

With its durable design and sterling reputation, MacKissic's rugged Merry Tiller line proves that a good front-tine tiller is hard to beat.

Little Tiller That Could

By Ken Morrison

Few outdoor power products could survive a past decade that included four changes of ownership and a bankruptcy. Yet Merry Tiller has done just that, thanks to its timeless design attributes and intervention by MacKissic Inc. of Parker Ford, Pa., a strong and capable manufacturer of outdoor power equipment.

The Merry Tiller concept was developed in 1947 by Clayton Merry. He and his brother-in-law, A.V. Allbery, formed a partnership and began building Merry Tillers in their basements in the Seattle, Wash. area.

The company grew rapidly and soon nestled into an industrial building in Edmonds, Wash. In 1953, Allbery bought out Merry and continued to run the company until his death in 1967. Allbery's family remained involved, and in 1977, they moved production into a new 100,000 sq. ft. complex in Marysville, Wash.

Just four years later, the Allberys sold Merry Tiller, which began a decade of instability. Merry Tiller saw three different owners during the 1980s, each with its own set of financial or operational difficulties.

Despite these problems, Merry Tiller's reputation for performance and "bullet-proof" durability endured. It was fostered by long-time Merry Tiller dealers and rental equipment operators who had 10- and 20-year-old Merry Tillers still working in their fleets.

In 1991, Merry Tiller was resurrected by MacKissic—a well-known producer of chipper/shredders, sprayers, leaf blowers, compost tumblers, log splitters and truck loaders. MacKissic acquired the

inventory, tooling and rights to the Merry Tiller name. The sturdy tiller fit nicely into MacKissic's line and has already benefited from the company's manufacturing and marketing expertise.

Often Imitated Design

Like any successful product, the Merry Tiller has been copied by a number of competing manufacturers. However, MacKissic claims no one has been able to match the original.

To get a closer look at this legendary machine, we contacted MacKissic, and within days a 5 HP Suburban Tiller Model ST5 was sitting in our shop. Its obvious sturdiness and simplicity made a favorable first impression.

hitch are a bright shade of red. Handle components and tines are white.

Dealer assembly duties are pretty much limited to the handle bars, handle braces and allied clutch and throttle linkages. It's a straightforward procedure that should only take about 20 minutes or so.

Clutch features "deadman" control that disengages when the handle lever is released. The spring-loaded clutch handle is connected by cable to an idler arm/idler pulley assembly. When the handle is depressed, the idler pulley is drawn into the drive belt and thus engages the transmission.

Belt service is easy to perform. Just remove the three bolts on the belt cover and everything is exposed. The 2 in.

diameter engine pulley and 10 in. diameter transmission pulley are secured to their respective shafts with keys and set screws. The pulley system delivers the first level of reduction, stepping RPM down by a ratio of 5:1.

Heart of the Merry Tiller is its ultra thin, yet muscular, chain drive transmission system. This is a positive, trouble-free component. The flanged transmission halves are held together by 26 fasteners, some of which perform double duty. Four serve as mounting bolts that

pass through the rear hitch and frame rails. Three accommodate the handle bar brace. One secures a pulley cover bracket and another holds the idler arm/adjustment link.

The transmission's strength and dependability are derived from its three-stage roller chain and sprocket configuration, which operates in a bath of gear lube.

Driven shaft rides on a bronze bushing and is fitted with a single 11-tooth



Merry Tiller "Suburban" Model ST5

The ST5 is equipped with a horizontally aligned, 5 HP Briggs & Stratton engine. Four bolts hold the engine to the heavy $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, 24 in. long, angular frame rails. The narrow transmission assembly fits between the frame rails, as does the rear hitch—a heavy casting that houses the rear skid and wheel assembly. The heavy-gauge handle tubing is also mounted to the frame rails, with strong supports secured to the transmission housing. Engine, frame, transmission and