

**Publisher's  
Notebook**



Harold Johnson  
Publisher and  
Editorial  
Director

**"Weed Eater" Imports Robot Mower** - That "robot mower" from Belgium that was featured on the cover of FARM SHOW a year ago (Vol. 17, No. 1) and again this winter on the cover of the 1994 Edition of "Best of FARM SHOW", will soon be on the market in the U.S. and Canada, manufactured and marketed by Poulan/Weed Eater of Shreveport, Louisiana. "We'll probably have a limited number of units on the market in 1994 and, if all goes well, they should be widely available by 1995," says Charles Hodges, Poulan/Weed Eater spokesman. The solar-pow-



ered mower is already on the market in Europe, manufactured by Husqvarna, where it sells for about \$3,000. Poulan/Weed Eater hopes to put a much lower price on it in North America, and they also say some engineering changes will be made to the mower to adapt it to North American conditions.

The first-of-its-kind mower is totally automatic, keeping your lawn at a pre-set height without refueling and requires virtually no maintenance. You put it out on the lawn in the spring and take it in each fall. It senses the height of un-cut grass and shuts down if the grass is too wet to mow. It bounces back from obstacles such as trees, buildings, hedges. On lawns without a natural boundary to turn the mower, you simply run an underground wire that sends a signal to the mower as it approaches.

To get on a mailing list for more information about the robot mower when it becomes available, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, David Anderson, Project Manager, Poulan/Weed Eater, 5020 Flournoy-Lucas Rd., Shreveport, La. 71129 (ph 318 687-0100).

**Flood Of '93 Not Over Yet**

The flood of '93 is not over yet for farmers along a 40-mile stretch of the Illinois river just north of where it joins the Mississippi. Water will not drain off 22,000 flooded acres of high-yield crop land because the Illinois river is actually higher at that point than the adjacent farmland due to years of silt accumulation on the river bottom. All the water has to be pumped back over the levees into the river.

Clair and Warren Wilson, Hillview, Ill., who have been featured several times in past issues of FARM SHOW, lost virtually their entire crop to the flood last year and most of their land is still under water despite gigantic pumping efforts like the one shown in the photo. It was taken near Nutwood, Ill., where 16 huge pumps have been working 24 hrs. a day pumping water back over the levee and into the river at a rate of 350,000 gal. per minute.



Flooded-out farmers, including the Wilsons, are upst not only that all the crop land wasn't pumped clear last fall due to bureaucratic mix-ups by the federal agencies involved, but also because they don't like the long term flood prevention solutions being proposed for the big river. The Army Corp of Engineers wants to rebuild the levees back to the way they were while farmers want the Corps to dredge the river, depositing the dredged-up silt on the levees and lowering the river level at least 6 ft. They say the silt has been building up ever since the lock and dam was built at Alton, Ill., in 1906. Instead of dredging the buildup, they say the Army engineers let it accumulate and simply increased the height of the levees to contain the river. They say the government could kill two birds with one stone by lowering the river level - levees would be rebuilt and water would drain naturally off flooded farmland. (C.F. Marley)



**New "Run-Flat" Tire**

Pictured above is the new "Run-Flat" tire from Bridgestone after being deliberately driven completely deflated for 2,800 miles.

"Most people can't make it to a gas station with a flat tire. We made it 2,800 miles," says Bridgestone of its new tire. It occupied the right front position on a Callaway Corvette convertible and, after being deliberately deflated, was driven non-stop for four days over a 2,800 mile course through 13 states.

Bridgestone's new "Run-Flat" is a complete system that includes radio-controlled low-tire pressure sensors, special alloy wheels and uniquely-designed sidewalls — a tire engineered so that with little or no air pressure, it can run at 55 mph for up to 50 miles, providing ample opportunity to get off a dark shoulder, over a bridge, through a tunnel, or possibly make it all the way home — if and when a tire suddenly blows or deflates.

For more information on the new "Run-Flat" from Bridgestone, call 800 452-2812 or 203 434-3010.

**Robotic Farming  
Making Progress**

For a decade, Ron Palmer has struggled to bring his version of robot-run farms to reality. During that time, the University of Regina Engineering Professor has been trying to perfect a robotic tractor and persuade people that it's a technique that could revolutionize farming.

Palmer's invention is a navigation system so accurate that a computer can locate a tractor in a field within a few centimeters. His system relies on radio beacons which, he says, can pinpoint the tractor's location to within 15 centimeters.

"The potential is enormous. This is the missing link, the missing piece," he says. "If you put all these things together, you make farming an unrecognizable industry."

"For example, instead of treating each field as a single unit, it could be broken down into a grid of much smaller

squares. Less productive squares might receive an extra shot of fertilizer, while those patches infested with weeds might receive more herbicide. Instead of scattering seed over a field, it could be more productive to grow grain in rows just like vegetables.

"With no cab or driver, tractors could be smaller and cheaper to buy, run and repair. No longer guided by human eyes, they could work at night and could instantly compute how to cover an irregular shaped field in the fewest number of passes.

"Other innovators will undoubtedly come up with more uses for this 'bunch of little slaves,'" concludes Palmer. "The farmer is no longer just a guy sitting on a tractor moving over bumpy ground. He's now more of a manager." (The Edmonton Journal.)

**As The Worm Turns**

Prepare yourself for the next battle over the use of farmland — worm pickers!

Don't laugh. This is serious business, at least to those who arrive on location with flashlights, boxes, jars, shovels and trowels. In fact, this is such a serious business that it prompted a knock-down, drag 'em out brawl on a farm near Georgetown last April. It seems two groups of worm pickers — one from Toronto and the other from Hamilton — arrived at the same spot on the farm at the same time. An argument broke out over who had the right to be there. There was no mention of either group having asked the farmer's permission to "harvest" worms from the field.

The argument was not just an exchange of angry words and uncomplimentary remarks. This was a clear battle over territory and these people meant business. They armed themselves with steel bars, chunks of wood and whatever else they could lay their hands on. Eventually, police and ambulances arrived to pick up the pieces. Six ambulances were needed to transport 11 wounded to the hospital.

So now farmers have to be on the lookout for worm gangs, the latest group to claim private farmland as public property. There must be money in worms. Maybe farmers have been missing out on one of the biggest cash crop opportunities to come along in decades. I can see it now — pick-your-own worm farms springing up on the fringe of urban centers across the country. Of course, competition would be fierce and, to avoid scuffles, security guards would have to be hired, which would push up the price of worms, which will prompt people to pick worms illegally, leading to gang wars over worm turf. Sigh — maybe worm farming doesn't have that much potential after all. (Paul Meldrum, Ontario Farmer)



**Double Baby Rocker**

Steven Birkholtz, Willow Lake, S. Dak., came up with this powered double baby rocker after his wife gave birth to twins and the babies had a problem with colic. "It's a side-by-side glider-rocker made to hold baby car seats," says Birkholtz. "The seats lift off when needed in the car. The frame's made out of electrical conduit and the shield over the motor is sheet metal. I powered the swing with an electric ice cream maker motor, which was already geared down to a speed that gently rocks the babies back and forth. They love it."

A little girl was watching her mother spread cold cream over her face.

"What's it for, Mummy?" she asked.  
"That's to make me beautiful, darling," replied the mother.  
The little girl watched in silence until the mother began to remove the cream. Then, in a tone of sadness, she whispered, "It didn't work, did it?"