



Mel Aho's home-built, self-propelled rock picker uses a New Idea 803C power unit and comes with gathering arms, conveyors and a hydraulic side-dump cart.



Steel-ribbed rollers, supported on a wheeled frame, churn the soil surface to a depth of 6 in. while picking up 2 to 15-in. rocks.

Self-Propelled Rock Picker Sweeps Fields Clean

A self-propelled rock picker developed by a central Minnesota farmer can sweep a field

clean of 2 to 15-in. rocks, faster than any rock picker we've seen. Inventor Mel Aho's brother Merf now uses the machine to do custom rock picking for as little as \$100 per acre, depending on field conditions. The partners plan to begin marketing the machines, but prices have not yet been determined.

Mel Aho began working on the picker after being frustrated with conventional rock pickers in a particularly rocky field. He and a Washington state farmer/friend, Perry Gilmour, began collaborating on a new-style picker.

In field tests, the unit has removed 1,500 cu. yds. of rock from 55 acres in 65 machine hours. It can make a single pass over 30 to 35 acres in a 10 to 12-hour day and produce 25 to 30, 8-cu. yd. loads of rock a day.

The RP1000 is a combination of off-the-shelf and fabricated components. The base power unit is the New Idea 803C power unit with a Cummins engine. Major elements of the picker include gathering arms, conveyors and a hydraulic side-dump cart.

The outriggers unfold from transit position alongside the cab in a V-shaped angle. Steel ribbed rollers supported on a wheeled frame churn the soil surface to a depth of 6 in. Rocks roll toward the center where they are gathered onto a conveyor. It moves them up and into a rolling basket that filters dirt back to the field. Rocks larger than 2 in. roll



Rocks roll toward the center where they're gathered onto a conveyor and then deposited in a trailing side-dump cart.

to the rear and onto a second conveyor that deposits them in a trailing side-dump cart.

Aho explains that being able to unload to a dump truck for transport to field edges allows him to keep moving in the field. He notes that clearing his once rocky fields has paid off at planting and harvest. Field operations have increased from 3 to 3 1/2 mph to running

between 6 and 7 mph. He no longer fears picking up rocks with his combine. Reduced wear and tear on machines means reduced time and expense in the shop.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Merf Aho (ph 603 365-7183; merf@therockpicker.com; www.therockpicker.com).

Vol. 34, No. 3, 2010

Harold M. Johnson
Founder

Editor/Publisher

Mark Newhall (mark@farmshow.com)

Senior Editor

Bill Gergen (bill@farmshow.com)

Contributing Editors

Janis Schole (jschole@west-teq.net)

Jim Ruen (edgcom@acegroup.cc)

C.F. Marley (ph 217 563-2588)

Dee George (dee_george@yahoo.com)

Office Manager

Anne Lash (anne@farmshow.com)

Circulation

Peg Nagel, Shelly Mende, Mary Lunde,
Sue Romnes (circulation@farmshow.com)

FARM SHOW (ISSN #01634518) is published 7 times per year (bimonthly plus one special "Best of FARM SHOW" issue published in December) for \$23.95 per year (\$27.95 in Canada) by Farm Show Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 1029, 20088 Kenwood Trail, Lakeville, Minn. 55044. Periodicals postage paid at Lakeville, Minn., and Madelia, Minn. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 952 469-5572; fax 952 469-5575; email: circulation@farmshow.com; website: www.farmshow.com). Single copy price is \$5.95 (\$7.50 in Canada). Publication No. 469490.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40032660
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses To:
Dycom Mail Svcs.
495 Berry St.
Winnipeg, MB R3J 1N6
Email: circulation@farmshow.com

FARM SHOW does not accept advertising and focuses exclusively on new products and product evaluations.

FARM SHOW does not charge for new products or services featured in the magazine. Anyone with a new product or service of interest to farmers - whether inventor, manufacturer, marketer, distributor or whatever - is invited to contact FARM SHOW regarding possible publication.

FARM SHOW Publishing, Inc., has not tested or used any of the ideas or products described in its publications. FARM SHOW Publishing, Inc., does not promote, recommend or endorse the use of the ideas or products described in its publications. FARM SHOW Publishing, Inc., disclaims any and all responsibilities and liabilities in the event of personal injury, death, property damage or losses as the result of the use or application of any such ideas or products. Anyone applying or using such ideas or products does so at his, her or their own risk.

Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission.

May-June, 2010

Three-Way Tomato Cages

You've never seen anything like these 3-way tomato cages that let tomatoes grow up, down and sideways.

"I had been raising upside down tomatoes for about 10 years, planting them in holes at the bottom of 5-gal. buckets," says William Russell. "I finally decided to build permanent cages out of wood that let plants grow in all directions."

Russell set pressure treated 4 by 4's in holes with 2 ft. of concrete. These served as the main supports for the 18-in. wide by 26-in. long and 16-in. deep planters made from pressure treated lumber, mostly 2 by 4's and 2 by 6's with 1 by 1's for upward growing plant supports.

He used 1 by 2's and mesh wire for the cage that extends between the two end planters. Doors hinged to one side provide access.

Russell set the planters at shoulder height so they would be easy to water, yet provide plenty of room for the downward growing tomatoes. Watering was made even easier by inserting a pvc pipe into a pocket of gravel in the planter. Russell simply fills the pipe with water as needed.



William Russell built these permanent cages out of wood that let tomatoes grow up, down and sideways. "The nice thing with this setup is that there's no weeding," he says.

"The nice thing with this setup is that there's no weeding," he says. "The only difficulty was picking the ones that grew upward. I had to stand near the top of my 6-ft. step ladder and reach as high as I could."

Last year, Russell planted Kentucky Wonder pole beans in the planters. He reports they reach 15 ft. tall and well beyond his reach. This year he plans to plant cucumbers

growing upward and cherry tomatoes growing across, but nothing growing down as he has planted strawberries underneath the twin towers.

"It's a great conversation piece," reports Russell.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, William F. Russell, 2268 Gibson Circle, Sevierville, Tenn. 37876 (ph 865 428-4893).