

PROBLEMS AND TECHNIQUES IN PLANTING LARGE AREAS OF
COTTONWOOD IN THE NURSERY

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Along with the seedling lifting and shipping season, I had to plant 12 acres of cottonwood for Chicago Mill and Lumber Company. Cottonwood switches were trucked from Kentucky to our Nursery and were delayed due to freezing and rainy weather.

Labor shortage and weather conditions were problems in planting. When the switches arrived, they were cut into planting lengths and treated with Thimet. Two men treated the cuttings. One man picked up cuttings and kept a supply ready for the planters. Prior to planting, we prepared the land and applied Treflan.

We received a picture of a planting machine that was used in Canada. It was a four-row planter used behind a large farm tractor. This gave me the idea of devising a planter by using a back-mounted, three point cultivator on a large tractor. We put two pasture renovator teeth on the cultivator frame, 3 feet apart, as the cottonwood was in 3-foot rows. The cultivator was adjusted for depth and a seat made from a 1- x 12-inch board placed on the back of the cultivator about 3 inches from the ground.

Two women riding on the cultivator frame planted the cuttings. A third woman sat facing the planters with tubs of cuttings, making handfulls of cuttings available to the planters. The cuttings were placed as near to a 1-foot spacing as possible in the drill made by the cultivator feet. A fourth person walked behind the planters to straighten up some cuttings that were leaning and in a few places, plant where a spot was missed. The tractor operator drove the lowest speed the tractor would go. The average time in planting two rows, 500 feet long, was between 15 and 20 minutes.

The cultivator teeth made an opening suitable for most of the cuttings. There was not much trouble in getting the cuttings to a suitable depth.

There was no provision made on the planting rig to pack or firm the soil around the cuttings. A small tractor, with small tires, was driven close enough to the drill to pack the soil around the cuttings.