

Wilco System Provides Cost Savings

Sometimes the best ideas are the simplest ones - that certainly seems to be the case with the Wilco Spot Cultivator.

Devised by Wilco Products, the system provides significant advances in growth, environmental enhancements and cost savings for forestry companies in tree planting. Yet the system, designed and patented by the Rotorua-based company is straight forward in its operation.

The system involves the use of an attachment - a spot cultivator - on an excavator arm and is used to cultivate the ground before planting. The unit weighs about 1t for a 20t excavator, with a lighter version for a 12t-15t excavator.

In one easy, neat operation the WILCO Spot Cultivator rakes the ground to clear slash and other loose vegetation in the planting area. The soil is ripped up to a metre deep and is cultivated into a mound centrally over the rip. The operator also has the ability to fertilise the site at the same time as doing preparation work using the system.

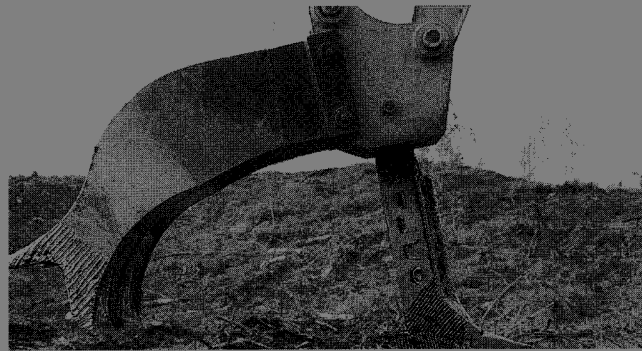
Previous methods of land preparation required bulldozers to clear slash and prepare the land, but the WILCO system cultivates only where the tree is to be planted and has minimum environmental damage.

Wilco principal, Lindsay Willis, says that WILCO has been in the land preparation business for 20 years and had rejected the old traditional methods now found to be environmentally unsound.

"There is a requirement to retain the nutrients in the land and to reduce environmental impact," says Willis. "Three rows of trees can now be cultivated with one machine pass and the excavator is easier on the ground than bulldozers."

Willis says that for forestry companies and independent contractors there is an advantage in that the attachment allows them to make better use of excavators which can be used all the year round to prepare land for planting.

The ripping mechanism breaks up hard pan soil areas and/or assists drainage from wet sites, so that seedling or cutting roots have



The Wilco Spot Cultivator head is simple in design.



Reducing environmental impacts of site preparation.

better penetration and are able to spread, which also adds to the stability and significant advances in growth.

"The benefit of providing even growth is that it promotes high survival rates in seedlings and the trees have better health, enabling a final crop selection to be made. With the cultivated spots, there is good site access and definition for the planters," Willis says.

One of the major customers, Fletcher Challenge Forests, has identified the Spot Cultivation System as their best management practise for the cultivation of compacted clearcut sites, noting that it provides maximum benefit for the least site impact and at a reasonable cost.

The WILCO Spot Cultivator's performance has been monitored by the Logging Industry Research Organisation (LIRO). The sites monitored were in New Zealand but the results have been sufficiently convincing to encourage companies from other countries to start importing the WILCO spot cultivator.

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"... provides maximum benefits for the least site impact and at a reasonable cost," forest manager testimonial.

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