



## All-terrain Farming: ATVs Around the Farm

**ATVs offer benefits to farmers; ongoing farm tasks are no match for an ATVs versatility**

By Jim Ruen (continued from All-terrain Farming - Page 2 of 4)

My initial investment in December of 2004 was less than \$10,000, including the Honda; the Groundhog loader with bucket, blade and posthole auger; and a trailer to transport it (5 miles) between my home site and farm.

How did Jim's ATV handle the field?

<Click here>

Both the bucket and the blade paid for themselves immediately, as heavy snows after the first of the year repeatedly filled in our 500-foot driveway. The 4-foot directional blade, swiveling up to 15 degrees to either side, easily threw most snowfalls off the road. The CVT high-torque setting slammed through drifts and lighter areas alike. When I hit deep drifts of 3 to 4 feet, I switched to the bucket.

With spring came gardening and landscape work. Here, too, the ATV-mounted bucket and blade came in handy as I pushed and pulled 10- to 12-foot-long, 12- to 14-inch-diameter logs into place for soil retention on our slopes and did finish work on terraces roughed in by a dozer the year before.

The ATV also made spreading wood chips the length of our driveway and around our gardens easy. Here, the speed of the ATV showed its value.

While running the wheelbarrow-sized load was slow, tractor-like work, the return trip could be made at 15 to 20 miles per hour. Similarly, deliveries of six to eight 40-pound bags of composted manure to the garden beds at the bottom of our hill were a breeze compared to using a wheelbarrow. Getting back up the hill was a lot more fun, too.

While I have yet to use the powered auger for posts, it did come in handy when transplanting raspberry plants in early August.

The clay loam soils pack hard as the summer progresses, and I wasn't looking forward to digging holes for more than 120 plants. The 6-inch auger made quick work of the project, creating starter holes that were easy to expand as needed to accommodate root systems. A little spade work eliminated any sidewall compaction that might have otherwise stunted root growth.

I'm confident that for years to come, my "little tractor" will do the job for me. It's proven to be an excellent investment and one I would make again. It handles most of the work I need done around the home site and on my farmland. Best of all, when the work is finished, I can slip off the loader and take a ride just for fun.

<Next: ATVs In the Field>

About the Author: Jim Ruen is a freelance writer and tree-farmer in-training in southeastern Minnesota. He lives and gardens on a 3.3-acre wooded lot and works another 120 acres of woods, fields and streams a few miles away.