

He's Growing Cotton In Illinois

By Dianne Beetler

Illinois farmer Clifford West has a dream. He wants to wear a pair of jeans and a shirt made out of cotton he grows himself.

There's a problem with that dream, however. He lives in Illinois, which is not known as prime cotton-growing territory.

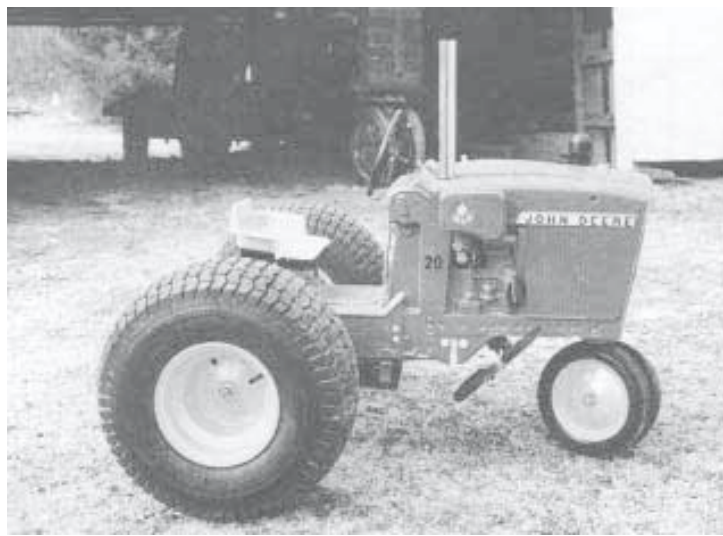
But West has been experimenting for several years. In 1999, he harvested about 100 lbs. of cotton from a small plot. This year, he planted four acres near his Kirkwood, Ill., home.

One problem he's had in the past is that the cotton plants grow too tall. So this year he's spraying them with a chemical to inhibit the growth of the stalks. And in the fall he will spray the plants with a chemical that will cause the leaves to drop off and open the boll.

Although the shorter growing season is against him, West plans to persist with his plans. "I had a guy tell me I couldn't do it," he says with a laugh. "I wanted to prove him wrong."



Clifford West planted four acres of cotton near his Kirkwood, Ill., home.



Val Otis put a 2 hp Briggs & Stratton gas engine inside this pedal tractor, which is fitted with tires off a garden tractor.

Motorized Pedal Tractor Great Fun For Kids

When a friend told Val Otis there was no way to put a motor in a pedal tractor, that was all Otis had to hear.

"That's kind of a mistake to say that to me," Otis says.

It took several months but Otis emerged from his large, well-equipped shop with what appeared to be an ordinary Deere pedal tractor with oversized tires. But on closer inspection, observers realized this was something they had never seen before.

To make room for an engine, Otis split the tractor apart lengthwise, making the body wider by molding wood pieces to fit. The tractor still looks the same from the side, but

from the front it is noticeably wider.

He put a totally rebuilt 2-hp. Briggs & Stratton engine inside the tractor. He put a garden tractor rear end on back of the tractor and simply chain-drives it off the engine. He took the pedals off the tractor, replacing them with a simple clutch pedal that tightens an idler pulley to engage the transmission. The tractor has just one speed since there's no transmission. It moves at walking speed.

Otis converted the tractor for a man who wanted it for his grandchildren.

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Pull-Tab Sculptures Inspire People To Donate

By Janis Schole

Doug Fibke has been collecting pull tabs from aluminum cans for seven years and now has more than 1,200,000 of them.

But Fibke doesn't just collect pull tabs. He makes things out of them.

He used the first million tabs to make several sculptures, including a 6 1/2-ft. tall farmer holding a pitchfork, a life-sized pig, an 8-ft. tree, a horse's head, a 14 by 7 1/2 ft. barn, a gas tank, a well, a chicken and a tractor. He's still working on the remaining 200,000 pull tabs.

Fibke has been featured on television and in farm newspapers. Now, he has plans to take his unique attraction on the road, to raise funds for charity. He has purchased a one-ton dually truck and a trailer to display his collection in.

He plans to call his travelling show, "The Amazing Million," and visit rodeos, fairs and festivals where he will charge a small admission fee and encourage donations into his "donation well," (made from tabs) to raise money for things like wheelchairs and the food bank.

Fibke doesn't ever plan to cash in the tabs for their recycle value, since they are worth far more in their current state as a publicity tool for charity.

"I'm inspired to play a small part in the big job of helping needy people," he says. "I think that others who collect tabs and send them to me deserve recognition, so I plan to have the names of each of those people put on a plaque that will be displayed in the touring trailer. For example, I've already got 253 names of people who contributed to the first million tabs in the collection."

To make his sculptures, Fibke strings them on wire and uses various materials to make the underlying frame.

"For example, the pig shape is made from paper mache and was donated to me. The base for the farmer's feet are made from two-by-fours, the legs are stovepipes, the stomach is foam with chicken wire around it, his arms are pipes and his head is a little garbage pail," he explains.

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Doug Fibke used pull tabs from aluminum cans to make this 6 1/2-ft. tall farmer holding a pitchfork.



Life-sized pig made from pull tabs. Pig's shape was formed using paper mache.



"Oliver's Good Breakfast" is made of all organically grown ingredients. It includes wheat, rye, oats, millet, sesame, buckwheat, flax, and sunflowers.

76-Year-Old Farmer Creates New Breakfast Cereal

Oliver Christensen is a 76-year-old man with a mission. He hates wimpy breakfast cereals that melt in your mouth, so he created a new cereal that sticks to your ribs.

"Oliver's Good Breakfast" is made of all organically grown ingredients purchased through a wholesaler. It includes wheat, rye, oats, millet, sesame, buckwheat, flax, and sunflowers. "I worked on it or five years before I came up with this recipe. It was just a matter of taste and what I thought would be a good mix. The wheat, rye, oats, and buckwheat give the bulk. The sesame seed and the flax are more of a laxative grain." No sugar, salt, or preservatives are added.

"One thing about my cereal is that you

have to chew it."

Christensen eats it both hot and cold. "I've just got a 3/4-in. roller mill and it's a slow process. I do about 20 to 30 lbs. at a time. Hopefully I will be able to enlarge my facility in the near future and be able to market my product to a wider audience," he says.

Oliver's Good Breakfast is sold in 2-lb. bags. It sells for \$6.00 (Canadian) for 2 lbs. "It's a very good buy food value wise," says Christensen. "People say they can't live without my cereal once they've tried it and that's why I'm waiting to get my own facility."

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