



Vacuum-powered collection system is combined with Big John Mfg.'s Speedy Soil Sampler. Auger mounts on side of a pickup or ATV and gets down to a 36-in. depth.

Vacuum-Powered Soil Sampler

High-priced fertilizer is causing more farmers to take a closer look at available nutrients. One way to do that is going deeper and sampling more acres. Jim Fritz says he has the ideal tool to do both - a vacuum-powered collection system (VCS) combined with Big John Mfg.'s Speedy Soil Sampler.

"Farmers need to know what the soil profile looks like from top to bottom, and the deeper you go, the harder it is to do by hand with a probe," says Fritz. "Our rotating auger gets down to a 36-in. depth."

The auger mounts on an outrigger, which in turn can be mounted to the side of a pickup or ATV. As the auger enters the ground, the sample is conveyed to a collection cylinder at the base of the outrigger. From there it's sucked away to the vacuum chamber and deposited into one of four selected sample containers.

Normally with a probe, several samples taken in a grid area would be gathered, combined and labeled for testing. With more intensive sampling, a single deep sample is pulled and with the aid of the VCS, deposited in a compartment. Then as many as six or more shallow samples are drawn and deposited in a second compartment.

"With four compartments, we can do two grids or zones before stopping to bag and label the samples from each compartment," explains Fritz. "The VCS can be used in conjunction with GPS systems to map where the sample was pulled."

All the work is done from the operator's seat with remote control of the auger. Fritz estimates the system can reduce field sampling time by 25 percent or more, depending on soil type and conditions.

"With growing demand comes growing opportunity for independent or contract soil sampling," says Fritz. "While most of our units go to retail agronomy organizations, a fair number are going to contractors."

If interested in setting up a contract or independent sampling service, Fritz suggests contacting local fertilizer retailers and working through them. A Speedy Soil Sampler with outrigger, carousel, four sample bins and the VCS is priced at around \$12,000.

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Rocking Chair Made From Horseshoes

Before he retired, Larry Thompson had a hobby as a horseshoe farrier. So it was only natural that he developed another unique hobby - making furniture out of horseshoes.

Thompson uses horseshoes to make unique rocking chairs, love seats, horseshoe hooks, and more. He recently sent FARM SHOW a photo of a rocking chair made from used horseshoes, which he painted black.

"I get used horseshoes from horseshoe farriers that I've known through the years, and I've sold a few items to other people," says Thompson.

He says the rocking chair is made from about 65 horseshoes. If he needs to bend a horseshoe, he usually does it with a hammer and anvil.

"Most people use a seat pad to make the chair more comfortable," notes Thompson.



Rocking chair is made from about 65 horseshoes.

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Soil Shaker is a skid steer attachment designed to loosen septic drain fields. It uses a 1 3/4-in. dia. pneumatic probe hammer to penetrate soil.

He Uses Air Pressure To Open Septic Drain Fields

Plugged-up septic system drain fields can be costly to replace. Here's a quick and relatively inexpensive solution to the problem. It's a machine called the Soil Shaker.

Greg Posch of Holdingford, Minn., owns the patent on the machine. He's been using it in his own custom business and is now offering the machine for sale.

The Soil Shaker is designed to loosen septic drain fields which are sealed, compacted or no longer draining. The patented skid steer attachment allows the operator to penetrate the soil using a 1 3/4-in. dia. pneumatic probe hammer.

"The Soil Shaker releases air into the compacted and sealed soil, loosening it. The operator is able to control the probe hammer and release air from the skid loader seat," says Posch. "Within hours the entire drain field is restored without any lawn damage."

A steel bracket mounts on the skid loader arms and is used to hold the air hammer and air tank. A trailer-mounted, diesel engine-operated air compressor with 100 ft. of hose supplies air to the air tank.

"Leach fields eventually become saturated or sealed and water no longer percolates down. In many cases, effluent from the septic tank seeps to the surface, leaving wet spots and even standing

smelly water in lawns," says Posch. "Done the traditional way, rebuilding a septic drainfield can cost thousands of dollars and take several days to complete because you're replacing the whole drain field. With Soil Shaker, it's all done in less than a day and any lawn over a drain field is left intact without getting ripped up."

Here's how it works: A long narrow probe and a pneumatic hammer penetrate soils up to 6 ft. deep, depending on the depth of the leach field. Once the probe is in the soil, air is forced through it at high pressure, loosening compacted soil and creating a network of cracks. The cracks break up the "biomat" pan that develops over years in the drain field. The process is repeated every 3 to 4 ft. throughout the entire drain field.

There are two control valves inside the skid loader. One valve operates the air probe and the other operates the air compressor.

"In most cases you can aerate an entire drain field in about two hours," says Posch. Sells for \$7,950.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Greg Posch, Soil Shaker, 39725 Co. Rd. 3, Holdingford, Minn. 56340 (ph 320 293-6644; t_county@hotmail.com).

Website Links Farmers To Consumers

Tom Davenport uses his website - Farmfoodies.org - to connect farm producers and consumers at no cost. It's a system that allows farmers to update their information easily and send emails to customers who are interested in their products.

For example, Davenport recently sent out an email that he planned to butcher 20 heritage Gloucestershire Old Spot pigs in November. Other times of the year he sends emails when his hay, beef and fruits or vegetables are ready.

"The ideal place this works is on the fringes of populated areas, and where people are nostalgic about connecting with farms," says Davenport, whose farm is in Delaplane, Virginia, about 70 miles west of Washington D.C.

Farmfoody.org went on-line this spring, but already has nearly 2,000 members throughout the U.S., with the majority in the Virginia area where it has had the most publicity. Visitors to the site can type in a zip code to find out what's available in their area and sign up to become "friends" of any farm they're interested in and receive email notifications from that farmer.

Davenport says it's another way to direct-market to consumers. His friend, Steve Knoblock, designed easy-to-use

software for farmers to fill out and update.

"It gives farmers immediate personalized websites, and they can change everything easily by themselves," Davenport says. Each farm's page includes a map where the farm is located and options that include recipes, video and frequently asked questions (FAQ). The FAQ section can be very useful; instead of spending time on the phone answering the same questions, the producer can direct the consumer to his web page.

Davenport invites interested farmers in the U.S. and Canada to check out his website and contact him for more information. There is no fee, he notes, for listings. Any size operation is welcome, from someone with a few extra vegetables to sell, to large farms and orchards.

"Getting a site like this to grow is a little like priming a pump. We advise new farm members to contact us with information about press contacts in their area," Davenport says. "We will send press releases to those contacts to spread the word to farmers and consumers."

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