

# A strap-on stool for field work

Stoop labor is unavoidable on berry and vegetable farms, since at times the plants and soil need to be tended by hand. If you spend too much time stooping, kneeling or squatting, you may experience fatigue, muscle soreness or injuries. One alternative is to use an adjustable, strap-on stool that lets you sit while you work.

## How does it work?

The one-legged stool features a nylon belt that fastens around your waist, and has straps extending from the belt to the seat of the stool that adjust to fit your body. Once you have fastened the belt and adjusted the straps, the stool moves with you and is easy to sit down on again in a new location. The seat is made of durable hard plastic, and the single metal leg is adjustable to three different heights for performing a variety of tasks. The lightweight stool features a 3 1/2" wide, spring-like base, so that you do not sink into the ground.

## Strap-on stool benefits: Less fatigue and discomfort.

Prolonged stooping or kneeling to harvest and weed are some of the activities which put vegetable and berry growers in one of the highest risk groups for occupational injuries. If you do these tasks while sitting, you eliminate



Sue Hazeltine of Janesville, WI, uses her "bumblebee stool" for picking raspberries.

knee strain and lessen strain on your back, hamstrings, and torso. Your body doesn't get tired as quickly and you can comfortably work for a longer time.

Harvest posture analysis for picking strawberries	Without stool	With stool
Time spent in unacceptable postures	82%	65%
Time spent in marginal postures	16%	34%
Time spent in acceptable postures	2%	1%

Postural analysis was compiled in Finland by the Work Efficiency Institute using the Ovaco Work Analysis System (OWAS).

## Lets you change positions.

Using a strap-on stool lets you move from sitting to standing, and then back to sitting, and then forward-leaning sitting, and then to kneeling. If you change your position often, you can alleviate muscle stress and prevent pain. The strap-on stool lets you give your knees or back a rest. Customers at Pick-Your-Own (PYO) farms might enjoy using strap-on stools. They might find the harvest experience more fun and comfortable with a stool, and possibly pick for a longer time in the process.



## WORK EFFICIENCY



## Tip Sheet

A series of tip sheets on labor efficiency for vegetable and berry growers.

by Astrid Newenhouse  
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and Larry Chapman

**Both hands free.** Some growers sit on an upturned five-gallon plastic bucket or use a padded kneeling stool to give their backs and knees a break. The disadvantage of these types of seats is that every time you move to a new place in the bed or row, you need to pick up your seat and reposition it. Since the strap-on stool fits snugly to your body and moves with you, you have both hands free to harvest, weed, or carry your harvest container.

**Affordable.** The price for a strap-on stool ranges from \$22-\$38. If the stool saves you the cost of just one visit to the chiropractor, or enables a handful of U-Pick customers to stay in your fields for longer, then it will pay for itself very quickly.

## How can I get a strap-on stool?

The strap-on stool we describe here is designed for milking cows. It is manufactured by Kruuse, a Dutch company, and is called the Port-A-Stool, Texas Milking Stool, or Strap-On Milk Stool. You can also build or modify your own stool to fit your needs. This strap-on milking stool or similar ones can be obtained from:

- Your **local farm supply store** or dairy equipment dealer (if they do not have one in stock, they may be able to order one for you from the Coburn Company, a distributor)
- **Nasco**  
P.O. Box 901  
901 Janesville Ave.  
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538  
1-800-558-9595  
www.enasco.com
- **American Livestock Supply**  
P.O. Box 8441  
Madison, WI 53708

*These references are provided as a convenience for our readers. They are not an endorsement by the University of Wisconsin.*

## Tips for choosing and using a strap-on stool.

When choosing strap-on stools for field use, look for a stool that is lightweight, has a base that is wide enough to prevent you from sinking in soil, has adjustable straps from belt to stool, and does not have any parts that would be harmed by weather, dirt, or grit.

Make sure that you adjust the straps so that the stool is tight, not wobbly. Then give yourself a few minutes to get accustomed to having a stool follow you around, and to feel comfortable enough to rely on it to support all your weight. If you position your feet so that your knees form a 90 degree angle, you'll have less knee strain.

You'll find that the stool gives you many posture options. You can sit upright, or let it support you while you sit and lean forward, or sit and lean to the side. If you feel like kneeling or standing for a while, the stool will not be in your way (although it may look a bit strange!).

If you are working in very sandy or in loose, wet soil, you may wish to attach a solid base such as a piece of wood or metal to the spring at the base of the stool.

*This material was developed by the Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project, whose goal is to find and share work efficiency tips that maintain farmers' health and safety and also increase profits. For more information, call (608) 265-9451 or visit our website at <http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/>*

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**Work Efficiency Tip Sheet: A strap-on harvest stool for field work**

