



Grassroots Innovation Since 1939

SPOTLIGHT ON CROP ADVANCES

Crop Advances is an annual report that summarizes applied research projects involving the OMAFRA Field Crop team and/or in partnership with commodity groups, industry and the OSCIA. Go to the Research & Resources page at www.ontariosoilcrop.org



On-farm ingenuity wins cash prize

By Madeleine Arseneau, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

The Don Hill Legacy Award, first presented in 2019, celebrates on-farm innovation in memory of past Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) president Don Hill. Lynn Leavitt of Prince Edward County was honoured with the \$1,000 cash award at this year's OSCIA annual meeting. His innovation creatively offers a solution to excess plastic waste on the farm.

"Lynn's plastic compactor works to help resolve the issue of plastic recycling on farm, in the spirit of Don's philosophy, it is simple and practical. OSCIA is pleased to recognize Lynn with this award," says OSCIA President Chad Anderson.

"The Pac-It is a basket compactor that works to maintain the integrity of agricultural plastic," says Lynn Leavitt. "I started it in 2016 after accumulating a ton of plastic over the years in an old barn and realized a lot of farmers were facing the same problem. This innovation gives farmers a place to put their plastic once they've pulled it off the bale, instead of throwing it in a pile and risking contamination. It takes bale plastic, twine, net wrap and other on-farm plastic and compacts it into a 40x48-inch cube ready to be dropped off at local recycling plants."

Leavitt sat down with his local recycling community and discussed the value of re-using clean plastic waste to repurpose it into newer plastic materials. Asking, "How can we work together? What can I do to help?" he was able to determine the most effective way to deliver plastic from the farm to the waste facilities. From



A compacted solution for used bale wrap is 2022's Don Hill Legacy Award innovation. Photo taken by Suzanne Atkinson

there, he got to work in his workshop pulling together materials from around the farm. He continues to build the basket compactor for interested farmers and sells the instructions for those interested in building it themselves. The materials cost approximately \$600 and about 10 hours of labour per unit is required.

This innovation also helps connect and network farmers across the community. Smaller scale farmers—who may not have enough plastic waste to create the cubes—can connect with larger-scale farmers to meet volume requirements: "I once worked with a farmer who had 10,000 pounds of plastic stored in a large building and was thrilled to hear that he could finally dispose of it in a responsible way."

"It's certainly an honor to have the Pac-it recognized and it provides encouragement to continue with this project in assisting to build a greener future on Ontario farms at this very important time in the advancement of sustainability," says Leavitt upon receiving the award.

More information can be found on Facebook by searching U-Pac Agri Services

The Legacy Award is generously sponsored by Ruth Hill and Family. Nominations for the 2023 Don Hill Legacy Award can be submitted to OSCIA any time up to December 1, 2022. Visit ontariosoilcrop.org to learn more.

ONTARIO SOIL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Mission: Facilitate responsible economic management of soil, water, air and crops through development and communication of innovative farming practices

www.ontariosoilcrop.org

OSCIA is a not-for-profit grassroots farm organization founded in 1939, with local member groups across more than 50 counties and districts. We are farmers actively seeking, testing and adopting optimal farm production and stewardship practices. The organization has also been deeply engaged in the delivery of both educational and cost-share programs in the broader farm community for more than 30-years.