

Gas-Powered Toy Combine On The Market

A toy combine at the recent Ohio Farm Science & Review Show drew a lot of interest. Little kids were hopping onto a toy Deere 9870 combine powered by a gas engine and complete with a 6-row corn head and an unloading auger. Jeff Moore of Moore's Farm Toys in Dresden, Ohio, made the unit by converting a commercial pedal combine sold by Scale Models of Dyersville, Iowa.

The combine is powered by a rope-start, 49 cc, 2-stroke 1 1/2 hp gas engine with gear reduction. The engine is connected to a Peerless transaxle. Moore replaced the combine's original pedals with an accelerator pedal on one side and a brake pedal on the other, adding a pair of footrests. He also replaced the original plastic wheels with larger rubber wheels, modified the steering system, and mounted the fuel tank and

muffler inside the combine's body.

"A lot of people stopped and took photos of their kids on it," says Moore. "We've only built one unit so far, but it runs too fast even though there's a clutch and gear reduction system on it. We hope that adding another jackshaft will help slow it down. A tether kill switch fastens to the driver's wrist, or parents can hold it.

"We've had requests to also make kits for the Case IH 7088, AGCO Gleaner S77, and Massey Ferguson combine models. We expect the Deere combine kit to sell for about \$900. The stock pedal combine sells for about \$350."

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World Record Cornstalk?

With the use of plastic and heat to extend the growing season, Jason Karl says he broke the world record last year with a 34-ft. tall cornstalk. While it's exciting to break a record, he has another motivation.

As a private breeder and researcher, Karl believes that growing and studying tall corn offers applicable lessons to commercially grown corn.

"The whole idea right now is to learn why corn does what it does, and what it tells us about the fundamentals of corn," he says. Experiments with it can show the effect of longer light with artificial lights, for example.

"We used seed from southern Mexico. Bring it here and it grows really tall because of the longer days in summer. It goes bananas," he explains. Through seed breeding over the past 15 years, the corn grows tall because of genetics and not because of special fertilizer or secret feeding formulas.

"Any maize in the U.S. that has ever grown over 20 ft. tall did so solely because it was taken directly from the tropics - that's the science and reality," Karl explains. "Under any circumstance ever, fertilizer itself is not going to be responsible for any epic height. If there is epic height, it's because genes are present in the maize that make the maize highly reactive to night-length (and night-length synergy with temperature and cat-ion exchange capacity). I am breeding to get it taller."

He extends New York state's relatively short season with plastic towers and heaters to protect the plant.

"It might make ears, but it puts most of its energy (sugar) into the stalk," he says. That's desirable for silage - or possibly as an alternative fuel.

While Karl keeps detailed notes of his work and has written a book on the science of tall maize that includes the history of tall corn, he notes there are limits and hurdles regarding tall corn.

It doesn't do well in large plots, he notes. Equipment is also an issue. For example, how do you handle tall stalks that are 3 in. in diameter and that tend to lodge.

Regardless of the impracticality of commercial tall corn, Karl continues to be fascinated by it and interested in talking to other professionals taking a scientific approach.

Through his research, he read about 30-ft. corn in the West Indies in 1899 and Don Radda's record-breaking, 31-ft. cornstalk in 1946 in Iowa (featured in Vol. 33, No. 5 of FARM SHOW).

Using a scientific approach, he wants to learn more about corn. "I'm pretty darn sure this is the tallest in history," he says. Though he has no interest in setting a Guinness world



Karl grew his tall corn inside a protective column of clear plastic. Here he put one stalk in a pot of dirt and stood it next to a normal sized field of corn.

record, he has signatures of four leading scientists who saw and confirmed the height of the tall stalk.

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