The Glenda Guard

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This describes a simple concrete guard you can make to use around sprinklers. This makes it a bit easier to mow around the sprinklers and helps protect sprinklers that mount flush in the ground. I call them a Glenda Guard because my wife Glenda thought up the design and made the first ones around 20 years ago when we had a cement pad poured. She knew we'd have a little concrete left over, so she made some forms from some scrap 2x4s and used some scrap cardboard shipping tubing we had for the holes. They have worked very well. The other day I had to mix up an 80 pound (makes 0.6 cubic feet or 4.5 gallons) bag of concrete because I needed to fill up a little remaining bit of a fence post hole. I knew I'd have most of the bag of concrete left over, so I made up a form so I could make some more Glenda Guards.

Here's one of the originals that my wife made:

I added a new sprinkler line to this line last week, so it had been freshly dug up. The basic design is a 10" by 14" rectangle. Glenda made the form from scrap 2x4s, so the thickness is 3.5 inches. Their only disadvantage is that weeds will grow up in the central hole, but some soil sterilizer or weed killer can take care of this problem.

Here's the form I made and a new guard we just removed from the form:

I made this form from some scrap 2x4s (old fencing and the cross pieces came from a new fence I just made). I chose to make the new guards 10" by 13" rectangles. That's a piece of 4.5" OD plastic DWV pipe that was used to make the center hole; this will fit over one of our larger sprinklers. This lets me put the guard over sprinklers that are already in the ground.

I used some used engine oil and a brush to cover the wood and pipe before putting in the concrete. Glenda smoothed the concrete with a block of 2x4 scrap and some old kitchen utensils she didn't mind getting dirty. I ripped the 2x4s for the form to 3" wide so that the finished guards would be about 3" thick. I just set the form on some sand we have and shoveled the concrete into the form while Glenda held the pipe in place.

I put a piece of clear plastic over the form and let the guards cure in the sun for a few days. The form is held together with 3" long #9 Torx bugle head screws. I loosened the screws and took one of the long boards off the form and the guards just fell out. I chose to do this rather than drive them out with a mallet to avoid accidentally cracking them, as I didn't put any reinforcing wire in them.

You'll want to use a dead blow mallet and a piece of wood to drive the plastic pipe out after the guard has dried. If you use a cardboard tube, it might be easiest to wet the cardboard and pull it out. If you want to get fancy, use a lathe to turn a piece of wood just under the size of the pipe and it will be easiest to drive the pipe out. I just used some scrap pieces of wood.

One 80 pound bag of ready-mix concrete will make about three of these guards, so my choice of sizes is about right. Since a bag of ready-mix costs a little over $3, each of these guards winds up costing on the order of a dollar apiece for materials.

Of course, you can leave out the pipe for the center hole and make some nice stepping stones instead. If you want them smooth on both sides, you can put the form on a piece of plywood instead of the sand like I used.

To make the form, I used a circular saw to cut things to length and cut the dadoes for the cross pieces and the handles. I used a chisel to get rid of the waste. I marked the cuts with a speed square and a Sharpie pen; there wasn't any critical measuring.