

Welcome. This is the AG Engineering Podcast, where we talk tools, tips, and techniques to improve the sustainability of your farm. I'm your host, Andy Chamberlin, from the University of Vermont Extension, and this podcast is supported by Northeast SARE, providing grants and education to advance innovation in sustainable agriculture. We're trying to improve the industry by chatting with farmers and getting their input on tools, tips, or techniques that have changed the way they farm for good. Many of these practices affect multiple areas of the farm, whether it be environmentally, emotionally, physically, or financially, we share the knowledge to promote sustainable agriculture, lifestyle, and business. Thanks for having a listen. Now, let's get started. Today's episode comes to you from Granville, Vermont, where I talk with John Hirsch of Clearfield Farm. This was recorded during a farm visit back last summer where he was explaining how he uses an ATV fertilizer spreader on the back of his cultivating tractor for a single pass system. Now, the benefit to this is it's a \$150 spreader, which is pretty darn cheap, and that allows him to really save his money and spend it on things that have a bigger impact on his farm, like his seeding equipment. So, that's what we talk about in this conversation. Another thing is, if this sounds interesting to you, you can watch the whole thing. I recorded it on video. So, you can watch this on our YouTube channel or find that via our website at [agengpodcast.com](http://agengpodcast.com). So, here's the conversation with John.

I'm John, I own Clearfield Farm. We're here in Granville, Vermont. We do about 8 or 10 acres of certified organic vegetables, a little bit of cut flowers. Well, this is our 1970 International Harvester Cub with cultivators. And, this is a four-wheeler spreader that I use for spreading fertilizer. This is \$99 on eBay. I've used it, this is the second season I've used this. It's got just the regular shoe adjustment that you'd use if you had one of these on the back of your four-wheeler. I don't have the little hand adjustment for it anymore, because, when I first had this thing set up, I actually had it mounted on the bucket of our '59 International Harvester, which had a trip bucket, so it wasn't really good for--

Oh, right, 'cause it has like that kind of fork to go on the rack.

Yeah, whenever we needed to spread some fertilizer, it was already pitched up, ready to go. The other International for fertilizing--

You put it--

I've done cultivating or vice versa. If I want to fertile... Spread fertilizer, then cultivate, I can do it all in one pass with this thing. So, the worst thing about these is the switches go bad. So, I actually, this is like two days ago, I had to replace the little on, off switch for the motor on it, because, just turned it on quick, and this is just a plant to the battery, just like... It's a four wheeler spreader. It's set up to run off a four wheeler. But, I built this little rack on the back here, which has some angle iron that bolts onto the seat bracket, which this I'm also gonna use for, we have a sprayer over here. I dunno if you see that, sorry, we got a lot of junk around here. So, this sprayer, I actually had this mounted to the rear cultivator arms on this last year, but it was falling off all the time, wasn't working right. So, so now this, I can just put up right on top of here when I take this thing off.

Right on that little deck.

Right on this little deck. Yeah, I don't have to... I really don't have to mess with much, just take these couple of U bolts off, and then that's about it. So, it's pretty easy. I don't do a lot of spraying. I actually haven't sprayed anything this year yet. And, we're in August, so they're... We're getting a little bit of a Colorado potato beetle pressure. So, I may take care of that with the sprayer. But, other than that, this is low dollar stuff. This was \$100. The sprayer was 160.

And, it fits your scale.

Fits our scale, fits, honestly, you could do... I do, what do I do with this thing? I could probably do like an acre in probably like 40 minutes, something like that, if you have all the bags ready to go, 'cause, most of the time when you're fertilizing, you're doing a couple hundred pounds of the acre, at least. So, and that depends on where you're at in the season. If you're doing your pre whatever, preseason fertilization, you'll use more. I'm doing a lot of side dressing now, so I don't use as much.

And, you just throw the bags on the deck behind the seat there too?

So, I can fit one bag here, one bag next to my feet. So, I can do like a hundred pounds at a time. What I really want to get, what I want to get into is bringing over a skid of fertilizer to where I need it, with this tractor, with forks, which, again, these forks, these are... This is an eBay set of, what are they? They're called a tighten attachment forks. And, these are \$100 shipped. They clamp onto your bucket. They sometimes come loose, but the beauty of them is that they come off. So, you don't need to have your... You don't need to take your bucket off to put on a special set of quick attached forks that cost that X amount of dollars. You get your \$99 shipped forks, clamp 'em on, and away you go. And, I, just by telling people where I got them, and how much they were, I probably sold, Christ, they owe me some money, how much I've sold these, just by telling people how great they are.

Now, the downside is you can't see the tips very well.

You can't see the tips, but these are the shorter ones. So, they sell, this is a 30 inch and they all sell 43 inch. The problem that I've heard about the 43 inch is that it puts a lot of stress on your bucket. So, it could bow the middle of your bucket into like a convex. But, if you weren't lifting things that heavy, I'm sure it could work.

Right, if you're not moving full pallets of fertilizer, then you're alright.

Yeah, exactly, yeah, yeah. And, this tractor will lift, I think, 800 pounds. So, if you need to be lifting more, more than that, you should really get a bigger tractor or a beefier fork set up. Just a couple of cheap pieces of equipment. And, it really, really makes a lot of operations that we do around here, more efficient. And, then we have money to spend on things like we've got our Jang six row seater. If we were spending a lot of money on all this other stuff, we couldn't have bought this. And, this is, this is how we do our wholesale accounts. And, we seed carrots and beets. Well, I seed carrots with this. And, then I run this exact setup without seed in it over our beds that we're gonna do beets in. And, then I just plant right over the lines that this, the seeder has made.

Oh, so you needed to dibble your lines?

Yeah, exactly. And, then I can run over that with the Earthway and now I have all of my wholesale roots set up at the same spacing, so I don't need to adjust my cultivators. It's got the three point hitch kit on it. So, yeah. Like if I were to spend whatever, \$800 on a fertilizer spreader, or \$1,000 on a sprayer, we're just taking money away from things that really make us more money.

Yeah, more central equipment.

Right, yeah, like the fertilizer spreader. Yeah, that makes us money, 'cause we can't grow things without fertilizing.

And, then you just put this on the John Deere here?

Yeah, and I put it right on the John Deere.

Sweet.

Yeah, and this, this has a 30 inch, actually, I think it's like 29 and three quarter inch spacing from this tread to that tread. So, it fits our 30 inch spacing, our 30 inch space beds. Actually, what our carrots and beets are planted on, it's really like a 28 inch bed top, that's held at about six to seven inches, and that's just for harvesting equipment. But... Yeah, this thing's great if you want to economize your seed. If you want to put a lot of seed down, like if you... If you're thinking about getting something like this for a salad, it hasn't really worked out so well for us for salad. So, actually we use this for salad. Actually, we use this for our weekly seeding. Other than beans and beets, we seed just about everything with this, 'cause it's got... This is the Johnny's four row seater and it's got four different size holes. So, this one we use for the Hawker eye salad turnips. That's for radishes. This is for baby lettuce. So, we put quite a bit of seed down and the largest one is for baby kale. And, then, some of the smaller seeded mustards like arugula and, whatever, scarlet frills or ruby streaks, whatever you're using. That's the... We use that for... So, it would be lettuce, small seated mustards, that sort of thing.

How much is that tool?

This is \$250.

Seems like a good investment.

Oh, my God, this thing's great. I used to do all of our salad seeding with the Earthway and the fine seed plate. And, I don't even put that seed plate on anymore. This thing is just so much better and there... So, before, we were actually using this to put down our salad turnips, because this, you can set... I've got the spacing set up right now for an inch and a half. And, that gives us our inch and a half to two inch carrots. It gives us perfect spacing for big salad turnips, which seem to be more popular than small ones. But, this is a pain to hook up if you wanna plant solid turnips every week and you don't have enough tractors to leave this thing on every week, or leave it on enough so that you're not switching equipment

in and out. So, we get much more use outta of keeping the three point inch tiller on than we do keeping this on. So, then that replaces this for our weekly seeding. But, there's not much that can replace this for our wholesale seeding. And, this, this is like a... It's like a \$2,800 setup here. So, certainly not as much as you could spend on seeding equipment, but we've got an acre of carrots planted with this. This thing's probably got maybe six acres on it right now. And, we've had it since 2017 and it's 2019 now. So, yeah, I think it's definitely... It's definitely paid for itself. We don't use every hopper either, which you could, I guess, but we find it better to do two to three at a time, just because we're not planting salad mix with it, or radishes, or anything like that. That, we're using the Johnny's Pinpoint Cedar for.

Thanks for listening to today's episode. If you learned something today or plan to make a change on your farm, let me know. I'd love to receive any feedback you have. Just click the link in the description to submit the form. It will help the future of this podcast to be a resource that is helpful for you. And, while you're at it, I hope you go ahead and subscribe, share this with a friend, or leave a comment. And, if you want more information, check out the show notes on our website at [agegepodcast.com](http://agegepodcast.com). That's A G E N G P O D C A S T .com. Thanks for listening and I hope you have a great day.

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