

Low-Cost Root Crop Diggers

"There are many different ways of harvesting tuber pieces or onion sets or other bulbs, may violate longstanding traditions. However, Willsie maintains planting them is easier than some suggest.



Digging shoe

"The plant is smart enough to know it needs to grow up, not down," he says. "It's called apical dominance. Just drop them in, and they'll grow."

With the seat removed and a shank positioned to either side of a row, hilling can be accomplished. At harvest, centering a single shank on the row loosens and lifts the crop.

Willsie Equipment diggers are more elaborate machines designed for harvesting a host of root crops, including tulips and other bulbs. They even have one for harvesting burdock roots.

"If you're doing 10 to 15 acres with eight different root crops, you can buy one harvester to work with them all," says Willsie. "We have one that comes in three different versions, for the 5 to 10-acre grower, the 50-acre grower, and 4-row machines for 100 to 150 acres. We have one we're working on for garlic this year that'll pull the bulb and top it right in the field."



The Single Shank Furrower Plow digs a furrow centered on the row of produce. It pulls the product at least partially out of the ground, making collection easier and more efficient. It's priced at \$499.



Undercutters with their angled bar travel below the roots, lifting them and the soil. This makes it significantly easier to pull plants with roots, tubers, or corns out of the loose soil. Willsie's undercutters start at \$1,769.91.

Priced at \$2,299.91, the Willsie Planter-Hiller-Digger is a versatile and relatively low-cost option for the entire season. The 3-pt. mounted toolbar supports twin shanks with plow blades and a planter seat with furrow-closing wings.

With one shank ahead of the planting seat, the Planter-Hiller-Digger opens the furrow. The seat is extended far enough back from the toolbar to leave room for a container of the bulbs, cloves or tuber pieces, which are dropped in the furrow.



At \$5,422.51, Willsie's 3-pt. Hitch Digger with a 25-in. chain is at the low end of these harvesters. It operates with either a pto or hydraulic drive. The chain width is also the digging width. The digging blade slips under the potatoes in the ground, lifting them to be carried over the length of the chain bed. Dirt sifts through the chain, leaving the produce to fall on top of the row/bed. Options include coulters, specialty blades, offset hitch, slip clutch, belted chain, custom chain widths, and multi-row configurations.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Willsie Equipment Sales, R.R.1, 9516 Northville Rd., Thedford, Ontario, Canada N0M 2N0 (ph 519-243-2616; toll-free 800-561-3025; www.willsie.com).

"Pogo Stick" Tree Fertilizer

Dave Meiners of Hendricks, Minn., made a pogo stick-style tree fertilizer to make holes at the dripline for evergreens to insert fertilizer spikes. It takes about 30 seconds per hole.

The stick is made of 1 1/2-in. pipe. Meiners cut a "V" at the end of the pipe, then squeezed it together in a vice. He then welded a "T" handle at the top for control and balance. He also added a cross pipe at the bottom to step on to force the pipe into the ground.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave Meiners, 162 Dakota Shores Place, Hendricks, Minn. 56136.



Helpers pushing dirt onto low tunnel edges.

Low Tunnel Speeds Up Sweet Corn

Darin Hubscher gives some of his sweet corn a boost by starting it under hoops and plastic. It got enough of a head start so that ears will be ready for roasting at a local celebration in late July. When your cornfield is located in central Saskatchewan, late July is early!

"I grow about 8 acres of sweet corn, and this year I decided to try and ensure I had several rows ready for the Northwest Roundup, our local rodeo," explains Hubscher. "I had to push snow off the field to plant, as I wanted it in early. I planted all 8 acres on the 29th of April."

As soon as the seed was in the ground, Hubscher and family pushed wire hoops in over each targeted row. He rigged up a rear-mounted rig to unroll and stretch perforated plastic over the hoops.

"It was a first attempt, and I'll be making modifications this winter," says Hubscher. "The plastic unrolled from a pipe on the 3-point hitch. The frame extends to the rear with wheels to hold down the plastic."

This year the job required helpers following behind, pushing dirt onto the held-down edges. The coulters he'd installed didn't work as planned. Next year, Hubscher plans to refine them to better cover the plastic edges.

"I had the plastic on for about 3 weeks, from the first of May on," says Hubscher. "I took it off when the soil started to dry out."

He notes that when the sun was out on a 50-degree day, it would be 80 degrees inside the tunnel. As a result, the plastic-covered corn jumped about 3 weeks ahead of the bare-soil corn. By the third week of May, the corn that had been covered was tasseling.

While he has done a few events where he supplied cooked corn on the cob, this is



Rear-mounted rig to unroll plastic over the rows.

his first large-scale event. Most of his sweet corn is sold fresh at local farm markets or from the farm.

Not only does it look like the added market will be successful, but the plastic significantly stretches out his harvest. If the planned improvements on the plastic stretcher work as hoped, Hubscher would consider making the implement for others.

"I work for a manufacturing company. They might be available to build them if there's enough interest," says Hubscher.

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Quick Fix Improves Mower Ride

"Last summer, I bought a new Hustler mower," says James Lacey of Dell Rapids, S.D. "I liked the mower but hated the ride because of its rigid platform. It goes over a bump and the entire platform jumps up and slaps back down. Since I had no grass cutting last week, I took some time to perform 'corrective surgery.'"

Lacey says the fix turned out to be simple as the overall unit was built strong.

He used a 1-in. pin T.O.E. that he inserted through the front into a 1 by 2-in. box tube for support. A front nut keeps the tube tight against added hard plastic blocks to limit unwanted movement and travel. Clips were attached on the top of the blocks to ensure the travel never got too high. The modification allows about 6 in. of vertical movement.

With this addition in place, he used a bullseye level to keep the axle horizontal and welded the spindle sleeves accurately on the vertical.



Lacey modified the front suspension of his mower for a more stable ride.

"It's a much smoother ride now," says Lacey. "The fix turned out great."

He estimates he invested about \$50 in the modifications.

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