



Planting

Puncher wheels are very useful on the small farm scene. No need to eyeball rows or measure plant locations. Mounting behind bed shapers or mulch layers is very practical and rows are perfectly aligned and centered. The wheel puncher can also be mounted on a separate toolbar.

Wheels are easily changed for different crops. Add and remove punches on one all-purpose wheel or buy different wheels for quickest change-overs. Also change punch size without buying different wheels.

"Dry wheels" are typically used for punching plant locations as no water or starter solution is being applied. Dry wheels feature a single center panel to save weight and a few dollars. "Water wheels" feature two center panels to hold water/solution to drain at each plant punch. Punchers can be fitted to apply water/solution, but this is uncommon. On a smaller scale, initial watering can be done with drip irrigation, with or without soluble fertilizer.

Complete water wheel planters feature a tank and water system with water wheels, plant racks and planter seats. Plants are slid into the starter hole by hand and covered as needed by hand and firmed...by hand. Essentially a semi-automated planter, it actually offers the most consistent planting with moderately skilled hand-planters at a fraction of the price of automatic/mechanical planters.

Planting speed can 1/4 to 1 MPH. 1/2 MPH is 44 ft per minute. Plant 3-4 acres per day with good field logistics: a water source at the field head and quick re-load of plants. Turn planter around, re-load, then let personnel sit down. Never lift planter with people in seats...end of discussion.

Tractors need a transmission with a creeper gear range. Hydrostatic transmissions are currently more available on smaller tractors. Note that hydros have limitations for heavier field work so it's questionable for the only tractor on the farm to be a hydro.

A one-seat, 65-gal planter is a simple low-buck tool that makes a world of difference over planting on foot. At one cup of water per plant, 65 gallon waters nearly 1000 plants (two cups - 500 plants). Carry enough water to at least make a full round. For the 1-2-3 row system, wheels are easy to add and remove. A 1-wheel planter can also plant 2 or 3 rows per bed by repositioning the wheel and traversing the bed 2 or 3 times.

If still a little bit out of the budget, consider Garden Series models - still a big value planting on a smaller scale. See Garden Series Catalog.

