

Brick Cleaner Quickly Takes Off Old Mortar

"My dad and I built a brick-cleaning machine in 1961 that I'm still using today with the original heads. It has cleaned at least 100,000 bricks and is still going strong," says Ted Carlson of Fort Jones, Calif.

"The beauty of it is its simplicity. My father, who has since passed away, was the brains behind it and I was just the helper."

Carlson says his dad got the idea after an old building burned down and the owner told him he could have all the old bricks for nothing if he hauled them away.

Carlson hired a crew of kids to chip away at the old mortar with hatchets, hammers, and chisels. This was slow, tedious work, so Carlson developed the cleaner. He later sold the cleaned bricks in pallets of 500 each.

His rig looks like a table saw. A 6-in. wide, rotating, dual cutting head comes up and out of a hole in the table. He says, you can use one head at a time, or both at once.

"The cutting head is the secret to the whole thing," Carlson says. "Two of them are mounted on a common 1 1/4-in. shaft under the table with bearings on either end."

The cutting heads are comprised of two round plates (3/8-in. thick by 7-in. dia.) joined together by eight 6-in. bolts. Between the plates, each bolt holds about 10 emery

wheel cutter heads - they resemble small washers with star points like the tip of a boot spur, and are normally used for dressing up a grinding stone. They are made from extremely hard material and are placed on the bolts with varying numbers of washers to stagger their position on each bolt. As a result, each bolt has a different alignment and it covers the entire brick smoothly.

In the center of the shaft, between the two plates, there's a V-belt pulley. It drops down to the unit's 5-hp gas engine, which drives the whole thing. The arms that hold the bearings and the shaft, all swivel, according to Carlson. At the far end of these two steel arms, two little hand cranks with jam nuts allow you to raise or lower the cutting heads, and tighten them into position.

The 1/4-in. plate steel table has two rectangular cuts in it for the heads to come up through, and there is 1/8-in. angle iron bolted to the tabletop to serve as a cutting guide.

Carlson says the dual cutting heads easily remove old, soft mortar from discarded bricks. "It'll clean 500 bricks per hour," he points out. "We clean all the sides except the facing edge - that's left original."

Carlson says bricks normally come to him with a 1/4-in. layer of mortar on them, and he leaves on "just a little bit of blush." He



Simple in design, Carlson's brick-cleaning machine looks somewhat like a table saw. Dual cutting heads easily remove old, soft mortar from discarded bricks.

likes to leave a little of the mortar on them to add color and character, and achieves this effect by not pressing the brick as hard against the head.

You can also make adjustments to the pattern of the emery wheel cutters that will allow you to score the bricks with any pattern you want, making custom designs that are not available commercially.

"Some of the patterns you can make look very nice and are pretty unusual. You can do this on brand new bricks, too," Carlson says. "You never, want to wear gloves or lose clothing when using this machine because it will grab them and you can easily lose fingers."

The machine is only intended for working on the bricks from old, old buildings because that mortar is softer. He says modern mortar



is harder like concrete and really wears the machine down fast.

"By putting a sprinkler on the pile of brick you're going to do for about 20 minutes in advance, it makes a lot less dust," he advises. "We wear a dust mask and safety glasses whenever we use it."

Carlson cleans bricks for people, and also rents the unit out. "I'm willing to sell the plans for this unit, so people could either build their own or take them to a machine shop and have it custom made," Carlson says. "All you'd need to build it is a drill press, a lathe and a welder. It'd be a good winter project."

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Garden Tools For Serious Gardeners

If you raise produce to sell or simply have a really big garden, you may want to consider some of the new tools from Johnny's Selected Seeds. Some aren't cheap, like the \$325 6-row seeder, the \$348 powered tiller, or the \$198 greens harvester, but for a serious bed gardener, they may be just what are needed. "Those tools fit the market grower who plants fairly intensely in beds," says Jon Hill, Johnny's tool and accessory manager. "The tiller and the 6-row seeder are designed for one trip down and one back on 30-in. beds."

The tiller is powered by a rechargeable or corded drill (not included in the price). It tills the top 2 in. of a garden bed, mixing in compost and fertilizer while chopping up the roots of the previous crop.

The 15-in. wide, 6-row seeder consists of two expanded metal rollers and a seeding shaft with 6 hoppers and 6 rollers in between them. The first roller adjusts seeding depth and consists of a wire grid that firms and preps the soil surface for seeding. The rear roller closes the furrow and also serves as the drive roller for the seeding shaft. Seed mechanism can handle seeds as small as lettuce and as large as spinach.

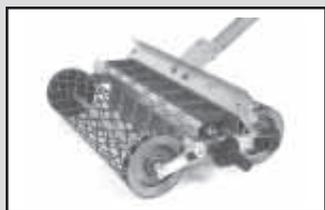
"Hoppers and shoes are set up to plant in 2 1/4-in. or 4 1/2-in. widths, if using every other unit," says Hill. "The shaft has 3 different gear ratios, and can drop seed at 1-in., 2 1/2-in. and 4-in. increments in the row."

Market gardeners with dense plantings will go for the greens harvester, a hand held alternative to using a knife. The device works like a bow saw with a cloth basket to catch greens without bruising as they fall.

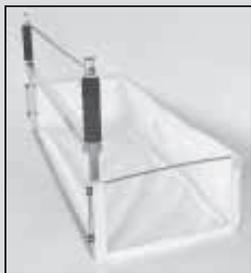
The new soil monitoring test kit from Johnny's checks soil samples for biological life. While the importance of microscopic life present in the soil has long been understood, there has been no simple way to measure it. This kit, developed by the Woods End Research Lab, measures carbon dioxide released by the soil to estimate how biologically active the soil is.

If you like flowers produced by bulbs, the

Powered by a drill, tiller works up the top 2 in. of garden bed, mixing in compost and fertilizer while chopping up roots of previous crop.



Johnny's Six Row Seeder.



Johnny's Greens Harvester.

\$22.90 bulb auger will let you plant lots of bulbs fast, regardless of soil type.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Johnny's Selected Seeds, 955 Benton Ave., Winslow, Maine 04901 (ph 207 861-3999 or 877 564-6697; website: www.Johnnyseeds.com).

Fabric-laying Silt Fence Plow can be attached to any tractor or skid loader. It cuts a slot 8 to 12 in. deep, inserting the edge of the fence as it goes.



Silt Fence Regulations Create Business Opportunity

Stringent government regulations often create money-making opportunities. That's the case with those silt fences you see nowadays around nearly all construction sites. Fear of fines up to \$10,000 or more has created a booming demand for the Silt Fence Plow from McCormick Equipment.

"The market is paying from \$1.55 to \$2 per foot for installation and materials," says Chris McCormick. "A 2-man team with our plow can put in 1,000 ft. of fence in 3 hours. Most guys average about 5,000 ft. per day."

That means a team of silt fences could gross from \$7,750 to \$10,000 per day. Costs would depend on the specifications of the contracting engineer. McCormick says silt fabric costs from 12 to 30 cents/ft. and posts will vary from \$2 each for steel posts to 65 cents each for wood posts.

A quick calculation of the highest cost fabric and wood posts at the closest spacing suggests material costs of \$408/1,000 ft. or \$2,040 for a 5,000-ft. day. That leaves \$5,710 to \$7,960 to cover the labor of two men and equipment costs for tractor and installation equipment.

McCormick's fabric-laying Silt Fence Plows are priced from \$3,200 to \$5,200, depending on models, with a Super Silt Fencer that also installs wire backing priced at \$7,200.

Laying silt fence with the plow is easy, he says. "The plow can be attached to any trac-

tor or skid loader. Drop the machine in the ground, and it cuts a slot 8 to 12 in. deep, like a knife through butter, inserting the edge of fence as it goes. At the end of the run, drive back alongside the slot, and the wheel packs the soil tight against the fabric."

McCormick says his Silt Fence Plow has gone through more than 30 modifications since the first prototype was made. One of the changes that sets it apart is a rear pivot design that allows it to turn as sharp as the power unit pulling it. Another feature is the positive feed design of the fabric chute.

"The ground actually grabs the fabric as you move forward, so the fence stays tight," says McCormick.

In addition to construction jobs, he says no-till farmers are also laying fabric (flat as opposed to an upright fence), across areas in fields where a ditch is appearing. The fabric slows the water, allowing silt to fill in the ditch. No-till farmers can plant right across it.

McCormick suggests talking to homebuilders and construction companies in your area. Ask about the need and opportunities in your area.

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