



Linda and Randy Naeve equipped their Pro Solar Style High Tunnel with rain gutters on either side. Harvested rain water is used to irrigate plants inside and out.



FarmTek's "Daddy Long Legs" canopy is designed for equipment storage.

FarmTek Provides Custom Buildings In Virtually Any Configuration

No one sells more "engineered" farm buildings than FarmTek, a big mail order company headquartered in Dyersville, Iowa. Buildings offered include greenhouses of every size, hoop buildings for livestock and machinery, high tunnels for crop production and many more.

"We make more than 500 designs of fabric-covered structures and at least 75 different greenhouse designs for everything from hobby gardens to commercial flower and vegetable production," says Barry Goldshire, FarmTek Representative.

"We've expanded quite a bit into the grower market, and hydroponics is creating quite a buzz with the drought. The same is true with growing fodder. Now that hay is so expensive, fodder systems are booming.

"Our larger structures are almost all one-of-a-kind," says Goldshire. "We custom-build to almost any size while a lot of our competitors are limited to specific lengths. For example, we recently put up a 250-ft. wide clear span structure for composting wood chips and a

15,000 sq. ft. clear span building for lions for an animal sanctuary in Colorado.

"They had 30 days to get a building up to receive circus lions from Bolivia, or the animals would have been euthanized," recalls Goldshire. "We designed a Hercules model for them. It was paid for by Bob Barker of TV fame and put up by volunteers."

The clear span, fabric-covered structure provides habitat with grass, plants and natural light. An overhead walkway allows visitors to observe the lions.

The company isn't the only one to get creative with structures. Linda and Randy Naeve, of Ames, Iowa, modified their Pro Solar Style High Tunnel with rain gutters on either side. Harvested rainwater is used to irrigate plants inside and out.

David Lucius, Atoka, Tenn., houses more than 100 banana trees plus tropical flowers in his 12 by 24-ft. Backyard Pro Greenhouse II. The greenhouse-style building has 2-ft. wide panels of tough polycarbonate.

Goldshire cites a customer in Texas that



David Lucius, Atoka, Tenn., houses more than 100 banana trees plus tropical flowers in his 12 by 24-ft. Backyard Pro Greenhouse II.

raises giant flytraps and others that raise orchids, koi and more. He says the locally produced food movement is driving interest in greenhouses. Even FarmTek is involved. Its retail, manufacturing and distribution are headquartered in Dyersville, Iowa. The company's demonstration high tunnel greenhouses supply Dyersville grocery stores, restaurants and food banks with fresh veg-

etables.

"People are wanting to grow their own or buy it local," says Goldshire. "We have a lot of 'urban farm' customers. Perhaps 50 percent of our web sales are to urban customers."

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Jig Makes Seed Boot Repair Go Fast

Carl Schafer has a handy jig for repairing seed boots on 750 Deere no-till drills. Over time the holes used to locate the seed boot wear. This can cause seed to randomly miss the furrow. Fixing them usually entails drilling out holes and inserting bushings. Generally that involves removal and use of a drill press. Though some jigs are available for sale, Schafer felt they were overpriced. He came up with a simple jig to make the exacting job go fast without removal of seed boots.

"The last drill I repaired was 40 ft. wide with 64 seed boots, one every 7 1/2 in.," recalls Schafer. "Each one had two holes that had to be drilled out and bushings inserted and tacked in place. Using my jig and my little 1/2-in. electric drill, I had the job done in about 8 hrs., including tacking each bushing into place. I can finish a 15-ft. drill in 4 hrs. easy."

The jig is a simple piece of 1/2-in. steel, 1 3/8 in. by 3 3/4 in. He drills three holes in the jig to match the three holes on either side of the seed boot casting. Two holes are for guide pins to ensure accuracy when drilling out center holes for bushings.

The holes are offset 3/16 in. from the centerline to fit against the casting. Two guide holes are centered at 1 1/8 in. from either end of the jig. These may be either 3/8 in. or 7/16 in., depending on the drill.

The center hole is a 1/2-in. dia. to which Schafer tack welds a 1/2-in. by 1-in. long

hardened steel bushing.

"The bushing and the jig plate are guides for my bit," says Schafer. "I like at least a 1-in. long guide to be sure my bit stays in line."

To repair a seed boot casting, Schafer lines up the guide holes with the casting inserts the two 3-in. long pins after adding a drop of oil to each for lubrication. He cuts his pins from drill rod rather than using stock bolts.

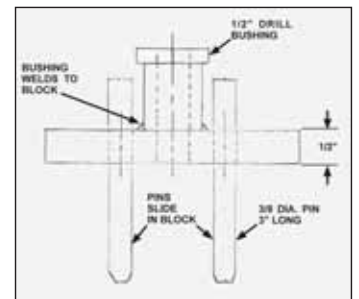
"Drill rod is correct dimensionally, and I can get a 3-ft. long piece for \$7 or so," he notes. "Stock bolts are often not dimensionally correct and can be off a couple thousandths of an inch either way. Drill rod is perfect."

The pins slide all the way through both sides of the seed boot casting. Schafer then inserts the bit and drills out the exactly centered hole on both sides of the casting.

"Once I have both sides done, I slip in the 1/2-in. (outside diameter), 3/8-in. (inside diameter) bushings," he says. "I slip a 3/8-in. bolt through to keep them in place and add a single tack weld to each bushing to hold it in place. Pull the bolt, and move on to the next seed boot."

Schafer emphasizes blocking the raised drill before crawling underneath. He says making a jig takes only about an hour. He estimates the whole thing, including the \$11 bushing for the drill bit guide, only costs about \$20.

"Remember to only tack the guide bushing a couple of times; don't weld it tight, or you'll



Carl Schafer came up with this simple jig for repairing seed boots on Deere 750 no-till drills. It eliminates the need to remove the seed boots and use a drill press.

bow the jig," he warns. "I was going to patent this and try to sell it, but decided to just give the idea away in hopes others can use it."

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