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Homemade Wild Duck Plucker Keeps On Plucking

Harry Hickerson of Pine Bluff, Ark., built a wild duck plucker that's still going strong in its fourth decade. "My buddy and I made it from scrap," he says. "It can pluck a mallard in under 3 min. and a wood duck or teal in under 1 min. We've used it on over 2,000 ducks, and it's still plucking."

He came up with the idea after seeing a natural rubber thimble used to shuffle through paper. "For years, we dipped the duck in paraffin or beeswax to make plucking by hand easier, then we'd singe the remaining feathers," he says. "With the duck plucker, we no longer have to singe them because it gets all the feathers off."

Materials for the plucker included a mandrel/head made out of a handrail filled with grease, along with two bearings pressed on each end. The tines are made out of a 1/4-in. natural rubber. "We experimented with the length and the width, and we found that 3 in. wide by 9 in. long worked best," says Hickerson. "Any higher is too stiff."

The motor is 1,725 rpm, half horsepower reduced to about 1,100 rpm. We attached it to a temporary board to test it, and it's still on that same board. The rubber is the same that linemen use on power lines to keep from getting electrocuted." Hickerson considers the plucker free because he had the materials on hand or received them from friends. "And there's no maintenance necessary," he says. "Haven't even had to change the grease."

To use the plucker, Hickerson grabs the duck by the head with one hand, keeping the other on its back, then rotates the bird through the plucker until all feathers are removed. "It's helpful to have a duck plucker if you deal with at least 25 to 30 ducks per season," he says. He recommends experimenting to create the most suitable design. "Yours doesn't have to be made exactly like mine; you can make it your own. I'm thinking it might be helpful to make a stand for it."

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Gravity Lock Keeps Trash Secure

Franzen North America, a Canadian division of a German company, specializes in robust locks for various purposes. The Gravity Lock prevents unauthorized access into waste bins—especially from animals. It's compatible with large four-wheel industrial and commercial bins and explicitly designed for automated dumping systems. When put upside-down, the locks unlatch via gravity-induced internal mechanics, then automatically relock when placed upright again. "They open for a dump truck, but you can knock them over on any other plane, and they'll stay shut," says Beaton. "This prevents mess and spillage."

By design, Gravity Locks require a human touch to open. "The ergonomic shape of the thumb keeps varmints from accessing the bins," says Beaton. "A large ceramic raccoon occupies our booth at every trade show. It highlights our biggest selling point—using the gravity lock will keep these creatures out of your trash and organic waste for good."

Still, the locks are simple for consumers, thanks to a large thumb turn that can be manipulated with minimal exertion. "It's good for arthritic hands," he says. "We recently removed the spring from the thumb turn for a municipality to make it even easier to turn." For extra security, it's possible to purchase locks that require a key. This prevents unauthorized parties from accessing the bin and protects sensitive personal data and medical waste from prying eyes.

"Franzen prioritizes top-quality design by working directly with German engineers," Beaton says. "We're forever evolving our



When put upside-down, the locks unlatch via gravity-induced internal mechanics, then automatically relock when placed upright again.

locks to meet evolving bin designs." He shares that the Gravity Lock's failure rate is essentially zero.

Franzen's Gravity Locks measure approximately 5 in. by 1.2 in. by 7.5 in. They sell for \$25 each and can be ordered by phone or email. "We like to talk with each customer because not all bins are compatible with these locks," Beaton says. "We don't want to sell a product our customers can't use, so we prefer to talk through the details first. We always strive for a win-win outcome. We won't sell our locks for use on bins that aren't compatible."

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LED Reflective Signs Light Up Equipment

Brian Downes of Seaford, Del., makes custom signs for farm equipment. "I've designed my signs for better visibility on roadways," he says. "The idea hit me one evening when I was transporting a round baler at dusk. It had no lights, and the baler blocked the tractor's lights."

Downes realized that a portable high-visibility reflective sign would benefit farmers transporting equipment in low-light conditions. Failing to find a solution, he decided to make one. "My signs are different from what's out there," he says. "Not only do they have a highly reflective chevron design, but they also have strobe lights. They have a small battery pack attached to the back, so no wires are required on the equipment they're attached to."

He's designed the signs to be portable. "I can make each of them fit in just about anything. And in any shape or size." Each comes with rubber-coated magnets that make it possible to mount them within seconds.

The signs are illuminated with strobe lights powered by small battery packs attached to the back. This eliminates the need for outside wiring and lighting. "The high-visibility chevron pattern provides more visibility than the old, slow-moving vehicle triangle alone," Downes says. "The sign that mounts to the bottom of a truck's bed cover was my initial idea, and the other signs evolved from that one. They work with golf carts, UTVs, ATVs, hay wagons and open or enclosed trailers. I even have one that can be mounted



"Not only do they have a highly reflective chevron design, but they also have strobe lights. They have a small battery pack attached to the back, so no wires are required on the equipment they're attached to," says Downes.

to the bottom side of the pickup truck's bed cover. One of my friends uses them on his hay equipment, and he's been really pleased."

Downes sells his signs locally and is also willing to ship. Pricing varies based on size but is usually around \$100. He's also working with an invention company to increase online exposure.

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Hanuszak made a lawn striper for his lawn tractor without using hydraulics or complicated adjustments for the roller.

Homemade Lawn Tractor Roller 'Stripes' Grass

Dwayne Hanuszak liked the stripes the rollers on the deck of his old mower used to leave on his lawn. He felt the stripes gave it a professional look, like a golf course.

"I spend a lot of time cutting my grass and thought I might as well make it look a little more interesting," says Hanuszak. "I always liked the look of stripes on golf courses. I tried using my lawn roller to make them, but felt it was hard on the grass."

Hanuszak made an attachment for his Deere X730 lawn tractor to give his lawn the look he wanted. His first thought was to use the garden tractor's hydraulics to adjust the roller, but he came up with a simpler design instead. He copied it from his brother's old Allis-Chalmers mower.

"I grabbed some 9-in. boat trailer rollers and steel rod at my local auto store," says Hanuszak. "I slipped the rollers on the rod and hung it from a 36-in. piece of scrap angle iron."

He used an adjustable, step-down trailer hitch to mount it to the garden tractor's receiver hitch. Hanuszak bolted the hitch to the angle iron. He reinforced the connection by welding two short pieces of angle iron to



Roller is mounted to an adjustable step-down trailer hitch.

either side of the hitch.

"I set the step-down hitch, so the roller is about 2-in. off the ground when in use," says Hanuszak. "It pushes over the grass but doesn't impact the gravel when I turn on the driveway. To remove it, I just pull the receiver hitch pin. It puts in the stripes I wanted, making the lawn look professionally cut."

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