



Skid loader-mounted attachment uses a spindle turned by a motor and gearbox housed in a box on side of attachment.

Skidsteer Attachment Speeds Up Fabric Mulch Removal

As the 145,000 trees that Dustin Gibbons and his family planted on their Brookings, S. Dak., ranch started to grow, they realized they had a problem. The fabric mulch the trees were planted in had done a great job of retaining moisture and preventing weeds, but it wasn't degrading like it was supposed to. To avoid girdling the trees as they grew, the fabric needed to be cut larger for each tree or removed altogether.

After spending a day and a half using a tractor and chain to pull out a 1/4-mile strip of the fabric mulch, Gibbons figured there had to be a better way. He developed his Weed Barrier Removal Attachment after a couple years of testing and tweaking a prototype on the family's property. He also built and sold a few from his farm shop (Duty Metalworks), and area conservation district employees are taking an interest in the attachment.

"It mounts on the front of a skidsteer at about a 30-degree angle," Gibbons says. A 4-in. sq. tube slips into the brackets and becomes the spindle, which is turned by a motor and gearbox housed in a box on the side of the attachment. Pull out about 10 ft. of the fabric by hand and wrap it around the spindle to get started, then drive the skidsteer ahead as the spindle winds up the fabric.

The fabric tears in the middle so the operator needs to go on both sides of the tree row. If a lot of dirt and grass pull up with the plastic, Gibbons says it's helpful to have someone walking along knocking clumps off the fabric as it is being pulled toward the spindle. Typically, the roll is 3- to 4-ft. in diameter after about a 1/4-mile. Then it is lowered, released and a new 4x4 is attached for the next run.

"Now it takes us 1 to 1 1/2 hrs. to pull up a 1/4-mile of fabric from both sides of the row of trees," Gibbons says.



Operator drives skid loader ahead as spindle winds up fabric.

He notes a tractor with a universal mount could be used, but a skidsteer is smaller and more maneuverable around the trees.

"Many people aren't aware of the problem," Gibbons says. "Ideally, the fabric should be pulled out when the trees are seven to 10 years old. There will be problems after that."

He has seen groves where the fabric wasn't cut and kept each tree at a small diameter where the fabric choked it, while the rest of the tree grew.

Gibbons invites landowners interested in his attachment to contact him. He builds and sells them for just under \$5,000. A video of it in action can be seen on his website.

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Chisel Plow Makes A Great Pothole Patcher

Anyone who can weld can turn the frame of an unused chisel plow into a useful heavy-duty "pothole patcher", says Perry Easley, owner of Easley Welding, Kirksville, Mo.

He uses the 10-ft. wide pothole patcher on his Kubota skid loader to smooth out gravel driveways.

He removed all the shanks, leaving a rectangular frame. Then he cut 120 4 by 1 1/2-in. rectangular "teeth" out of 1/4-in. thick steel plate. They mount horizontally on the crossbars, spaced about 6 in. apart and staggered between bars. To mount the unit on his skid loader, he made a cardboard pattern

and then welded three lengths of 2 by 4 steel tubing at an angle running from the frame to a mounting plate that's equipped with quick-tach brackets.

"It does a good job of loosening the surface and smoothing out any clods and rocks," says Easley. "One time I used it at a local tractor pull where they fell in love with it. When the tractors spin their tires they pile up a lot of dirt, but my pothole patcher did a great job of dragging the dirt back into the holes."

"On gravel roads it rattles around some, but it does a good job of loosening the gravel and filling in the potholes. After a pass or two it

Device Keeps Conveyor Belt Fencing Tight

Repurposed Materials owner Damon Carson sells a lot of repurposed conveyor belt, but credits his customers for finding ways to use it. Recently he shared a customer's tip for keeping a conveyor belt horse fence tight as a drum.

"Conveyor belt trimmings have characteristics that are ideal for horses," says Carson. "They are soft, yet strong and protect the horse, unlike steel or wood fences. The problem is that the material will stretch over time. One of our customers came up with a device to fix that."

The device is as simple as it is low cost. It consists of a length of pipe sized to match the width of the belt being used. A hole is drilled through the pipe to match the diameter of a length of threaded rod. It is butt-welded to the corral's corner post at the height desired to mount the belt.

The belt is cut to length, doubled over and bolted back on itself to form a loop around an end post. Once the loop has been secured (with rivets or bolts), the belt is threaded through retainers at each pipe until it reaches the opposing end post. After pulling it tight, a second loop is formed close to the threaded rod.

A hole drilled in the center of the loop lets it be drawn over the threaded rod. The pipe is then inserted inside the loop and slid over the rod. A simple nut and washer lock the pipe and loop in place.

"The belt will stretch over time and become lax," says Carson. "When it does, it is a simple matter to tighten the nut on the rod, drawing the pipe and belt with it."

Carson has shared pictures of the device with other customers interested in repurposed belting. It has helped increase sales and uses for what would otherwise be landfill waste.

"Our customer's practical ingenuity has helped turn a waste stream into viable fence railing," he says. "It is real cowboy engineering and a good example of what our frugal, resourceful and innovative customers can do."

It is that "cowboy engineering" that has helped Repurposed Materials grow from a Denver, Colo. base to warehouses and yards in Chicago, Atlanta and soon Dallas, Texas.

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Belt tension device uses a threaded rod that runs through a pipe sized to match the width of belt being used. Threaded rod is welded to corral's corner post.



Belt is doubled over and bolted back on itself to form a loop. Pipe is then inserted inside loop and slid over rod. As belt stretches, operator tightens nut on rod to draw pipe and belt in.



Belt is threaded through retainers at each pipe until it reaches opposing end post.



Perry Easley used the frame of an old chisel plow to build this 10-ft. wide pothole patcher, which he uses on his skid loader to smooth out gravel driveways.

looks like I've put new gravel on the entire driveway."

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