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Urbandale man invents a 'new buddy' for lawn waste

BY JOANNE BOECKMAN • JBOECKMAN@DMREG.COM • OCTOBER 16, 2008

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Chris Koll of Urbandale is an example of how necessity - or exasperation - leads to invention.

Koll has invented a cardboard chute designed to make filling a "Compost It" bag with grass clippings, weeds, branches and leaves more efficient and less frustrating.

"People comment that the best thing about it is that they can get more in the bag, and my friends who tried it say it prevents punctures from branches," Koll said.

Koll, 49, named his invention Lawn Bag Buddy. He created it last year when he was trying to scoop grass clippings into a paper lawn bag that kept falling over. Frustrated, he headed for his garage to assemble a chute with cardboard and duct tape that he could insert inside the bag to hold it open and upright, or lay down to rake waste into. It worked, and when he showed his design to his wife, Heidi, she encouraged him to apply for a patent.

ADVERTISEMENT The couple kicked around names and one month later had the one they liked. Koll, who is in marketing and sales in his full-time job, said his next priority was finding a graphic artist to create a logo. Then, armed with a name and logo, he sought a manufacturer. To his surprise, he located one in Des Moines.

"My education was in finding out how to put a UPC code on it," Koll said. "I spent many nights online looking for how to do it; that's how I found the manufacturer, too."

The first run of 3,500 Lawn Bag Buddies came from the manufacturer in mid-July, along with cardboard display stands Koll devised.

Lawn Bag Buddy is reusable and, because it's made of cardboard, it can be recycled. It folds flat for storage and has cutouts so it can be pulled out easily from a filled bag.

It is sold locally at most Des Moines area Fareway stores, Hy-Vee stores, Cappel's Ace Hardware in West Des Moines and Johnston Ace Hardware. Suggested retail price is \$9.75.

Koll will begin selling the product online on www.lawnbagbuddy.com later this month, but Koll, who has another full-time job, said he's not planning to market it to a broader area just yet.

"My goal is to create a local following to get it known at the local level then maybe I'll think of going regional," he said.

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Chris Koll of Urbandale demonstrates his invention, the Lawn Bag Buddy, a cardboard insert for compost bags that allows the bag to be filled completely and prevents ripping from branches.

(JOANNE BOECKMAN/THE REGISTER)

Lawn Bag Buddy

FIND IT: Purchase locally at Fareway, Hy-Vee, Cappel's Ace Hardware in West Des Moines and Johnston Ace Hardware in Johnston.

WEB SITE: www.lawnbagbuddy.com.

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