

Mobile Sand Blaster Built Out Of LP Tank

"We do custom painting and sand blasting of tractors, forklifts, and other equipment. We made our own sand blaster using the frame off a 3-ton grain truck and a 120-gal. LP tank," says Jeff Hobert, Charles City, Iowa.

The portable unit weighs 7,000 lbs., holds 1,920 lbs. of sand, and contains a screw-type 210 cfm compressor that's powered by a 1987 4-cyl. International industrial gas engine. The components mount on a 2-wheeled steel frame equipped with a gooseneck hitch that rides on a dolly. The dolly is attached to a drawbar-type hitch, allowing the unit to be pulled by either a pickup or tractor.

Hobert cut the frame off an old International 3-ton grain truck to use as the main platform and used 4-in. channel iron and 3/8-in. thick steel plate to make the gooseneck hitch, which he welded to the truck frame. He used 2 1/2-in. channel iron to

build a frame and welded brackets on to which he bolted leaf spring suspension.

To build the sandblast "pressure pot", he used a 120-gal. LP tank that previously had been converted to hold diesel fuel. To force out the fumes inside the tank, he hooked it up to the exhaust on his car. After washing the tank out several times with soap and water, he cut it open. He welded a 2-in. threaded bung in the bottom of the tank to hold a sand valve. Then he welded a 2 1/2-in. threaded length of thick wall pipe to the top of the tank, which is used to fill the pot. He used an existing opening in one side of the tank to feed the air.

He made a moisture separator for the compressor which consists of a pipe inside the housing that points downward, and a pit cock in the bottom for the draining and relieving of air pressure whenever he's done blasting.

An electronic solenoid is used to open a one-way air valve which opens the sand valve



Jeff Hobert made his own sand blaster using the frame off a 3-ton grain truck and a 120-gal. LP tank.

at the bottom of the pot, allowing air to mix with the sand - all at the touch of a button that mounts behind the blasting tip. The sand blasting tip has a venturi design which helps accelerate the air and sand, providing a wider blasting pattern and also helps accelerate the media to 450 mph at 120 psi.

A breathable air unit, mounted on the frame, connects directly to the air compressor and connects to the operator's air-fed helmet, via the air filtration system.

"I use it to do everything from buildings to farm equipment and also to do a lot of res-

toration work on cars," says Hobert. "I spent about \$7,000 to build it several years ago and it has already paid for itself many times over. To buy a comparable sand blaster you'd have to spend about \$30,000. I'm proud of its performance and reliability over the years. It costs about \$45 per hour to operate."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jeff Hobert, 1936 Windfall Ave., Charles City, Iowa 50616 (ph 641 228-6703; sandblst@netzero.net).

Fish Farming Suits Small Farmer

Fish farming suits Todd Daniels because it allows him to generate significant revenue off just 16 acres.

"My business motto is based on being small scale. I want to be a small farmer and stay a small farmer," he explains.

The Hayfield, Minn., man is licensed to sell live bass, perch, bluegills, hybrid sunfish, crappies, and walleye. He breeds all his own fish except for the walleye, which he purchases wholesale, grows into bigger fish, and then sells retail.

Daniels' 16 acres consists of 14 ponds, with one species of fish in each pond. He switched to this type of management because he found that the yield from monoculture (one species per pond) is well over double of what it was when fish were mixed.

"My niche is to be able to sell the customer everything they might want to fill their pond. I may only break even on the walleyes, but they allow me to meet all the needs of my customers. In some cases, it's the walleye that bring them to my store, and also end up buying other fish varieties," he says.

Since fingerlings are the most profitable, he focuses on the small fish that range from 2 to 8 in. long and are 1/2 to 1 1/2 years old.

"You can sell 100 small fish for every big fish you would have produced," he explains. "Eating-size bass are much more valuable as brood stock than as food fish. With food-sized fish, the risks are so high. Great fortunes have been lost because of it. We have a short growing season in Minnesota, and can't compete with commercial fishermen."

Daniels' niche is retail sales. The majority of his customers are pond owners who want fish for their own personal fishing. He also sells to lake homeowner associations that want to keep their lake populations strong. Lastly, he also wholesales fish to other farmers who grow the fish bigger and then re-sell them.

Daniels also offers consulting to help people establish their ponds correctly.

To set up his own operation, he excavated 14 ponds. The advantage of that over using natural ponds is that they're built to your specs and arranged so you can intensively

manage them.

"You can always dig a hole, but whether it will hold water is important to find out before you dig," Daniels points out. "Water doesn't flow through clay, so that's the kind of base you want."

He says the best time to excavate fish ponds is in the fall, when the water table is low. Once the ponds have been filled, he puts in straw or organic matter, which together with sunlight, brings on plankton production which provides food for the fish.

The very first spring, the pond is ready to seed with fish. Daniels says that most people put in adults to generate the fry, which by fall have grown into 3 to 7-in. fingerlings that can be sold.

Aquaculture is a very technical type of farming, according to Daniels. Everything has to be precise for it to work.

"Even then, you're at the mercy of heat waves and bad winters. There are plenty of ways to accidentally kill fish during nesting, harvesting, sorting or delivery. There's always some new problem - an endless parade of accidents and mistakes," he explains.

"It is very time intensive, especially since I provide personal service," he explains.

Still, Daniels is excited about fish farming, and says it can be successful if you start small, pay your way, learn more every year, and get a little bit bigger as you can handle it.

"Or, you can take out a loan, borrow \$50,000 to build and buy everything. You can start big and make your money that way, but the risk is much higher, as some people have found out," he says. "If you start small and grow, as I've done, you've got lower risk and less income. I've grown 20 to 30 percent each year for the past six years."

To help save money, Daniels has found innovative ways to make equipment such as a fish holding tank he made by converting a 300-gal. milk bulk tank. He also uses 200-gal. plastic containers that once held jelly. He bought two of those for only \$50, instead of paying \$600 each for commercial holding tanks.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Todd Daniels, 73323 270th Ave., Hayfield, Minn. 55940 (ph 507 365-8081; tdaniels@kmtel.com; www.danielsfish.com).



Recent graduates show off their skills.

Horse Whisperer Teaches Skill To Others

When Larry Surretts whispers to a horse, it listens.

"I can train a horse to do anything physically possible, whether to jump in a pickup as it drives away or lay down and play dead when you point at it and say bang," says Surretts.

Not only does he train horses, but for the past 11 years he has taught their owners as well. The \$3,600 course at his Minnesota Horse Training Academy is an intensive education, regardless of a horseman's background.

"I had one 74-year-old man tell me he learned more in two days than he had in a life time of working with horses," says Surretts.

He tells of one young woman who came to class with a freshly purchased \$700 horse and trained it in class. A week after the class, she sold it for \$5,000.

"She not only paid for the class and then some, she now has the knowledge to train hundreds more," says Surretts. "That has happened many times."

The three-week program is repeated from May through October in Minnesota and will also be held in January, February and March in Florida. Students are responsible for their own food during the academy. They can stay in a dormitory on the grounds, use RV hook-ups on the grounds, or make other arrangements.

"I have had students stay at the nearby casino hotel for the entire three weeks," recalls Surretts.

Surretts says he learned his trade working with horses and horse trainers. The key to training, he says, is to see things the way horses do.

During the course, a student trains a horse (his own or one provided by Surretts) in the basics. The student learns how to train the



Newly trained horse climbs into pickup.

horse in neck reining, backing-up, sliding stop, controlled and free lunging, biting and flexing. Students also learn how to desensitize horses to gunfire, ATV's and other distractions. The horse is also taught to stop when a rider falls from a saddle and stand while being mounted or when hoofs are trimmed.

They also learn how to teach tricks and how to correct horse behavior such as kicking, rearing, bucking and shying. The training program is almost as diverse as the people attending.

"Some people who take the course are professional horse trainers who want to be better, and others just want to connect with their horse," says Surretts. "I have had unbelievable success stories, including one gal who made \$36,000 her first year after the course. She trained horses on the side while staying home with kids."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Minnesota Horse Training Academy, 1253 210th Ave., Ogilvie, Minn. 56358 (ph 320 272-4199; mntrainingacademy@hotmail.com; www.mnhorsetrainingacademy.com).