

Dozer Tracks Used To Make Shop Apron

Farmers keep finding new uses for old stuff at Damon Carson's company, Repurposed Materials, which recycles industrial materials on a giant scale (www.repurposedmaterials.com). Carson recently sent photos of a project done by one of his customers, Jaime Stuever of Bailey, Colo. He used lengths of bulldozer rubber track tread to build a 16-ft. wide, 27-ft. deep apron in front of his new workshop.

"My tire tread apron took only about 4 hrs. to install and saved thousands of dollars in concrete work. It cost only about \$900," says Stuever. "The tread is heavy and solid so it won't go anywhere in high winds, even though it's not anchored down. I'm very happy with it."

He says the tread was made by Firestone and looked new, with the factory tags still on it. "There must have been blemishes on it or some other kind of problem, but I didn't notice anything wrong. It came with a diamond-shaped pattern and was just what I wanted so I took all the tread the company had. I could have used even more if it had been available."

The tread came in 16-ft. long, 3-ft. wide sections that were 3 in. thick. Each section weighed about 300 lbs. Stuever drove to the company's Denver headquarters last November and loaded 9 tread sections onto his single axle flatbed trailer. At home he used a fork-equipped loader bucket to unload the sections one at a time, centering each section

on the forks with both ends drooping down.

"It was cold the day I installed the apron so the sections were a little stiff, but it wasn't a problem," says Stuever. "I got off the tractor and pushed both ends of the section down by hand a little at a time. By maneuvering the loader I was able to fit the sections tightly together."

He says the tread is pliable enough that it conformed nicely to the ground contour. Before installing the apron he used a hoe and shovel to level the area, making sure the tread would be level with the entryway to the shop.

He says wind and snow hasn't caused any problems. "We had wind gusts this winter of more than 80 mph, but the tread didn't move at all. We also had about 100 in. of snow. Whenever it snowed I used a loader bucket to remove most of the snow from the apron. The shop faces south, and with its black color the tread heats up in the sun and quickly melts the snow. The water drains into the ground between the tread sections, so there are never any icy spots."

Stuever also bought some old conveyor belts from Repurposed Materials and used them to make an inexpensive "sidewalk" leading to his house, as well as a patio behind it. He simply laid two 15 by 3-ft. sections down end to end. "The belts look nice and have a link-style design that makes them easy to clean with a broom," he says. "They're made of hardened plastic and can take a lot



Jaime Stuever used lengths of bulldozer rubber track tread to make this 16-ft. wide, 27-ft. deep "tire tread" apron in front of his new workshop. "It saved thousands of dollars in concrete work," he says.

of abuse."

He used 2 more belts to make the patio. "I placed the belts on a sawhorse and used a hacksaw to cut them in half, then laid them side by side on the ground to make a 7 1/2-ft. rectangle. The belts have a greenish color so they look nice. I paid \$20 apiece for them."

Stuever says he plans to also install conveyor belts on the concrete floor next to his shop workbench. "I think they'll work great because they'll be softer to stand on, and will insulate the floor to keep it from feeling so cold during winter."

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Instead of purchasing a \$500 hiller, Robert Weaver built his own for less than \$100. He uses it to create beds for his 2-acre garden.

Hiller Reduces Gardening Labor

Using "junk" he had laying around, Robert Weaver built his version of a single-row toolbar to create raised beds for his 2-acre garden. He bolts on cultivator disks and shanks and sets the depth and width of hilled rows.

"I have been growing produce for more than 30 years and this past season I tried a new way of doing it that has helped growing and working the crops. Now at 73, I let the tractor do the bulk of my work," Weaver explains.

He pulls the toolbar with a 20 hp. compact tractor to build rows 30 in. apart, which fits with the tire width.

Instead of purchasing a \$500 hiller, he built his own for less than \$100. He made the toolbar out of 2 by 2 steel bar and clamps out of U-bolts and muffler clamps.

After cultivating his garden, he hills rows about 8 in. tall and scores a row down the center with a small V-shovel to manually plant seeds with an Earthway planter.

During the season he can cultivate between the rows and fertilize with his tractor until the plant canopy shades out the weeds. Weaver also spends about an hour each evening with

a hoe scraping weeds from the sides of the beds.

Hilling works well for the shale soil in his Williamsport, Md., garden, he says. Plenty of precipitation helps also. In 2018 the area received 64 in. of rain. Everything did very well until several days of more than 100 F temperatures "cooked" his potato plants.

Weaver added that he adjusts the height of the hills to the plants so that roots are at ground level. Beans only need about 2-in. hills, for example. With 8-in. hills, he can harvest potatoes at ground level.

After just one season, Weaver says he was pleased with the results and plans to adjust a few things this year and make a video of his process. He is especially pleased with how large his onion sets grew using a double row method and fertilizer.

"For people with larger gardens, it's a simple thing to do," he says. "I've grown gardens all my life and always plant more than I need so I can share with others."

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To make this raised garden bed, Bernie Coulthurst used old real estate sign frames as the base and attached used aluminum sheeting to it.

Raised Garden Beds

"I'm 80, and weeding the garden is difficult on my back so I set up some raised beds," says Bernie Coulthurst of Amherst, Wis.

So far he has built 3 raised beds. They are all different, because instead of going to the lumber yard to buy materials, he used whatever he had on hand.

The bases of his first 2 beds are made from steel doors.

"I fiberglassed the metal doors so they wouldn't rust and will last a long time," Coulthurst says. He stacked concrete blocks under one door to get the right height and made the bed walls out of old 2 by 8s (which he also coated with fiberglass).

The first year, 2016, he planted strawberries in the bed, so he added a pvc railing to hold netting to keep birds out.

"The crop was outstanding, but the strawberries froze out over winter," Coulthurst says. Now, he plants crops like beets and radishes in it.

His second bed is similar and also has a steel door base on stacked pavers he took up from a patio area he no longer uses.

For drainage, Coulthurst cut V openings on the bottom of the wood walls of both beds.

For the third raised bed, Coulthurst used old real estate sign frames as the base for used aluminum sheeting he had on hand. The sheeting already had holes for drainage. Steel strips bolted on the sides of the frame legs add support to the raised bed. At 12 in. deep,



He made another bed by stacking concrete blocks under a steel door with sides made out of old 2 by 8s.

Coulthurst plans to grow peas and carrots in it this summer.

Raised beds require extra watering, and so this year he plans to lay soaker hoses in each of the beds to hook up to a garden hose.

"It's easier to weed and easier to harvest, from the raised beds," Coulthurst says, though he still grows vegetables like squash, pumpkins and tomatoes on fabric mesh on the ground. He always has plenty of vegetables to share with his family and with friends he and his wife square dance with on Thursdays.

Coulthurst is pleased with how well the beds turned out, and his wife also appreciates gardening with them, he says.

"I just enjoy making something out of nothing," he concludes.

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