



Travis Brockshus built this big 3-pt. mounted hay merger for less than a third of the cost of a commercial rig.



Reels installed on the rig's two 7-ft. forage heads keep hay flowing smoothly to the 32-ft. long, 4-ft. wide conveyor belt.

## Big Hay Merger Does More, Costs Less

Travis Brockshus can merge two hay swaths with a single pass, drop it on a third and add two more on his return trip down the field. Best of all, he built the merger himself for less than a third the cost of a commercial rig.

"We cut 160 acres four times a summer, making haylage for our dairy herd," explains Brockshus. "We needed a merger, but I couldn't find anything reasonably priced."

With the exception of two 7-ft. forage heads, which he used for pickups, Brockshus designed and fabricated the entire merger. The 3-pt. mount with lift assist wheel lets him quickly raise the heads as much as 3 ft.

at the end rows.

Hydraulic motors on the heads and a flow control for them lets him match pickup speed to hay conditions. Reels installed on the heads keep hay flowing smoothly to the 32-ft. long, 4-ft. wide conveyor belt. Both reels and belt are also flow controlled. The hydraulic power runs off a pto pump.

"When I am cruising along at 12 to 13 mph in good hay, the conveyor belt runs full pretty well," says Brockshus. "With the flow control on the belt, I can match forward speed. In light hay crops I can go faster."

Because his family uses both a 12-ft. and

a 16-ft. swather to cut hay, he needed to be able to adjust the pickup units to match two 12-ft. swaths, two 16-ft. swaths or one of each. He also wanted to be able to match end row swaths, which can be uneven due to field boundaries.

"One head can be mechanically adjusted to the side about a foot," says Brockshus. "The other one can be hydraulically adjusted nearly 5 ft. and on-the-go if swath widths change. The merger works behind swathers with 12 to 18-ft. widths."

Brockshus bought all materials and components new, aside from the pickup heads.

While prices would vary depending on the price of steel and other materials, Brockshus says he would be willing to sell his merger or custom-build a second for around \$25,000. "Initially I looked at a trailing merger with similar capacity, and it was priced at around \$75,000," he says.

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## Fence Ties Work With Portable Drill

The ties and tie twisting tools from Logical Decisions, Inc. (LDI) make fencing fast, easy and permanent. Attach an LDI tool to your drill, and it twists ties tight.

"We work with all types of fencing and offer galvanized, aluminized, stainless steel and vinyl coated ties," says Patty Krake, LDI. "Our ties are available in 1 5/8, 1 7/8, 2 3/8 and 4-in. lengths, as well as in 6, 9 and 11-ga. steel."

LDI also makes tools to twist 6, 9 and 11-ga. wire ties tight. Simply put the tie in place, slip the drill tool over the ends and start the drill. A standard 1/2-in., low speed, electric drill with a minimum 7-amp draw is recommended.

Each gauge requires its own tool. Tools are priced at \$50 each. Ties are commonly

packed in 500 count packages. Prices range from 12¢ per tie and up, depending on gauge, length and material.

"We also handle smaller orders," says Krake. "We make up whatever size order the customer needs."

Custom tie bending of wire from 11 ga. to 1/2-in. in diameter is available from LDI. The company also works with fence companies and suppliers to offer a wide range of other fence products, including crash gates, swing and slide gates and solar-powered gate systems.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Logical Decisions, Inc., 2020 N. Sherwood Forest Blvd., Baton Rouge, La. 70815 (ph 225 274-1115; toll free 800 676-5537; patty@ldi.com; www.ldi.com).



Tie twisting tools attach to your standard electric drill.



Fence ties are available in various sizes, for a variety of fastening jobs



## "Paper Chain" Transplant System

John Hendrickson is taking the backache out of transplanting. The Paper Chain Pot Transplant (PCPT) system he and his wife Karen discovered on a trip to Japan is a "game-changer" for small growers like himself. It allows a grower to transplant as many as 264 plants in less than a minute, all while walking down the field.

"You plant the seeds in the paper pots on trays, and when it's time to transplant, the pots are in a chain that simply feeds through the transplanter," explains Hendrickson, who distributes the PCPT system through Small Farm Works, LLC. "Pot chains are available with 2-in., 4-in. and 6-in. in-row spacing. Simply stake one end of the chain and pull the transplanter forward down the row."

Transplanters are available in one and two-row configurations. They hold trays of chained pots for transplant. The transplanter opens the furrow, sets the pot and pushes soil around it. Packing wheels tamp soil around the newly set pot.

"The transplanter works best in a flat, uniform, tilled bed and generally best in lighter soils," says Hendrickson. "Heavier soils may require using a rake to cover the pot with soil."

The PCPT system consists of transplanter, paper pots, opening rods, an opening frame and growing trays. The opening rods and opening frame allow growing medium to be added to pots. The 12 by 24-in. trays, each with four drain holes per square inch, are for seed starting and to transfer the potted plants to the field. Dibble plates create uniform depressions for the seed, and seeders are also available that seed an entire tray at a time. Once pots are filled and seeded, the opening frame is moved to the next tray.

"The paper pot system is great for hand transplanting, as well as mechanized," says Hendrickson. "The paper pots come apart easily if selling individual or multiple seedlings to customers at farmers markets or other sell points."

Hendrickson has distribution rights for North America, and his website is the only English language information source for the system. He is also a user of the system. It can be used with lettuce and other salad greens, beans, peas, corn, herbs, cut flowers and even ornamental grasses.

"It is absolutely wonderful for planting onions, leeks, scallions and shallots," says Hendrickson. "I use it for them, as well as

for spinach, beets, kohlrabi and basil. I had trouble getting uniform germination with spinach leaving gaps in beds. With the paper chain pot system, I get virtually 100 percent germination."

He notes that transplanting into newly tilled fields gives the crops a head start on weeds. The PCPT system also allows him to start successive plantings in optimum greenhouse conditions, regardless of field soil conditions that can affect direct seeding.

The single row transplanter is around \$1,200. Paper pot chains vary by size and number of pots per chain, generally ranging from \$2.00 to \$3.25 per set. Cases contain either 75 or 150 paper pot sets.

"We often get initial orders in the \$2,000 to \$3,000 range," says Hendrickson. "Growers recognize the reduced labor, especially painful stoop labor. I would never try to grow the amount of alliums that I do without the paper chain pot transplanter. Doing it by hand is such a huge and arduous task."

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Seeds are planted into paper pots that are connected in a paper "chain" that feeds out through transplanter.