he puts out.

His varmint-proof feeder consists of a 33-gal. garbage can that holds 50 lbs. of sunflower seed, and a rectangular metal feeder that holds 100 lbs. of corn. The feeders both hang from the end of a hinged, 20-ft. long wooden beam about 15 ft. above the ground. A hand-cranked boat winch is used to raise or lower the beam.

"Everything is up out of the reach of bears and deer," says Green. "Everyone who sees it loves it."

Green says his system may be bigger than what most people need but that it could be scaled down. "For example, you might use a smaller 15-gal. garbage can."

The garbage can bird feeder is fitted with a 3 1/2-in. dia. metal chimney cap. Green cut a hole in the bottom of the can to insert the chimney cap, leaving about 1 in. of pipe extending up inside the can. Then he wrapped sticky-backed foam material around the pipe and put a big radiator clamp around the pipe to hold it in place. The can's side handles attach to a pair of chains that hang from a wooden yoke, and the can's lid is held on by a spring off a screen door.

"The chimney cap is tucked under the can, where big pest birds such as blackbirds and grackles can't reach it. Squirrels might be able to get on top of the can, but if they try to reach the feeder they just slide off."

The metal corn feeder is a modified commercial model equipped with a battery-powered electric motor and timer. It drops corn onto the ground three times a day for ducks and geese to feed on. The corn feeder was originally mounted on four legs and was designed to throw corn 50 ft. out in any direction. Green removed the legs and made metal deflectors so the corn drops straight down



A 33-gal. garbage can bird feeder and a metal corn feeder hang from a hinged, 20-ft. wood beam. A hand-cranked boat winch is used to raise or lower the beam.



Sunflower seed flows into chimney cap tucked under garbage can, where big pest birds and squirrels can't reach it.

onto the ground.

The 20-ft. long support beam is made from a pair of 2 by 8's spaced 6 in. apart. It mounts on an 6-in. sq. post anchored in concrete. The boat winch is attached to the post, with the cable attached to the end of the beam. A truss bridge-type assembly was added to prevent the beam from flexing.

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