

# THE LEADING EDGE

[www.yetterco.com](http://www.yetterco.com) · [Yetter Manufacturing Inc](http://www.yetterco.com) · [E-mail:info@yetterco.com](mailto:info@yetterco.com)

## A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

### **For Best Planting Results, Use the Right Tools and Check Your Planter**

As producers prepare for another planting season, they face critical decisions about which combination of attachments will give them the best results. The market is crowded with options, but there are some consistent high-performers that should always be considered.

#### **Using coulters may extend the life of your true-v opener blades.**

No matter what tillage system you practice, coulters are probably a critical component in your planting setup. The proper coulters blade works the soil where the seed will be placed to help reduce sidewall compaction. Not only is the ideal seed-to-soil contact is ensured, but also the soil is placed directly around the seedling, which results in excellent closure. Also through coulters tillage, the capacity of the soil to hold moisture is improved, aiding germination and uniform emergence.

Generally, coulters should be set at least ¼-inch above the true-v opener's height. This prevents the coulters from trenching deeper than the seed placement. Coulters penetrating too deeply could create air pockets, which will hurt germination.

If producers decide coulters are not the best tool for their operations, cast spike closing wheels should be considered. These tools also help eliminate sidewall compaction and can compensate for the soil work the coulter would have done. Spike closing wheels have proven to be invaluable in challenging planting conditions such as wet soil, helping to create good seed-to-soil contact in less-than-ideal conditions.



Spike closing wheels help eliminate side-wall compaction and close the seed trench.

In heavy soils where closing the seed trench is especially difficult, producers may want to consider adding drag chains. Heavy, five-sided, beveled links will pull weighty soil onto the seed trench. Most chains are easy to add on to the planter frame. Producers applying insecticide while planting may find drag chains especially beneficial because it will help incorporate the chemical.

Row cleaners are imperative in no-till, strip-till, and minimum-till situations. Good row cleaners, or residue managers, clear residue, root balls, and dirt clods from the row and create a level planting surface. On a level surface, planters' gauge wheels achieve better seed placement. Also, when the residue is cleared, the exposed soil warms the seed zone more quickly. Warm soil early in the season leads to earlier planting dates and even emergence.

**Some producers choose to side-dress young crops instead of, or in addition to, placing starter fertilizer. Side-dressing puts fertilizer farther away from the row and deeper into the soil. This provides a growth spurt later in the development of the plant.**

Some producers choose to add fertilizer application tools to their planting setups as well. This decision increases the efficiency of the planting operation and reduces trips across the field, which should always be a goal. Tools that achieve precision placement in these situations are key. Placing fertilizer 2 inches to the side and 2 inches deep while planting will get plants off to a good start. Roots hit the fertilizer shortly after developing and get the boost needed for a

growth spurt.

First of all, producers should look for attachments that fit their specific planter or toolbar setup. Features that make the attachments quick and easy to adjust when moving from field to field are important. Producers who fail to fine-tune application equipment for varying soil conditions risk poor placement and wasted investment. Other beneficial features can include angled blades to cut narrow fertilizer slots, soil disruption guards, and stainless steel tubing.



Planter frame height is critical in making planter attachments work properly.

However, merely adding all the correct attachments to a planter is not enough. To achieve the best results and return on investment, producers must take the time to adjust and maintain their planters. Frame height and levelness adjustments are critical to achieve the desired planting depth. An improperly adjusted planter frame is the leading reason for uneven seed depth, spacing, and emergence, resulting in less than ideal plant population and yield.

Most attachments are designed to operate at a specific depth range, which they can only consistently do if your planter is running level to your soil. The levelness of the planter frame is important because it affects so many other things—the angle of the seed tube, seed depth, and seed spacing, as well as the effectiveness of row-unit mounted attachments, spring pressure, and closing wheels.

Producers should make sure that the planter frame height is adjusted to the manufacturer's recommendations.

**Many more helpful planting preparation tips, including**

Consult the operator's manual. And, be sure to check those measurements when your planter is in the field and has been fully loaded with seed, fertilizer, pesticides, or whatever it is you are applying. While

**illustrations, are available in this guide.**

there are many critical components to planters, two of the most important to maintain and adjust are the v-openers and v-closing wheels. V-openers should be replaced when they are worn down to 14 3/8 inches.

Improperly adjusted closing wheels may cause sidewall compaction and uneven stands, and could use a too little to achieve seed-to-soil contact. Closing wheels should be adjusted so that they are an equal distance from the center of the seed furrow.

Row-unit attachment options and planter adjustment and maintenance tips will be readily available from multiple sources for producers as they prepare for spring planting. Producers who take the time to analyze their own operations and consult their best resources—owners' manuals, fit-up specialists at rusted manufacturers, and experienced fellow growers—will definitely have an advantage. Using the right tools and having the right planter adjustments are both necessary for a successful planting season that will reap the rewards come harvest.



Placing starter fertilizer gets plants off to a good start.

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Yetter Manufacturing Co., Inc.  
109 S. McDonough  
Colchester, Illinois 62326  
Phone: 800-447-5777  
FAX: 309-776-3222  
[www.yetterco.com](http://www.yetterco.com)  
E-mail: [info@yetterco.com](mailto:info@yetterco.com)



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