

Mower “Chain Guard” Replaces Discharge Chute

Al Robbins, Friendswood, Texas, got tired of the grass discharge chute on his riding mower getting in the way all the time, so he replaced it with a homemade “chain guard” that results in easier trimming and parking in tight areas.

It consists of a series of short galvanized steel chains mounted on a length of all-thread rod, with the chains free to swing back and forth.

“It stops stones from flying out but lets the grass clippings go through. I wouldn’t want to cut grass without it,” says Robbins. “Because there’s no discharge chute I can mow around trees on either side.”

Robbins has made 2 chain guards, one for a Deere ZTrak zero-turn riding mower and the other a Sears Craftsman GT 5000 riding mower.

He removes the discharge chute and bolts on a 12 to 16-in. length of angle iron in its place using existing holes. Both ends of the angle iron are bent to make “tabs” that accept a length of all-thread rod, to which the chains are attached. Robbins slips the chains over the rod, mounting 1/2-in. wide rubber spacers between them to hold them in place.

“It works great. It doesn’t clog up with grass any more than a conventional discharge chute,” says Robbins. “If the grass is real thick and tall I just back up a bit, or raise the mower deck and start over. The hardest part is cutting the chains to just the right length and spacing. There has to be enough room between the chains for the grass clippings to go through, and the chains have to be short enough to avoid dragging and then hitting the blade tips. Most of the time I use 3 links per chain. The spacers help keep the chains from getting tangled. I made them by cutting up a reinforced rubber hose.”

Robbins says he’s willing to build chain guards for others if there’s enough interest.

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“It results in easier trimming and parking in tight areas,” says Al Robbins, who replaced the grass discharge chute on his riding mower with this homemade “chain guard”.



Easy-to-set-up Garden Circles are made out of 1 by 2-in. welded mesh wire and heavy landscape fabric. They measure 2 ft. tall and are 3, 4 or 5-ft. in dia.

Low-Cost Raised Garden Circles

When Ryan Hunt and his family decided to get into gardening a few years ago, raised beds were a top priority. They wanted to work at a comfortable height, but Hunt didn’t like the cost of most raised bed designs. So he made his own out of inexpensive materials. They worked so well he started selling “Garden Circles” through a website from his Pine River, Minn., home.

“We use a 1 by 2-in. welded mesh wire and the heaviest landscape fabric available,” Hunt explains. Garden Circles sell for \$53 to \$69 for 3, 4 and 5-ft. dia. units that are 2 ft. tall.

Garden Circles come in rolls that open and set up easily. Form the roll into a circle, clasp the folded ends together and secure with zip-ties. The largest circle (5-ft.) holds about 2 cu. yards of soil.

As a way to reduce the amount of soil needed and to hold moisture, Hunt suggests placing wood chunks and brush in the bottom half.

“It slowly breaks down and acts like a sponge,” he says.

Once set up, Garden Circles can be set up with drip or other types of irrigation systems. Because they are raised beds, frequent watering is necessary – especially around the perimeter.

The Hunts’ garden expanded from 10 circles to 40 circles to 80 circles over the



Units come in rolls that open and set up easily.

years, including Garden Circle Extensions that fit up against the circles and are less expensive. Hunt also has a 1-ft. tall version ideal for perennials such as asparagus, and rectangular setups that hold straw bales for that popular type of gardening. The versatile fabric walls make it easy to set up the garden in many configurations, such as the Foldout-U Shape garden that Hunt offers for \$225.

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