

UT grad invents timesaver for yard work

Mike Blackerby

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University of Tennessee alumnus Mark Arnurius turned lessons learned in his engineering classes on The Hill into an invention that he says can trim hours off yard work for chore-weary homeowners.

Arnurius, a Bearden High School graduate who now lives near Johnson City, was exasperated with the amount of time it took him to remove trimmed limbs and branches from his vegetation-laden property.

Arnurius, who received an industrial engineering degree from UT in 2004, said the most time-consuming aspect of his yard work was raking and hauling off debris.

“I tried a wheelbarrow, but I broke it the first day,” said Arnurius.

“I loaded it up and the whole plastic frame popped off the top.”

Arnurius said his father suggested going the traditional route of sweeping the refuse onto a large plastic sheet and dragging it away.

“I thought ‘this is killing me. There has to be a better way to do this,’”

That’s when Arnurius had an epiphany for a device that he would eventually call Tarp Tow.

His invention is a sturdy metal bar made of heavy duty corrosive resistant steel that attaches to the back of a riding lawn mower.

Arnurius said it only takes about 15 minutes to permanently install Tarp Tow on a mower.

A standard inexpensive plastic sheet — much cheaper and durable than expensive tarps that are reinforced with grommets — then easily hooks onto Tarp Tow.

Debris either falls onto or is placed on the sheet, and the mower does the rest of the work as horsepower replaces manpower, pulling the pile away.

“What’s awesome about it is (Tarp Tow) holds the plastic sheet in place. There are no grommets, chains or ropes — and there are no kickback issues.”

Arnurius said Tarp Tow — which can also be used to haul things such as mulch and leaves — has allowed him to drastically cut down on his time working in the yard.

“You can put 25 wheelbarrow loads on one sheet. If I have three days work, I can get it down to one day by using Tarp Tow.”

Arnurius said that another positive aspect of the Tarp Tow device is durability.

“They should last 10 to 15 years. The only way you can hurt it is if you run it into a tree with the mower wide open.”

Arnurius, who recently received a utility patent for Tarp Tow, is in the beginning stages of selling and marketing the device on his website at <http://tarptow.com>.

Depending on the type of mower, Arnurius said that Tarp Tow units sell for between \$179 and \$249.

The 42-year-old Arnurius, who attended night school for eight years before earning his engineering degree, said his experience at UT was instrumental in giving him direction.

“I modified everything for Tarp Tow in 3D on my computer software. I’m really blessed that I learned to draw designs at UT. UT definitely gave me the confidence to do this. Now, I wonder what else I can do.”

Web location: http://www.knoxnews.com/business/ut-grad-invents-time-saver-for-yard-work_28804222