

Rules of thumb

A basic rule of thumb says everyone remembers the rule, nobody remembers the source. That's true for one of my favorites, which says there are only two things needed to repair equipment: WD-40 and duct tape. If it won't move and it should, spray it with WD-40. If it does move and it shouldn't, use the duct tape.

While that won't earn you a degree in ag engineering, the following rule was suggested by a Penn State ag engineering professor — and I've found it holds true. If you're putting up a storage building, take your best estimate of how much space you'll need, double that, and then add 10%. That's where you'll be in five years.

Most of us who have fertilized or transplanted trees know the roots of a tree extend to the drip line of the branches above. Another good way to figure how far roots extend is to take the diameter of the tree in inches. That's roughly equal to the radius of the root system in feet.

I once had a rule for how big to dig a hole for planting a tree, but I can't find it at the moment. Anyone out there have one to share?

A chain saw brochure I read had this suggestion for adjusting tension on a new chain: Adjust the chain twice for the first tank of fuel, once on the next tank of fuel, and every other time on the next several tanks of fuel.

If you are stocking a pond with fish, Cornell University recommends putting in 300 fingerling trout per acre of pond each year.

Perhaps a more typical situation is trying to reach a fair price on a used piece of equipment. Employees have an embarrassing habit of using the boss as a referee in these disputes. A good rule of thumb is that a power tool, in decent working condition, should sell for about half of what a new one would run. At least, it'll get them out of your face and on to arguing about what a new model costs.

What works for you? Send me your favorite rules of thumb for use around the golf course, on the landscaping job, for irrigation or spreading seed. I'm at curt@curtharler.com. I will thumb through them and share them with our other readers in an upcoming issue. Oh, and a last rule of thumb: if you don't send me your favorite rule of thumb now, it'll never get done.



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