Reworked Potato Planter Works Like New

Willard Kanning found a better way to plant potatoes than stooping over an open furrow. He found a used one-row planter that was headed for the scrap pile and retooled it.

"I stripped away all the foot pedals, depth controls and other features," explains Kanning. "All I needed was the planting shoe and closing disks."

With the help of local welder Earl Keough, Kanning installed sections of old catwalk used on grain bins to make platforms for a helper's seat and to hold extra seed potatoes. The seat was recycled from an old Deere 820, complete with seat belts. A hopper for holding seed potatoes was fabricated from a heavy plastic tool tote.

"It was 3 ft. long and 1 ft. wide," says Kanning. "I cut the 1/4-in. thick sides down to a 4-in. height and mounted it to the frame in front of the helper's seat."

He cut a 4-in. dia. hole in the bottom of the seed hopper and bolted a matching pipe flange and length of pvc pipe to it. Hole, flange and pipe were placed so seed potatoes dropped through them would land directly behind the opener shoes.

The front end of the planter was also modified, replacing the wheels and hitch with 3-pt. hitch connections. Adjusting planting depth is as easy as moving the 3-pt. lever.

"I drive the tractor, and my wife sits on the planter, dropping seed potatoes down the hole," says Kanning. "When the hopper is empty, it's easy to retrieve the next batch from the rear platform."

When one variety is depleted, his wife drops a marker flag down the hole.

The one control that Kanning left in place was the lever for adjusting the camber and height of the closing wheels; however, the wheels were frozen solid. They were equipped with cups for packing grease around the bearings instead of zerks.

"I removed the cups and had to drill out the old grease," recalls Kanning. "I packed the cups and reinstalled them. Now the wheels spin like new."

Willard Kanning retooled a used 1-row planter, installing platforms for a helper's seat and to hold extra seed potatoes.

Kanning spent $50 on the original planter, which looks like new, thanks to a coat of paint. "The closing wheels really hill up the potatoes," he says. "We used it last year and didn't have any problem with greening. The only thing it doesn't do is space the potatoes."

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Potato Digger Updated With Hydrostatic Drive

An old, ground-drive potato digger found new life when Willard Kanning added a hydrostatic drive. Kanning used the drive from a 149 Cub Cadet Hydro, a gearbox from a Cub rototiller, and the pto from his Deere 4115 garden tractor.

"The digger was headed for the scrap pile when I bought it for $100," says Kanning. "Ground-drive units have problems with dirt buildup on wet ground. With hydrostatic drive, I have complete control of depth and speed."

Kanning had help from master welder Earl Keough. The tiller's 2:1 gearbox allowed them to double the tractor's 540 pto speed to meet the drive's required 1,000 rpm's.

The Cub rear end straddled the digger, allowing axle stubs to be turned into belt drives.

"I had already stripped off the gears and chains from the ground drive and replaced the conveyer drive sprockets with big bull pulleys," explains Kanning. "The direction of the hydrostatic drive needed to be reversed to drive the conveyer chain. I could have run it in reverse, but I twisted the belts instead."

Kanning and Keough replaced the old steel wheels with rubber wheels from a grain auger. The original hitch was welded solid and cross-braced to the digger frame. For field work, Kanning connects it with a clevis hitch to a bar on his 3-pt. hitch. To adjust depth, he simply raises or lowers the 3-pt.

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This ground-driven potato digger was given new life by adding hydrostatic drive.

High-Tech Plot Planter Also Helps Create Perfect Corn Mazes

When Bob Lucia put together plans for a high tech plot planter, his goal was to demonstrate the latest precision ag technologies. What he also got was the perfect maze planter.

"We reworked a 1750 Deere four-row corn planter for precision placement of corn and soybeans in a variety of row configurations, variable rates and differing inputs," explains Lucia, director of sales, Progressive Crop Technology, a division of Advanced Agri-Solutions Cooperative, Inc. "We want to take test plots to our farmers. We have requests for on-farm plots from the Ohio River north to Michigan."

The planter and a 4720 Deere tractor are equipped with an Ag Leader Integra Monitor (in-cab) for RTK sub-inch steering, variable rate seeding and DirectCommand, which controls three liquid products: on-seed starter fertilizer, 2-in. placement fertilizer and a liquid insecticide.

With precision steering and in-cab computer-controlled planting, the system can be used to do multi-pass twin row and other configuration planting.

The planter is equipped with four planting units on 30-in. centers. A second set of three units is mounted between the first set for 15-in. row spacing. Hydraulic controlled mounting brackets allow them to be extended back 24 in. from the first rank for service and seed change-out.

The planter's precision system includes row-by-row shutoffs that can be set and controlled by pre-loaded field maps.

Planter's precision system includes row-by-row shutoffs that can be set and controlled by pre-loaded field maps.

"We can drive across a field, and the planter will spell out words or plant in the designated spacing for a maze," says Lucia. "Our cooperative recently merged with another, and the new name will be Trupointe. We are spelling out the name in a field this spring. We have another farmer signed up for us to do a maze on his farm."

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Ray Sheets cut an old round wire corn crib apart to make two half circles, which he connected end to end. He filled in each end of building with more corn crib wire and covered it with 6 mil plastic. Then he laid vinyl-coated wire over the top to hold the plastic in place.

"Corn Crib" Greenhouse

Ray Sheets, Helena, Ohio, grows flowers and vegetables in a 12-ft. wide by 14-ft. long portable hoop greenhouse. What makes the greenhouse unique is that it's constructed from an old wire corn crib.

"It works great for starting plants in the fall or even growing them all year long. Best of all, it didn't cost much to build," says Sheets.

He cut the round corn crib apart to make two half circles, which he connected end to end. He filled in each end of the building with more corn crib wire and covered it with 4 to 6 mil plastic. Then he laid vinyl-coated wire over the top to hold the plastic in place. He also framed in a door at each end, and mounted the greenhouse on 4 by 6 wood skids.

"It works great for starting plants in the spring but can also be used for other purposes. Best of all, it's built almost entirely from recycled materials so it didn't cost much to build," says Sheets. "I bought the corn crib from a neighbor for $50 and spent about $10 on other materials.

"It makes a nice, cozy place to go in cold weather. During the winter I use the greenhouse as a workshop. It sits on top of a septic tank leach field where the ground never freezes. I also keep a small wood stove inside and even a dozen baby chickens. It stays so warm inside that last winter I was able to work in a T-shirt with a foot of snow on the ground outside.

"During the summer I haul the building out to my garden. I also put black fabric over the building to help keep it cooler inside."

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