

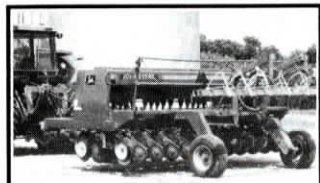
“Best & Worst” No-Till Drills, Planters

Are you satisfied with your no-till planter or drill? What could the manufacturer do to improve it? Have you modified your no-till drill or planter in any way?

These are some of the questions we asked randomly-selected owners of no-till drills and planters in an effort to highlight those planters and drills that perform with flying colors, and to pinpoint the “lemons” that fail because of poor performance or failure of the dealer or manufacturer to provide service.

Here's how our survey shaped up:

“We're generally satisfied with our 1990 Deere 750 drill. It's strongly built and has been reliable. Replacement bearings are quite expensive and shoes are shot after just three seasons and will have to be replaced. Another complaint is that there are over 125



Ray McCormick mounted a home-built adjustable-height spray boom on back of his Deere 750 no-till drill to spray burn-down herbicides onto weeds while he plants.



grease fittings, all of which are hard to get to. Gaps in stands are a problem in heavy corn stalks. Changing seed placement depth is difficult and time-consuming. However, our bean yields have gone up an average of 5 bu. per acre since switching to no-till. Corn yields stayed the same but we have higher net profit margins because of reduced tillage costs, less fuel consumption, and less labor. We added a sprayer to the back of drill for applying burndown herbicide (Roundup) while planting,” says Ray McCormick, Vincennes, Ind. “If I were in the market for a new no-till drill and planter, I'd buy a 30-ft. Deere 750 no-till drill and a 16-row, 30-in. Deere planter with Martin row cleaners.”

“We're extremely happy with our **Buffalo** no-till slot planter. Great soil penetration so that it's always planting into moisture and excellent accuracy. We actually practice ‘semi-till’ since we burn off the residue before planting soybeans and then we cultivate with Danish tines. This is a cheap and effective system,” says Bill Horne, Pinehurst, Ga.

“I don't own a no-till drill but I've used a **Deere 750** drill to no-till. It works satisfactory but on heavy clay ground, yield drops slightly. However, there are considerable savings in fuel and the reduction in time spent in the field,” says Harold Davis, Brantford, Ontario. “I've found that there's a reduction in weeds with no-till and that less herbicides are needed. I've no-tilled both soybeans and wheat.”

Mac Campbell, Wilkesport, Ontario, owns a 1992 **Great Plains** 10-ft. end wheel no-till drill with a harrow attachment. “It has been a boost to my farming operation and I'm totally satisfied with it. The dollars that you can save are unbelievable in time

and fuel savings. And you don't need a big tractor to pull this drill. I get by quite nicely with a 75 hp. Case/IH 885. The only modification I made to the drill was to equip it with a 110 gal. liquid fertilizer tank, which I mounted on the factory-installed weight bar. It lets me fertilize on the go without cutting back on seed capacity by having to carry granular, and it increases weight. Many conventional-till farmers say this drill is too small but when they see the acres you can cover in one day they start asking more questions. When they're getting ready to work their ground the second time, I'm heading for the next field. My yields have increased over what they were with conventional till, due primarily to conserving the moisture in the ground.”

“Our 1987 **White** no-till 5100 air planter does a good job and plants uniformly. My one complaint is that the dry fertilizer lids don't stay on. Very little maintenance is needed. I think the biggest benefit of no-till planting is that it cuts out erosion,” says Simon E. Beachy, Belvidere, Tenn.

Donald Martin, Republic, Ohio, who operates a **Yetter** Weight Transfer toolbar ahead of a **Case-IH 5100** drill, says the biggest benefit of no-till as compared to conventional tillage is the savings in time. “I put 100 fewer hours on my tractor this year than last. Fuel savings are also considerable. Yields have been as good or better than conventional and the ground was firmer with the wet fall. Penetration of the drill is good. One improvement would be to make the toolbar so it can be used with a quick hitch. It takes about 30 min. to put it on the tractor. I control weeds by having the field

“I put 100 fewer hours on my tractor this year than last.”

sprayed with Roundup about 3 days after planting and then I have it post-sprayed again for weeds that develop. I've had excellent results with this method so far. If I were in the market for a new no-till drill, I'd buy a **Blue Jet** Landhandler and a **Case-IH 3-pt.** drill because it would allow so many options and could be used with a planter or a drill.”

Robert Frey, Phillipsburg, N.J., has been planting no-till with a double-frame **Kinze** planter since 1985. “I'm satisfied with it and would buy another Kinze if I were in the market. It's built strong. I put accessories on it to allow press wheels to operate independently and guards to keep rocks out of the iron press wheels. One further improvement the planter could use is installation of trash-clearing tine wheels like those made by Dawn or Yetter ahead of furrow openers. One of the biggest benefits of no-till for us is that without tillage there's no longer the need to pick rocks in fields. Erosion has also been reduced. Yields are about the

same as conventional tillage but vary with the weather. Chemical costs are higher with no-till but we save time and labor.”

“We get excellent stands and good penetration in all conditions with our 1986 **Case/IH 800** air planter,” says no-tiller George E. Holmes, Tromansburg, N.Y. “Most of the improvements needed on this planter were made on later model 900 Series planters but I would like to see them install trash clearers ahead of furrow openers. Yields have been about the same as conventional but we save a lot of time planting and working fields. We use Roundup over no-till fields for initial kill-down.”

“We modified both of our **Deere 7000** Max-Emerge 6-row planters with 30-in. spacing to no-till plant soybeans into wheat. The planters are 5 and 10 years old so many of the improvements they needed have shown up on newer models,” says Greg Rendel, Miami, Okla. “We added more seed capacity, reinforced pivot points on closing wheels, and added our own spray equipment and markers. We also make quick change attachments for switching from no-till to conventional. The biggest benefit for us in no-till is that we are usually no-till planting beans in late June or early July when soil moisture is at a minimum and time is of the essence and with no-till you don't lose either time or moisture. Thanks to no-till, we're insured the best yields you can get. We spray weeds as we plant. With no-till beans in wheat we either use a dual/Lorox DF/Gramoxone mix or a Roundup/Dual/Lorox DF mix. Price of chemicals at planting time - and whether or not rain is in the forecast - determines which chemicals we select.”

“We use an old 300 Series **Allis Chalmers** 6-row planter. It's well-built and we're pleased with the results in no-till. I added four extra units so I can plant 18-in. soybeans, which saved me the price of a drill. Yields are pretty much the same as conventional but corn is so poorly graded today, and this is a plate planter, so I don't get an even drop. One thing I've never liked on this planter is the flimsy markers. They're too light,” says Ray Helbling, Ripley, Ohio.

Robert Wening, Brownsville, Wis., rented a 10-ft. wide **United Farm Tool** drill this year to put in small grains this fall. “I was satisfied but the depth adjustment is rather tedious. I don't use chemicals on my conventional tilled ground and I don't want to use chemicals, so I'm still researching what I'll do during the coming year. So far all I used was Ranger and Roundup for burn-down. No-till may just end up being an experiment for me.”

“We pull two 1990 **Haybuster** 107 drills together and they're fairly easy to handle. We're pleased with performance but they should fit them with better packer wheels. We modified the seed tubes so they run directly down to the seed openers rather than to the special oversize drop tubes. To me, the biggest benefit of no-till is the reduction in machinery usage. Our yields seem to be quite good,” says Greg Grotegut, Newton, Wis.

“I haven't had any problems with my 1986 **Deere 7000**. I added Deere no-till coulters and want to add trash clearing wheels but don't know what I'm going to get yet. Crop rotation is the key to controlling weeds with no-till. I use Roundup on sod in the fall for

burn-down. Then I use minimum amounts of Atrazine and Bladex or Dual and do spot treatment with Accent if necessary,” says William Taubman, Shell Lake, Wis.

“I'm very satisfied with my **Case/IH 800** Early Riser 8-row 30-in. planter. It does a good job in all soil conditions with down pressure and population control. I like having only one box to fill. Upkeep is low and simple. I installed Dawn trash wheels to eliminate the ‘hairpin’ effect of trash on furrow openers. They do an excellent job although they do require adjustment depending on the condition of each field,” says Wayne Erdman, Wauke, Iowa. “Reduced machinery investment and labor requirements are the biggest benefits of no-



Iowa farmer Tom Vittetoe sells these no-till signs “at cost” and sometimes even gives them away to groups in order to promote conservation tillage. The 2-sided signs measure 18 by 24-in. Most farmers mount them on metal posts alongside fields. Price ranges from \$5 to \$7 apiece depending on quantity. Contact: **FARM SHOW Followup**, Tom Vittetoe, 2460 275th St., Washington, Iowa 52353 (ph 319 653-2529).

till along with erosion control. So far yields have not changed.”

“We're satisfied with our 1989 **Tye** 10-ft. drill but if I were in the market for a new drill, I'd probably look at other makes and models. The problem is that it's not built strong enough. It's too flimsy - the aluminum pack wheel frames break,” says A.T. Smith, Hindsville, Ark. “Our yields are down with no-till but it eliminates plowing - a big savings.”

Wayne Hooks, Nichols, S.C., owns a “best buy” **Marliss** 14-ft. no-till drill. “Its size enables me to cover a good number of acres per day yet it's small enough for my smaller fields. I do have some suggestions for improvement. It needs to have a better seed rate setting mechanism that's easier to adjust. And I'd like to have an end transport for when I have to run it on the road. One other problem is that it tends to bulldoze in the field. I think the biggest benefit of no-till is better weed control. Certain weeds like wild mustard tend to germinate better on tilled ground. Also, no-till reduces wind erosion and crop damage from blowing sand on our sandy loam type soil. We burn down with Gramoxone and go over the top with spot spraying.”

“I'm very satisfied with my **Haybuster** 107 for planting alfalfa because I get a better stand using less seed, boosting my yields and cutting costs. I farm light sandy soil and we drill alfalfa into wheat stubble in July and get zero ground blowing with no-till. The depth adjustment could be made a little easier to use. You have to insert or remove washers to increase or decrease pressure on disc openers. The only modification I've