

Making Strip-Till Work

Richard and Larry Martin, Lincoln, Ill., were pioneers in strip tillage, the "mini-till" system where only the row area is cleared. They believe strongly in the idea and have continued to find new ways to improve. Here are some ideas that work for them.



Their latest new idea is to use a miniature TV camera to follow one of the strips on their 8-row, 30-in. planter. There's a monitor in the tractor cab.

"We've tried this for two years and it really helps keep the planter on top of the ridges as much as possible," says Richard. "We bought the camera and monitor at Radio Shack for only about \$300."

The camera is powered by the tractor's 12-volt battery and mounts on a homemade metal bracket that bolts to the middle part of the planter toolbar. A piece of black tape on the center of the monitor's 6-in. screen serves as a guide mark.

Mix And Match Openers

When planting in soybean stubble, the Martins had problems with finger wheel openers - normally designed to run in pairs - clogging up in damp conditions. To solve the problem they replaced one of the finger wheel openers in each pair with a notched disc opener.



"It keeps bean stubble from wrapping up because there's nothing for it to catch on," says Richard. "The disc opener is the same size as the finger wheel opener so it bolts on with no modification."

PVC Pipe For Storing Field Flags

The Martins attached a length of 2-in. dia. PVC pipe (with a cap at each end) on back of their anhydrous applicator toolbar as a convenient way to carry field flags. "We use flags to lay out the field before we make the



first pass through. We simply roll the flags up and place them inside the pipe. The pipe is attached to a metal bracket that bolts onto the toolbar."

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Planter toolbar is equipped with Yetter strip-till row units, as well as a GDI ground-driven pump and hoses that hook up to a trailing anhydrous ammonia trailer.

Strip-Tiller Converts Deere Planter Bar

Ron Mowry, Brandt Fertilizer, Ashland, Ill., converted a used Deere 12-row folding planter bar into a low-cost 12-row strip tiller for applying anhydrous ammonia.

"We used it for the first time last fall. It worked great, and we saved a lot of money," says Mowry.

The toolbar is equipped with Maverick strip-till row units made by Yetter Mfg., as well as a GDI ground-driven pump and hoses that hook up to a trailing anhydrous ammonia trailer. A home-built hitch on back of the toolbar is used to pull the trailer.

"We paid \$2,500 for the planter and \$1,000 per row for the Yetter row units, so our total

cost less than \$15,000. A commercial strip till unit of comparable size would've cost at least \$25,000," says Mowry.

He says strip-till is gaining in popularity. "Strip-till provides all the benefits of no-till but results in higher yields that are comparable to conventional tillage. The cleared strips allow soil to heat up faster than no-till where the soil can often be cold and damp at planting time. The result is higher yields."

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Fitted with metal traction bars, rubber tracks are designed to mount over dual wheels.

"High Flotation" Center Pivot Tracks

You can reduce center pivot wheel ruts and keep your pivot from getting stuck by equipping it with new rubber tracks, says Don Starr of Summerville, Ore.

His "StarrTrak" system, developed for use on his own farm, was introduced at the recent Spokane Ag Expo. The tracks are available in either 24 or 30-in. widths and are designed to mount over dual wheels. Traction is provided by a series of 1 by 2-in. metal bars spaced about 10 in. apart.

To install the tracks, you bolt an extension hub onto the original wheel to add a dual, deflate the original tire, then slip the track over it and re-inflate the tire. Then deflate the outside (add-on) tire, put it on the extension hub and, inflate it. A divider guide on the inside center of the track keeps it from slipping off the two wheels.

"It increases flotation, allowing the machine to roll more freely. Track depth in our heavy clay soils is only 2 to 3 in. compared to 12 to 24 in. using a high-flotation tire," says Starr. "The tracks run smooth and quiet, with no extra wear or vibration."

"The dual tires allow for uneven air pressure between the inside and outside tires, which

allows them to run on the factory-designed angle without adding undue torque and stress to axles or to the axle's horizontal support tube. Another advantage is that puncture and sunlight damage is minimized, allowing for much longer tire life. The tires virtually never touch the ground. The horizontal traction bars allow water to move to the outside edges of the track instead of toward the center as with conventional tires. As a result there's less soil erosion on uneven terrain, as well as reduced rutting. Vegetation will even grow under the wheel track.

"The tracks may be used on the entire system or only on problem towers."

Total cost per tower, including wheels, extension hubs, and tracks, is \$1,160 to \$1,695. "If a farmer already has extra tires, the cost for extension hub and track only is \$775 to \$900 per tower, depending on tire size," notes Starr.

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Van Soest's 22-ft. "drill fill" auger has a big steel hopper and a short tongue welded onto the bottom end, allowing him to use a garden tractor to move it around.

"Made-It-Myself" Drill Fill Auger

When Jeff Van Soest switched from using bags to buying seed in bulk, he needed an easier way to fill his grain drill. So the Moorefield, Ontario, farmer converted a 40-ft. long, 6-in. dia. auger that he already had into a 22-ft. "drill fill" auger. It's complete with a big steel hopper and a short tongue welded onto the bottom end, allowing him to use a garden tractor to move it around.

"We use a gravity wagon to fill the hopper. It lets us fill our 13-ft. drill with very little effort," says Van Soest.

He cut the auger in half at the seam, then welded a 2-ft. section back onto the top end. He also mounted the original frame back onto the shortened auger. The original gearbox was damaged so he rebuilt it and remounted it at the top of the auger. He also added a length of telescoping tubing - a length of old blower

pipe from a feed truck - to the end of auger.

"It lets us fill our 21-run drill in only about five minutes, compared to a half hour when we were using bags," says Van Soest. "We use the auger's original winch to lift the auger up to clear the drill or let it down for storage. All our gravity wagons are mounted on big truck tires so they will easily clear oversize hoppers, which we needed to mix inoculant with seed."

"We pull a packer behind our drill. The auger is long enough that we can back it up to the center of the drill without having to unhook the packer. The telescoping tube flexes back and forth far enough to reach to both sides of the drill."

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