



Trucks quickly carry many tons of stones away. Stones are used as the base for greens and future parking areas. The entire operation is highly mechanized.



Here's a stone's eye view. Windrowed stones are picked up easily with this converted potato digger-stone picker. Bergman designed and built the picker himself.

Stone Pickin' Pro

PEBBLES, rocks and stones are the unusual trademark of William Bergman, Jr. His business is stone picking, an enterprise that would be a strong candidate for "What's My Line."

He has capitalized on the fact that a stone is like a plant out of place. A problem. And when that problem occurs in multiple quantities and on a golf course under construction, "Stoney" Bergman can bring results that puts smiles on a contractor's face. He's built quite a reputation in his 25 years of experience.

This Reese, Michigan based firm operates anywhere. Operating a fleet of trucks and buses "caravan style," he has picked stones from Florida to Michigan and from Texas to Boston. Like the rollin' stones he gathers, Bergman's mobile operation can descend on a job and be ready to go in short order.

The heart of the operation is his stone picker. Call it homemade and handy, but Bergman claims it will out pick and out live most any other unit on the market.

"The secret is in the construction," he says. "We've essentially taken a potato digger and converted it into a stone picker. Stones like potatoes come in all sizes. So we designed our picker to handle pebbles as small as three-fourths inch and as large as ten inches."

Once lifted by the picker, stones are conveyed by a series of belts and chains to an attached elevator which deposits them into a truck. From the ground to the truck, stones are whisked through the picker at high speed. Little or no dirt remains on the stones.

Bergman will tell you quickly that his picker can pick up every stone on a course but the last one. Then he waits while that statement sinks in. Slyly he says, "This is because it takes a stone to push the stone being picked up. We don't dig up stones with this picker. They must be laying on the ground. The picker rolls a stone forward until contact is made with a second stone. It pushes the first stone onto the revolving platform and then on to the waiting truck."

In a typical operation he will traverse the course several times with tractors pulling drags and rakes. This brings semi-buried stones to the surface. These are

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Bergman claims he can keep 200 pounds of stones in the air with this stone picker. The vertical elevator lifts stones and pitches them into the waiting truck.



Stones are windrowed for easy pickup. When finished the course is ready to seed. Bergman picks up stones as small as three-fourths inch. Picker works on most any terrain.



This is not pebble beach but piles of stones picked from Adventura Golf Course in Biscayne Village, Fla. Bergman says this is the most stones ever picked from any job.

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then windrowed for the stone picker.

When complete, the course is free of stones and ready for seeding.

What do you do with the stones? Bergman has the answer. Some are used as the base for greens. Others are taken out to future parking areas or used as a base in areas where concrete will be placed, he says.

The business is basically a family operation. There's Melna, "Stoney's" wife, and four sons. Bob, 20, Fred, 18, Michael, 17 and Paul, 14, who drive trucks, tractors and other equipment used in the job. Even the youngest, Mary, 6, helps out by bringing water to the hard-working crew. Another daughter, Cheryl, 22, takes care of the telephone calls at the Michigan residence on M-15. The family moves to the job in a mobile home, formerly an interstate bus.

"Toughest course we've encountered so far was the High Mountain Country Club, Franklin Lakes, New Jersey," says "Stoney." "It was rolling terrain and gave our equipment a workout."

To date, Bergman has picked stones from more than 147 golf courses. "We believe that our operation can be moved quickly to practically any part of the coun-

try," he says. "We recently picked stones at the Adventura Golf Course in Biscayne Village, Florida. That experience will go down on our records as the most stones ever picked from one course."

In addition to picking stones, Bergman specializes in seeding, fertilizing, consultation and irrigation work. "We feel that these jobs are interrelated," he says. "When we finish picking stones, the course is ready to seed. Some of our other equipment lends itself to a seeding operation. A contractor who hires seeding and fertilizing is sometimes delayed in getting the operation going. Since we offer these services in addition to picking stones, the contractor can have this vital function performed on time."

Picking stones on new courses permits Bergman to observe and contribute to new trends in golf course construction. Some of these include: fewer sand traps — some newer courses don't use any; dramatic increase in the use of irrigation; and generally more interesting courses.

Bergman figures that as much as 15 percent of the total contract price on new construction should be allocated for stone picking. "The time to pick stones is before the grass seed is planted." "It will never be less expensive; the investment more than pays for itself."

Future plans for this Michigan resident include making another rock picker that can pick up stones of one-fourth inch size. This picker would be used on race tracks. "Our present picker can handle stones even smaller than three-fourths inch," he says. "But we can't guarantee that every stone of that size will be picked up. That's why a second picker is needed." □

EDITORIAL (from page 6)

which safety is an integral part. To add ANSI Z133.1 or any other manual to the package of accomplishments of an association does nothing for the tree climber. To elicit and discuss ways in which ANSI Z133.1 can be used as a tool to help the tree climber place a higher value on his own safety will be meaningful to the association member and the industry. We charge that this is the duty of arborist organizations. Without this kind of effort, safety will never be much more than a six letter word.

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