

## Skid Loader Scarifier “Shaves” Icy Farmyards

As Jeff Ryan slid uncontrollably down an icy hill this winter on his Cresco, Iowa, farm while moving a big round bale with his loader tractor, he knew he had to find a way to deal with thick ice after winter storms.

Ryan called a friend who worked for the county to ask if any old grader blades were available that he could use to make a scarifier. Turns out his friend, Brad Stevenson, had already had the same idea, notching teeth into the cutting edge with a plasma cutter, but hadn't had a chance to try it.

Ryan volunteered his skidloader for testing the 6-ft. wide blade and wrote about it in his online blog for *Farm Industry News*.

“The scarifier was pretty effective,” he wrote. “I scratched around Brad’s yard and was impressed with how a fairly simple tool like that could change a yard from a sheet of glare ice to more normal driving conditions. I took the new tool home and gave it a workout. We decided we should change a couple things to beef up the design.”

Ryan contacted fabricator Dick Wise at Wise Welding and Fabrication. “I’ve thought about making one for a couple of years so Ryan’s call was timely,” Wise says.

He scall-built a quick-attach with a 3-ft. extension for better visibility for the driver. He bolted on an 8-ft. grader blade

and sharpened the points he cut to dig into the ice better.

Ryan tested the prototype and was impressed. “Dick didn’t mess around,” he wrote. “He went all out and built a sturdy tool from the word go. There was a lot of heavy steel in it and plenty of bracing, because you never know what you might encounter when you’re flying along making your own shaved ice.”

Ryan notes he liked the wide blade because it scared up the ice to give his tires traction on a 75-in. wide skidloader. The wider blade length can create problems on crowned or uneven ground, however. Wise’s model turned out so well he sold two and started taking orders (\$1,450 for scarifiers with new 6-ft. grader blades that are powdercoated and painted). One went to a college, where the scarifier can be used on sidewalks and areas where students walk.

“It can double as a landscaping tool for back-dragging dirt,” Wise notes.

He adds that hooks on the sides can be used to secure cement blocks for more weight. The scarifier works well on medium- to-large skidloaders.

Ryan adds that he was surprised that he could travel up to 12 mph when “shaving ice.” He only slowed down on rough spots



Dick Wise converted an 8-ft. grader blade into this scarifier with notched, sharpened teeth. Quick-tach 3-ft. extension improves visibility for driver.

and when he backdragged in front of a garage door.

“This is the kind of tool you only use one or two times a year, but it makes a huge difference with traction. It’s worth its weight in gold when you do need it,” Wise

concludes.

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## Ho-Bits Rebuild Rotary Hoe To “Better Than New”

Way back in 1980 FARM SHOW ran a story about a Canadian company that made replacement tips for rotary hoes. We recently saw a new ad for the product and decided to check back in with the company.

“We’re still making Ho-Bits,” says an enthusiastic Jim Tulen of Manufarm Specialties, “and we have been since 1980. It’s interesting that you called because just recently I had a farmer order from us who said he’d found our phone number in a really old issue of FARM SHOW. Farmers apparently keep their magazines around for a long time!”

Tulen says recently there has been a growth in interest from organic farmers and also conventional farmers who are using rotary hoes to deal with herbicide resistant weeds. The price listed in the 1980 FARM SHOW story was 43 cents apiece. The price in early 2017 is now 85 cents.

Manufarm uses a progressive die to form

and punch the patented spoons. The steel is similar to that used on ice skate blades and was originally purchased from Sweden, but now it’s acquired from a supplier in Chicago. Tulen says “After the bits are punched out they’re heat-treated and annealed to a Rockwell hardness of 45 to 47. The bits are aggressive and hold an edge even in extremely tough conditions. Our salesman from Kansas, Anthony Feldt, used to display wheels with spoons from a 30-ft. hoe that had covered 7,000 acres, and the bits were still in good shape.”

Tulen adds that “farmers who buy Ho-Bits are buying an economical replacement that may last twice as long as the originals. They can completely rebuild 16 fingers on a wheel for about \$14 and are saving a lot of money, because an entirely new wheel may be \$50 to \$60.”

Ho-Bits fit over the teeth on a wheel and are welded in place. The company supplies a

production jig with each order that positions the replacement spoons so they can be welded precisely in place. The jig has 5 adjustments for different wheel diameters. Using the jig assures that the outside radius of a hoe wheel remains uniform and that the pitch of the bit is proper after all the spoons are welded on. The Ho-Bits work on any model rotary hoe.

Tulen says “Welding our bits on a used hoe is a good winter project. When you’re done, your hoe will be longer wearing than a new one.”

Manufarm, started by Jim and his brother Jack, has been in business more than 40 years. They employ 2 young millwrights who help them produce Ho-Bits, land levelers, and other specialized farm implements. They also repair and modify implements and produce first-of-a-kind prototypes. The company doesn’t advertise much or even have a website. “We rely on our good name, good repeat customers, and referrals to keep



Ho-Bits fit over the teeth on a rotary hoe wheel and are welded in place with a jig the company provides.

us going.”

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## “Lifter” Harvests Root Crops Fast

Brian Huckins’ Bed Lifter makes harvesting carrots, sweet potatoes and many other in-ground crops easy. The harvester blade passes under the root crops, lifting and breaking up the packed soil. Pulling carrots or other crops near the surface is easy.

“A farmer I work with had seen something similar and asked me to make one,” says Huckins, a self-described blacksmith and tinkerer. “The first one was an experiment that could be adjusted in several ways, such as the pitch of the blade.”

Once Huckins had everything adjusted properly, he began making a fixed model. Initially he sold them in his neighborhood. Eventually he began to advertise in surrounding areas. He also sells a set of plans for folks farther away.

“It would cost someone less to use the plans and have the Bed Lifter made locally than to have me make it and ship it,” says Huckins.

Huckins advises using the Bed Lifter for crops with stems that allow them to be lifted

once the ground is loosened.

“It could be used with potatoes, but you would still have to root around in the ground,” says Huckins. “Carrots just lift out of the soil.”

Huckins customizes the Bed Lifter to match the planted rows, plus about 12 in. A 3-ft. wide frame is made to fit Cat. I, 3-pt. hitches. Larger Bed Lifters are made to fit Cat. II, 3-pt. hitches.

“It is very sturdy with extra reinforcement at stress points,” says Huckins.

He suggests needing about 10 hp. per foot of width if using a 4-WD tractor. If you’re using a 2-WD, it requires more than 10 hp. per foot to supply the added weight needed.

“It’s really about traction more than power,” he says. “However, heavy rocky soil may require more power.”

Huckins prices locally delivered Bed Lifters at \$899 plus tax for widths of 4 ft. or less. Add \$50/ft. for widths over 4 ft. Orders are built once a year for spring delivery and



Bed Lifter blade passes under root crops, lifting and breaking up the packed soil to make harvesting easier.

must be placed by January 30th.

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