

RENTAL CHARGES AND USE OF A MACHINE IN NORTH CAROLINA

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The North Carolina Division of Forestry operates 2 Lowther tree planters on a custom basis. A charge of \$4.50 per acre (based on 1,000 trees) is charged the landowner for the use of the machine and machine operator. The landowner furnishes a tractor and driver and pays for the seedlings. This past year we have endeavored to have the landowner furnish a machine operator also, charging \$3.00 per acre for the use of the machine. The Forestry Division furnishes technical supervision free of charge and trains the machine operator for the landowner. To date, a good many landowners have availed themselves of this service and say that if this service had not been available they could not have planted their land. Wages of labor in the better agricultural and industrial sections of North Carolina are too high for hand planting).

We have here in North Carolina one consulting forester who does machine planting and is kept quite busy during the planting season. Needless to say, we try to turn all machine-planting jobs over to him, taking the ones that are surplus.

Of interest on machine planting is a job undertaken by the State's machine last February for Victor King of Sanford, North Carolina. On the initial inspection, the broomsedge-covered field looked like a natural for machine planting. Some rocks were noticed but not much attention was given to them. On the date agreed for planting, we started the job and found that under the thin layer of top soil there were rocks of all sizes and degrees of firmness. Those

familiar with the Lowther machine will visualize how the coulter kept the plow out of the ground most of the time so that only when a soft place was hit could a seedling be planted. This was so seldom that only about 100 seedlings to the acre would have been machine planted. An attempt to hand plant the area was given up when it was found that the labor of getting the planting bar down and then closing the hole would have run the cost much too high. Taking advantage of the machine's rugged nature, we took the coulter off so the plow could go into the soil and went ahead and did the job. Although a ragged split was opened, the seedlings were firmed in satisfactorily.

Thirteen acres were planted and although it is too early to check the survival, we feel that the job will be satisfactory. Taking the coulter off slowed the planting a great deal as much care had to be taken to avoid the large rocks and stumps. We do not advocate this procedure under normal circumstances as there is great risk of doing a lot of damage to the planting machine. However, if care is taken to avoid the worst spots and in making turns, it can be done. In planting this area we feel that land that would never have been used otherwise was put into production, and the good will we have gained with this landowner was worth the risk.