

No-climb truck tarping systems

Climbing trucks to pull a tarp over a load of trees and shrubs can put nursery workers in danger of falling. Workers who are lifted up in skidsteer buckets or standing on fork arms to tarp a load are at even greater risk of falling and injuring themselves. You can get the job done more safely and quickly with a truck tarping system that lets you stay on the ground. We'll describe four "no-climbing" truck tarping systems: pole hook, truck mounted tarp roller, skid steer hook, and flagpole.

Benefits:

Saves time. You can tarp a load faster with these systems compared to climbing onto the truck bed or trailer to crawl around the load and fasten the tarp. Some systems can be operated by one person, which cuts in half the typical amount of labor hours needed.

Improves product quality. When you crawl around a load of trees and shrubs hauling a tarp, it's easy to step on branches and break them. This is especially true with mixed loads of plants with different sizes and shapes. Standing on the ground to haul the tarp prevents this branch breakage.

Efficient. Wind can make the job of tarping trucks unpredictable. Even a 12 mph wind can start to lift a tarp, and gusts over 19 mph cause real problems. It's easier to set up a tarp and maintain control of it if you are not climbing onto the load.

Profitable. The "no-climb" systems we describe here fall into four cost approximations: ~\$60, ~\$300, ~\$650, and ~\$2120 plus. You will save labor hours, reduce risks of worker injury and reduce risks of product replacement caused by damage. Depending on your needs and the system you choose, you could quickly recover your costs. If you factor in the potential for



A simple extension pole keeps workers on the ground.

reducing medical or workman's compensation costs, the tarping system's payback period is even shorter.

Less risk of serious injury.

Workers who are lifted high into the air to tarp a load may fall and break bones or suffer sprain injuries, head injuries or bruises. Workers who climb onto a truck or trailer and crawl around the load to secure the tarp may suffer similar injuries. Jumping down from the truckbed or trailer also risks injury to worker's knees, ankles, and feet.

How do they work?

The pole hook method (~\$50-\$90) uses a set of two telescoping fiberglass paint roller extension poles with a modified hook on the end. Choose a pole length to fit your needs, such as 6' x 12' or longer, and buy two. Buy two lightweight metal paint rollers with a single rod spool. On each, remove the endcap of the spool opposite the handle end. Bend the remaining metal rod at a 45 degree angle to form a hook. Screw the paint rollers onto the poles.

To use, first secure the tarp to the front end of the truck or trailer bed with two short pieces of rubber bungee cords. With a worker on either side, hook the extension pole into grommets on the other end of the tarp. As each person walks towards the back of the load, they can lift the tarp up to 25' above the ground.

Roller-type tarping systems

(~\$300) are designed to permanently attach to the truck, just behind the cab. The tarp is on a spool and either a manual or motor-driven system unrolls the tarp over the load. Tarp rollers come in different sizes to fit different types of trucks.



Old way: greater risk of falls and injuries.

WORK EFFICIENCY



Tip Sheet

A series of tip sheets on labor efficiency for nursery field work

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The flagpole system (~\$2120 plus) is a set of four tall steel flagpoles that you permanently erect in a rectangular shape in the ground. When it is time to cover a load, attach one corner of the tarp to each flagpole's rope and hoist the tarp up the poles. Then drive your truck or trailer underneath and lower the tarp onto the load. The flagpole system requires 4 poles tall enough that the tarp can clear a loaded truck. These can be commercially available flagpoles or sections of 4" steel tubing. Depending on your construction skill and available equipment, you may have to hire a crane operator to erect the poles, which should be set in concrete.

Roller-type tarping systems are available through the following companies:
Pioneer Cover-all, North Oxford MA, 01537, 800-237-0225 www.pioneercoverall.com
Pulltarps Mfg., El Cajon, CA 92020, 800-368-3075 www.pulltarps.com
Roll-Rite, Alger, Michigan 48610, 800-297-9905 www.rollrite.com
These references are provided as a convenience for our readers. They are not an endorsement by the University of Wisconsin.

The skid steer hook. The "Tar-Puller" (~\$650) is a commercially available attachment designed for pallet forks or Nursery Jaws. The forks fit into the side of a long steel arm which extends your sideways reach by 8' to 15'. After securing one end of the tarp to the front end of the truck or trailer bed, attach the four hooks on the arm to the other end of the tarp. Drive the skidsteer or tractor along the side of the load, pulling the tarp as you go. With pallet forks you use set screws and safety chains to secure the attachment. With Nursery Jaws, only the safety chains are needed. The TarPuller is available through



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) 262-1054 or visit our website at [http:// bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/](http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/)

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