

Success 16: Seedling Transportation Units

“The FIST canopy is now the standard seedling transportation unit for planting crews across B.C. It consolidates seedlings and planting crews, and reduces stock handling, thereby minimizing the need for seedling caches and freeing the crew boss to focus more on planting quality. The resulting operational advantages are reduced planting cost, with improved stock handling and seedling growth.”

-Dirk Brinkman, Brinkman & Associates Reforestation Ltd.

Although the technology for producing large quantities of seedlings has been in place for many years, actually getting those seedlings safely to the field and keeping them alive while they wait to be planted poses more of a problem. In traditional operations, boxed seedlings were loaded onto small trucks for delivery to planting sites, and the seedling boxes were covered with reflective tarpaulins designed to provide some protection from the sun. However, the tarpaulins were difficult to secure and were not very effective. In response to member concerns about protecting the seedlings in their reforestation operations, FERIC's Craig Dorion began investigating the problem. In the spring of 1989, the Canadian Forest Service contracted FERIC to develop an insulated canopy suitable for use on a pickup truck. The canopy had to reduce seedling damage due to high or fluctuating storage temperatures during the final phase of transporting seedling to the field. A concept development committee with members from Brinkman & Associates Reforestation Ltd. and FERIC designed what would eventually become a “FIST” (Fiberglass Insulated Seedling Transportation”) canopy, a completely enclosed 180-kg unit with an insulated floor that was designed to slip into the bed of a standard pickup truck. The canopy features two full-sized cargo doors, removable shelving, and a capacity of more than 50 seedling boxes. The canopy's walls, made from panels of urethane foam insulation sandwiched between layers of fiberglass, are light and durable, and offer considerably improved protection against sunlight and heat. The FIST canopy has been well received by the industry, and more than 300 units have been sold across North America.

-from “A Quarter Century of Success” FERIC: 1975-2000