Made It Myself

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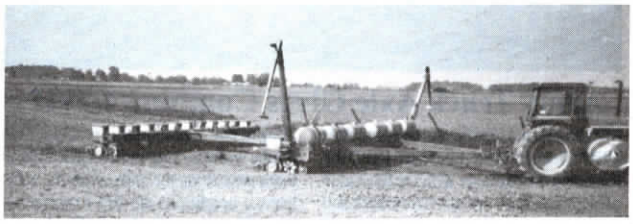

Doubled-Up Planters Let Him Switch To Narrow Row Soybeans

You don't have to spend $15,000 or more for a new planter to switch to narrow row soybeans, according to Ron Hastings, Ashville, Ohio, who along with father Jim and brother Brett hitches two 12-row 30-in. planters together, one behind the other, and splits the rows to plant 24 15-in. rows at a time.

Hastings built a hitch from 2 by 6-in. sq. tubing that bolts onto toolbar of the front planter - a front-folding Deere 7000. The rear planter is a 7000 straight beam planter that Hastings modified to fold forward manually. He lengthened the tongue of rear planter by 6 1/2 ft. so the planters clear each other on turns at end of field.

"I built it for $7,500 while commercial add-on planters cost about $15,000. The problem with the commercial rigs is that you have to modify your existing planter to mount them, making it difficult to change from planting one crop to another. It takes only 10 minutes to unhook my rear planter. All I do is pull the hitch pin and unhook the hydraulic hoses and monitor wires."

Hastings positioned the hitch so that the rear planter is offset 15 in. To compensate for the wider planter, he slid one of the front planter's markers in 15 in. and extended the other marker out 15 in. He cut the frame of the rear planter and installed hinges so he can transport both planters hooked together. He lengthened the wiring on the monitors so he could monitor both planters and extended the hydraulic hoses to lift the rear planter. He's pulled both planters with a 170 hp Deere 4430 tractor for two seasons. Last year he switched to a 295 hp Deere 8650 tractor so he could increase speed to 6 1/2 mph.

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Hydraulic Wire Roller

Rolling up 6-strand woven wire is an easy chore for Robert Burdette who build a hydraulic-powered wire roller out of scrap parts from around his farm. He also uses the roller for barbed wire and it could be used for high-tensile electric wire.

The trailing 2-wheel rig is pulled by a hinged tongue that can be moved back and forth by hydraulic cylinder to tip the wire spool either direction in order to keep wire rolling on straight.

The wire spool has a square center shaft and four long rods that run the full width of the spool, spaced around the center shaft. The rods, threaded at either end, are a couple inches longer than the height of the woven wire, and they fasten to the round wheel at either end with nuts. Once the wire is rolled up, the spool is disassembled and the rods and center shaft slipped out of the roll. Then the spool is reassembled and put back on the roller.

When rolling up barbed wire, Burdette simply uses shorter spacer rods, making a spool 12 to 16 in. wide.

The spool is driven by a hydraulic motor which chain-drives a large sprocket connected to the spool.

Burdette used an old field sprayer as the basis for the machine. A tripod frame that rises up above the wire spool is used to lift the rolls of wire from the machine with a block and tackle.

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Livestock Trailer Lowers To The Ground

"It makes it much easier to load cattle and horses when moving them into and out of my pasture," says Charles Wiles, Williamsport, Md., about the hydraulic cattle trailer he built.

The 20-ft. long, 6-ft. wide trailer lowers flush with the ground to load animals, then raises back up for highway transport. A 10-in. stroke hydraulic cylinder mounts on each side of the trailer. The cylinders, powered by a hydraulic pump driven by a 12-volt battery, push down on the frame which is free to slide up and down inside a "box socket". Wilson notes that the same hydraulic elevating trailer bed principle was used on old cotton trailers.

"I built it because I keep cattle in a pasture several miles from where I live, and I was always hauling dry and fresh cows back and forth with a conventional trailer," says Wiles. "Cows don't like to step up a steep ramp, and fresh cows with full udders sometimes injured themselves. Cows feel much more comfortable walking into the trailer at ground level. One time I was carrying a calf to the trailer and her mother walked right into the trailer before I got the calf there.

"My hydraulic trailer lets me load cattle without a chute. I back the truck and trailer at an angle to the fence near a corner and use the fence and trailer as a chute to funnel cattle in. After loading I raise the floor back up and flip a 'stop' over the cylinders to lock the trailer in position."

The tongue, which Wiles built from 6 by 8-in. box tubing, extends 8 ft. back underneath the trailer. To make room for the tongue when the trailer is lowered Wiles built a 6-in. "step" into the floor. "The step allows the rear 8 ft. of the floor to drop all the way to the ground," explains Wiles. "I can set up a 6-ft. wide divider gate inside the trailer to keep weak cows from walking up the step."

Wiles used salvaged mobile home tandem axles equipped with 14.5 by 14 tires and 12-ft. lengths of channel iron to build the trailer's frame. The sides are made from aluminum. The floor was built with pressure-treated wood. The front end of the tongue is equipped with a pintle hitch. "The hitch is probably heavier than necessary, but I wanted it strong because of the stress caused by twisting, raising and lowering of the floor," says Wiles. "The only problem I had is when manure got between the steel frame and aluminum sides which caused aluminum to oxidize. I added wood blocks between steel and aluminum to solve the problem."

Wiles spent $4,500 to build the trailer which holds seven mature cows.

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Portable Light

Here's a good alternative to flashlights. George Manning, Saskatoon, Sask., put together his own portable, high-powered light to carry around the farm.

Manning says he was fed up with conventional flashlights because they wore out so fast and didn't provide enough light. He simply built a box out of sheet metal to house a 12-volt spill-resistant motorcycle battery. He attached a 35-watt sealed beam tractor light to the hinging cover of the box, wiring it to a good-quality automotive toggle switch. The light is mounted on a 2-way swivel. Manning also fitted the box with a small reading lamp. The 35-watt bulb will blaze for 6 hrs. while the small reading lamp will burn for several days.

"At 16 lbs. it's not made for long marches but it works great for many applications," says Manning. "It worked so well I made a second unit using an automotive battery, a standard 110-volt light switch and a piercing 55-watt automotive spotlight."

For longest light, the batteries in the lights should be kept in the upper half of their capacity range. They also have to be kept upright so they won't leak.

"They work great for machinery breakdowns or calving. All individual components are simple and durable and can be easily replaced," says Manning. He says make the box big enough so you can pad the inside to keep bolts from protruding against the battery. Vent the box to allow hydrogen gas to escape, and don't let battery terminals short out on battery box.

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