

Rock Picker Gets Both Big And Small Rocks

Lester Pritchard only picked rocks in his son's field for 20 min. before he started looking for a better way. When he didn't find it, he started working on his own design.

"I bought a rock bucket and put a reel on it to flip rocks into the bucket," says Pritchard, who now sells the rock picker. "It took me 3 1/2 years of trial and error, but I got it. I found out it's not just a matter of putting a reel on a bucket."

The problem was getting the taper right on the teeth. When he started, the teeth had a 45-degree taper, which worked about 50 percent of the time. Eventually the taper got down to 28 degrees, and Pritchard also shifted the pivot point of the reel back about 5 in.

Once his son's neighbors saw how well the skid steer-mounted rock picker worked, they wanted their own. "I figured I was too old to start manufacturing rock pickers," says Pritchard, now 80. "However, another son suggested I get it patented, and I found someone to make them for us."

The L.P. Reel Rock Picker weighs 1,220 lbs. It is made from 1/2-in. steel wall tubing, sidewalls and teeth. The reel is a 1 3/4-in. steel shaft mounted on greaseable bearings and driven by a hydraulic orbit motor and #80 roller chain. A pressure relief system protects the motor.

"We have a grate that can be installed to handle rocks down to 2 in. in diameter," says Pritchard. "However, you can end up picking up more dirt instead of it falling through the larger grate."

Pritchard may not do the building, but he does a lot of sales, making deliveries personally in central and northern Minnesota. He also does field demonstrations, showing up with a skid steer, Reel Rock Picker, and even his own rocks. When he makes a delivery, he brings his Bobcat to demonstrate.

Pritchard prices the Reel Rock Picker at \$4,995 in areas where he can sell direct and deliver the units himself. A distributor handles sales in other areas.

"Readers can contact me directly, and if



Rock picker's front-mounted reel flips rocks into bucket. "It gets both big and small rocks," says inventor Lester Pritchard.

they are outside my area, I'll give their name to our distributor," says Pritchard. "If they ask, I'll be glad to send them a copy of a 3 1/2-min. DVD on how the Picker works."

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They're Killing Weeds With Electricity

Electroherb equipment designed to kill weeds with electricity is coming to North America in September. The Brazilian Zasso Group has already opened a division to sell their "digital herbicide" in Germany and is actively looking to do the same in North America. The company offers a wide range of electro weeders from a 1 kW corded unit for gardens and yards to a 1,000 kW unit for fields, roadsides and forests.

"The technology was originally developed for forestry, but we have done work in fruit, vegetable, grain and soybean production" says Sergio Coutinho, Zasso Group. "We've also done weed control work in urban markets with municipalities."

Coutinho says the technology is especially appropriate for organic production where there are so few alternatives. It is also a good option in conventional crops troubled by herbicide resistance.

High frequency and high voltage are produced by the unit and applied through an electrode to the weed, into the roots, and into the soil around it. When a second grounding electrode touches a nearby weed, the circuit is complete and roots and shoots of both are destroyed.

A variety of application heads, designed for the vegetation to be controlled, deliver the charge to the plant. The "contact only" design means you have to touch the electrodes themselves to be harmed.

A person standing alongside a plant being "burned" by the equipment is completely

safe, even in wet soils.

Environmental conditions do affect how the electrical energy is delivered. Coutinho explains that you want the same power delivered under all conditions, but to reach that requires more current and less voltage in wet soils. Dry soils require more voltage and less current. Plant type also plays a role.

"Broadleaf plants have a very large leaf system compared to their root system and are more easily controlled than grasses with their larger root systems," says Coutinho. "Broadleaf plants also have a higher water content."

Because the energy is transmitted throughout the plant, disrupting cells from plant tip to root, the company claims electro-physical control to be more effective than cultivation. There are no resistant plants, nor is control affected by weather conditions after application. Physical "contact only" control means there is no worry over misapplication or movement off target.

In addition, weeding near stems of desirable plants is possible. Erosion is reduced compared to cultivation, and there is no impact on water quality.



A Brazilian company that makes machines designed to kill weeds with electricity, plans to sell and lease equipment in North America.

In Brazil, units are pto-powered or powered by a stand-alone generator on a trailer or aboard a truck. Coutinho expects a similar setup when introduced in North America. He says the company is working with European tractor makers, who are developing on-board generators.

"We are very enthusiastic that we are not the only ones looking at electrical applications in agriculture," says Coutinho.

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