

ORIGINAL

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

1: CV 02-0395

Ames True Temper Inc.

Plaintiff

v.

Suncast Corporation

Defendant

Civil Action No.

(Judge )

**JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**

**FILED**

HARRISBURG, PA

MAR 11 2002

**COMPLAINT FOR PATENT INFRINGEMENT**

MARY E. D'AMORE, CLERK  
Per                     

Plaintiff, Ames True Temper Inc. ("Ames"), for its complaint against defendant, Suncast Corporation ("Suncast"), states:

1. Plaintiff, Ames, is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the state of Delaware, with its principal place of business located at 465 Railroad Avenue, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania 17011-5611.

2. Upon information and belief, defendant, Suncast, is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the state of Illinois, with a principal place of business located at 701 North Kirk Road, Batavia, Illinois 60510.

3. This is an action for patent infringement arising under the patent laws of the United States, 35 U.S.C. § 1 et seq., more particularly 35 U.S.C. § 271 and 35 U.S.C. §§ 281-285.

**Jurisdiction and Venue**

4. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1338.
5. Venue is proper in this district under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1400(b).
6. Products made or sold by Suncast are shipped into and are offered for sale and/or sold in the State of Pennsylvania and in this Judicial District.
7. Hose reel assemblies made or sold by Suncast are shipped into and are offered for sale and/or sold in the State of Pennsylvania and in this Judicial District.

**United States Reissue Patent No. 37,442**

8. United States Reissue Patent No. 37,442 (“the ‘442 patent”) is entitled “Portable Hose Cart Assembly” (copy attached as Exhibit A). The ‘442 patent issued on November 13, 2001, based on U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/465,172 filed December 16, 1999. The ‘442 patent is a reissue of U.S. Patent No. 5,794,649 (“the ‘649 patent”), which issued on August 18, 1998 and was based on U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/724, 668, filed on October 1, 1996. Ames is and at all relevant times has been the owner of the ‘442 and ‘649 patents.

9. Suncast has known of the ‘649 patent at least since being put on notice by a letter from Ames dated August 3, 2001, advising Suncast of its infringement of that patent. Subsequent correspondence from Ames put Suncast on notice of the reissue of the ‘649 patent and Suncast’s continued infringement of claims in the ‘442 patent that were issued in the original ‘649 patent.

10. Suncast has made, used, sold, and/or offered to sell, and is continuing to make, use, sell, and/or offer for sale, hose reel assemblies that infringe one or more claims of the ‘442

patent, including claims that are identical to claims in the '649 patent, in the State of Pennsylvania, within this Judicial District, and elsewhere in the United States.

11. On information and belief, Suncast has also contributed to and/or induced infringement of one or more claims of the '442 patent, including claims that are identical to claims in the '649 patent, in the State of Pennsylvania, within this Judicial District, and elsewhere in the United States.

12. Suncast's activities, with respect to the infringement of the '442 patent, have been without the express or implied license of Ames.

13. Based upon information and belief, Suncast's infringement of claims of the '442 patent, including claims that are identical to claims in the '649 patent, has been willful and deliberate.

14. Ames has been and will be damaged by the foregoing infringing activities of Suncast in an amount that cannot be accurately determined at this time.

**United States Patent No. 6,338,360**

15. United States Patent No. 6,338,360 ("the '360 patent") is entitled "Hose Reel Carrier Assembly" (copy attached as Exhibit B). The '360 patent issued January 15, 2002, based on U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/832,845, filed April 12, 2001, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/202,881, filed May 10, 2000. Ames is and at all relevant times has been the owner of the '360 patent.

16. Suncast has made, used, sold, and/or offered to sell, and is continuing to make, use, sell, and/or offer for sale, hose reel assemblies that infringe one or more claims of the '360

patent in the State of Pennsylvania, within this Judicial District, and elsewhere in the United States.

17. On information and belief, Suncast has also contributed to and/or induced infringement of claims in the '360 patent, in the State of Pennsylvania, within this Judicial District, and elsewhere in the United States.

18. Suncast's activities, with respect to the infringement of the '360 patent, have been without the express or implied license of Ames.

19. Ames has been and will be damaged by the foregoing infringing activities of Suncast in an amount which cannot be accurately determined at this time.

**Prayer For Relief**

WHEREFORE, Ames requests the following relief:

- A. A judgment that United States Patent Nos. Re. 37,442 and 6,338,360 are valid, enforceable and infringed by Suncast.
- B. An injunction against Suncast preliminarily and permanently enjoining Suncast, its officers, agents, employees, and others acting in concert with it from further acts of infringement of the aforesaid United States Patent Nos. Re. 37,442 and 6,338,360, whether the infringement be direct, contributory, or by inducement.
- C. That judgment be entered, awarding Ames its actual damages adequate to compensate Ames for Suncast's infringement, but not less than a reasonable royalty, together with interest and costs as fixed by the Court, as provided in 35 U.S.C. § 284.
- D. That the damages be increased up to three times the amount found or assessed as provided in 35 U.S.C. § 284 for Suncast's willful infringement of United States Patent No. Re. 37,442.

- E. That Suncast be ordered to pay Ames the costs of this action and attorneys' fees.
- F. That Ames be awarded such further and additional relief as this Court may deem just and equitable.

**Demand For Jury Trial**

Plaintiff, Ames True Temper Inc. requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

STEVENS & LEE



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(19) **United States**  
 (12) **Reissued Patent**  
**Spear et al.**

(10) **Patent Number:** **US RE37,442 E**  
 (45) **Date of Reissued Patent:** **Nov. 13, 2001**

(54) **PORTABLE HOSE CART ASSEMBLY**

(75) **Inventors:** **Kenneth J. Spear, Vienna, WV (US);**  
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(73) **Assignee:** **Ames True Temper, Inc., Parkersburg,**  
**WV (US)**

(21) **Appl. No.:** **09/465,172**

(22) **Filed:** **Dec. 16, 1999**

**Related U.S. Patent Documents**

Reissue of:

(64) **Patent No.:** **5,794,649**  
**Issued:** **Aug. 18, 1998**  
**Appl. No.:** **08/724,668**  
**Filed:** **Oct. 1, 1996**

(51) **Int. Cl.:** **B65H 75/34**  
 (52) **U.S. Cl.:** **137/355.27; 137/580**  
 (58) **Field of Search:** **137/355.27, 580**

(56) **References Cited****U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS**

Re. 32,510	9/1987	Tisbo et al.	137/355.27
D. 381,375	7/1997	Spear et al.	
D. 392,080	3/1998	Tisbo et al.	
2,488,425	11/1949	Morrone	
2,512,756	6/1950	Wasserman	
4,137,939	2/1979	Chow	137/355.27
4,512,361	4/1985	Tisbo et al.	137/355.27
4,777,976	10/1988	Johnston et al.	137/355.27
5,007,598	4/1991	Spear et al.	137/355.27
5,046,520	9/1991	Sanchez, Jr. et al.	137/355.27
5,056,553	10/1991	Whitehead	137/355.27
5,381,981	1/1995	Nelson	137/355.27
5,425,391	6/1995	Tisbo et al.	137/355.27
5,657,789	8/1997	Tisbo et al.	137/355.27
5,704,384	1/1998	Tisbo et al.	137/355.27

**OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

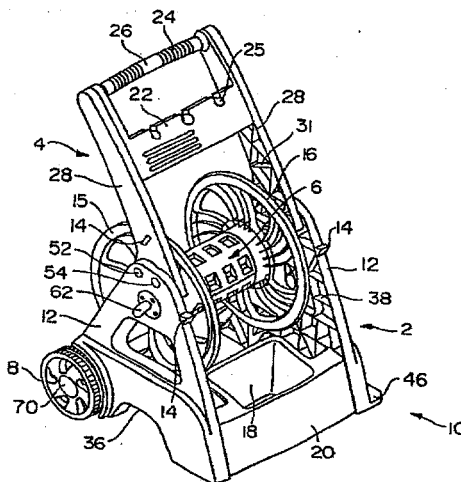
"Ames Full Line Catalog," Home/Farm/Industry Catalog  
 No. 950525, 1995.

*Primary Examiner*—A. Michael Chambers  
 (74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Pillsbury Winthrop LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

The objective of the present invention is to provide a portable hose cart assembly capable of stacking, yet having circular hose reel end flanges. The portable hose cart assembly utilizes a supporting frame structure constructed and arranged to be nested on top of a similar supporting frame structure. The supporting frame structure is also constructed and arranged such that a similar supporting frame structure can be nested on top of the supporting frame structure. A hose reel structure for receiving and supporting a length of hose is rotatably mounted within the supporting frame structure. Circular end flanges are fixed to the ends of the hose reel structure. A handle structure movable between a stacking position and an operating position is connected to the supporting frame structure. The handle structure has a locking mechanism such that the handle structure may be secured in the operating position. Wheel structures are connected to the supporting frame structure to allow for manual movement of the portable hose cart assembly. These structures are designed and assembled in a manner to allow a similar portable hose cart assembly to be stacked on top of the portable hose cart assembly in a nesting arrangement such that the circular end flanges of each portable hose cart assembly are closely spaced. Upwardly facing supporting surfaces of the portable hose cart assembly support the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of the similar portable hose cart assembly stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the portable hose cart assembly. A portable hose cart assembly with a tray structure located below the end flanges of the hose reel structure is further provided. The tray structure has a bottom wall with perforations and a peripheral wall extending upward from the bottom wall.

**22 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets**



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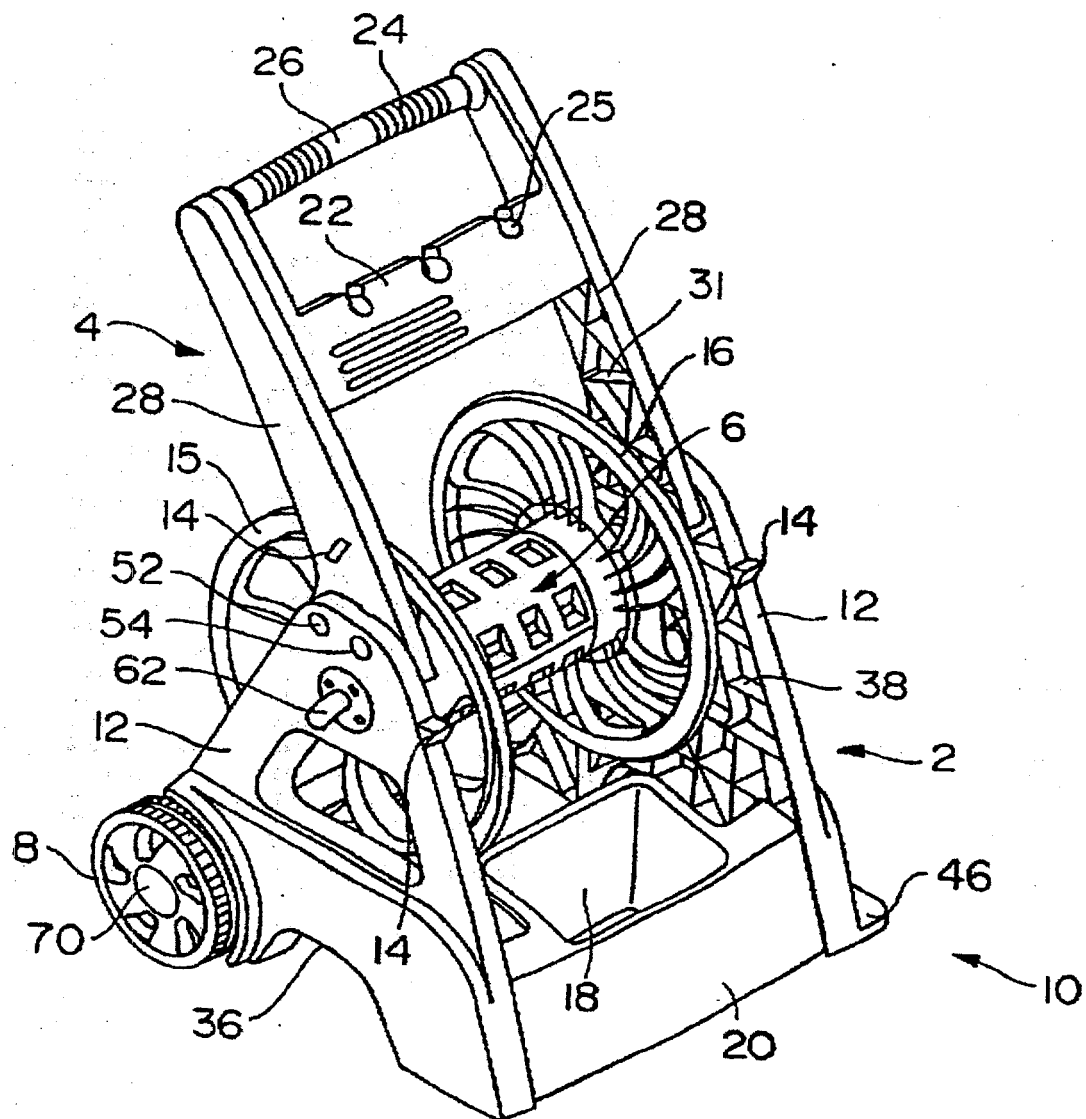


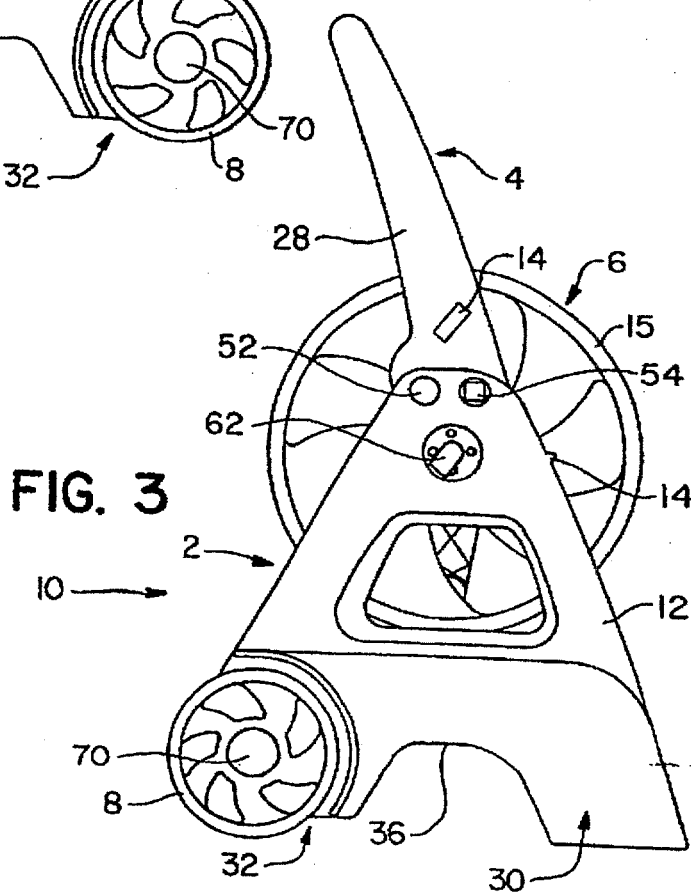
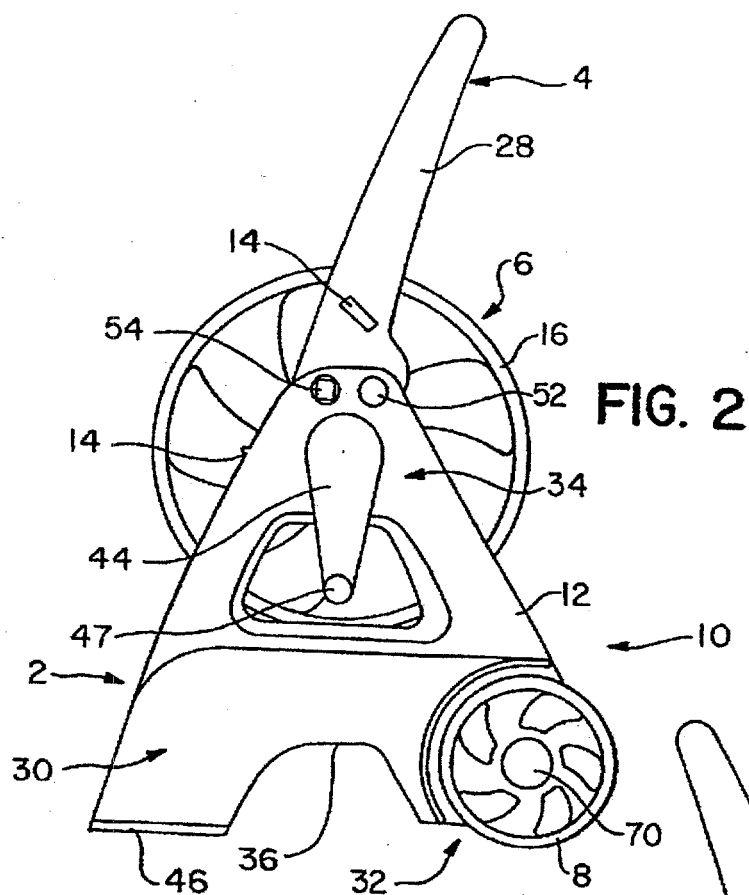
FIG. 1

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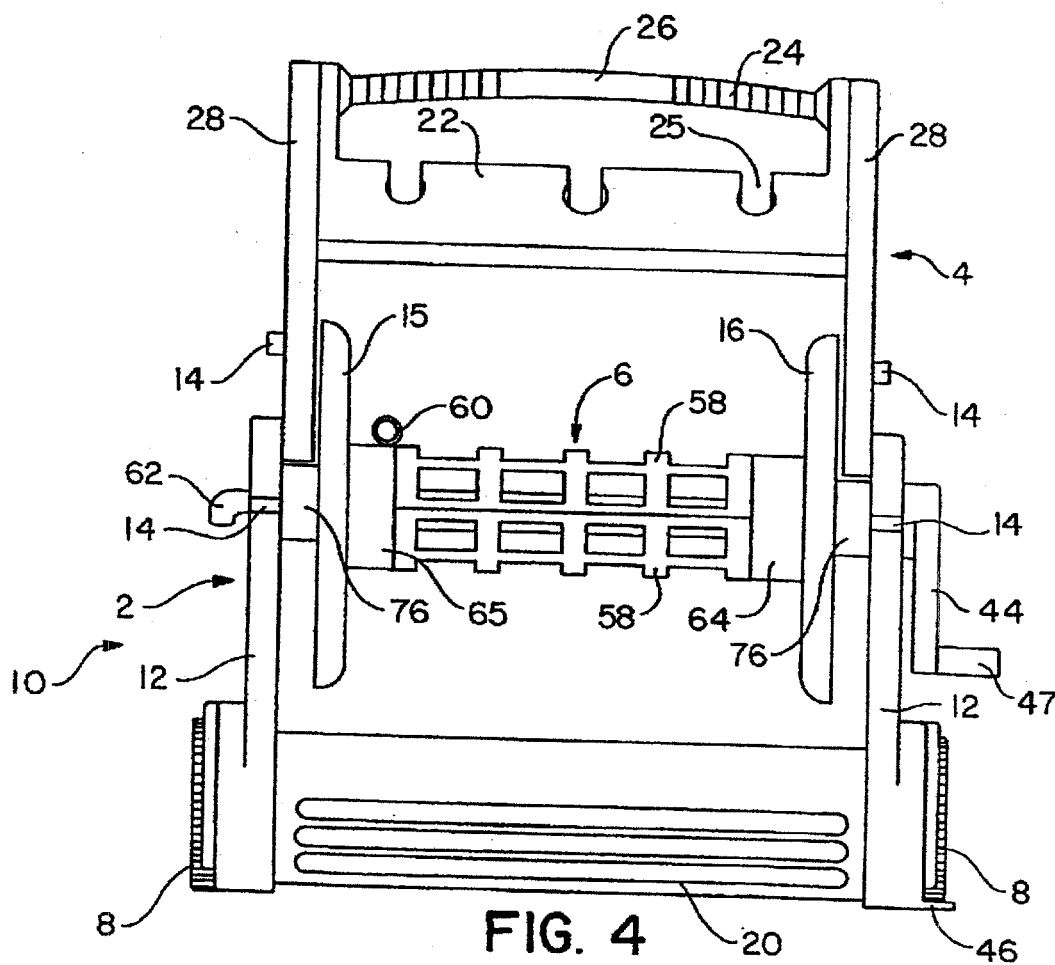


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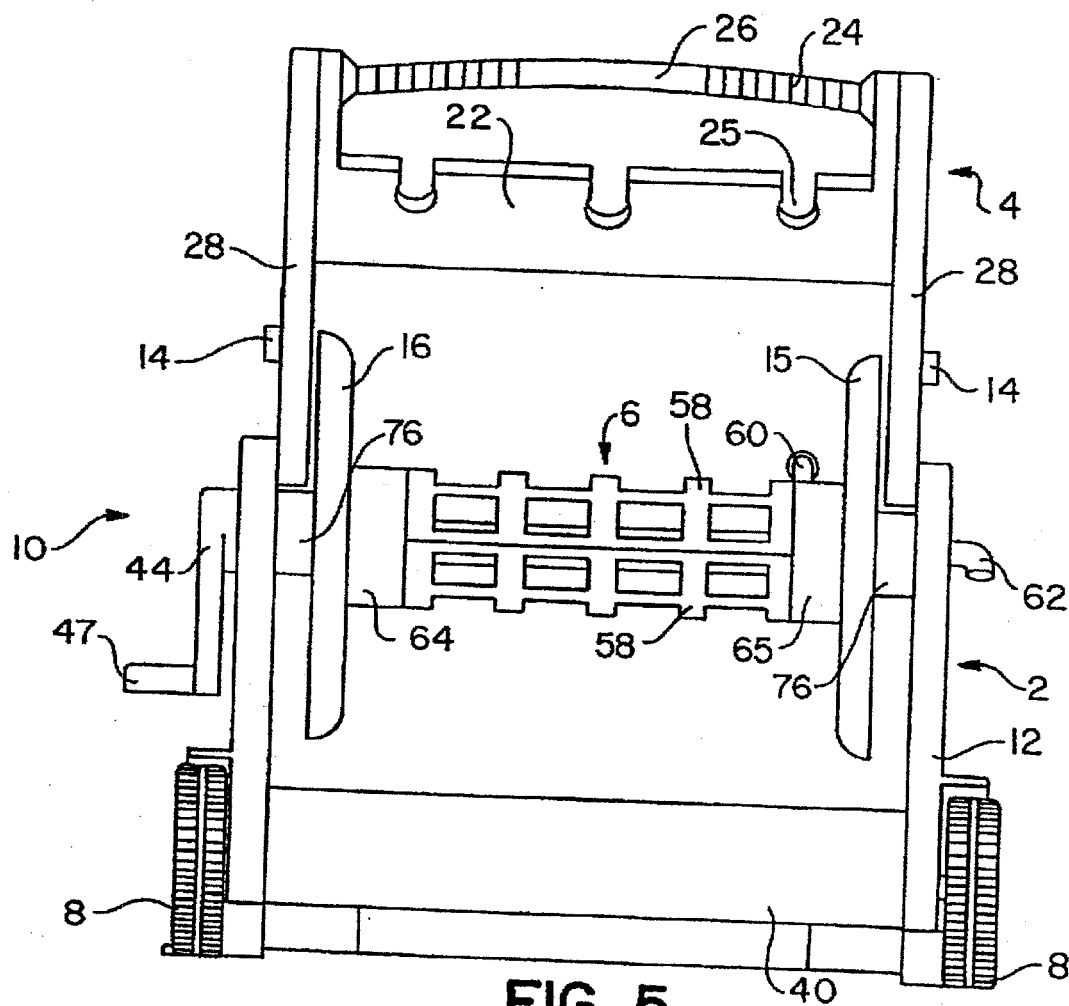


FIG. 5

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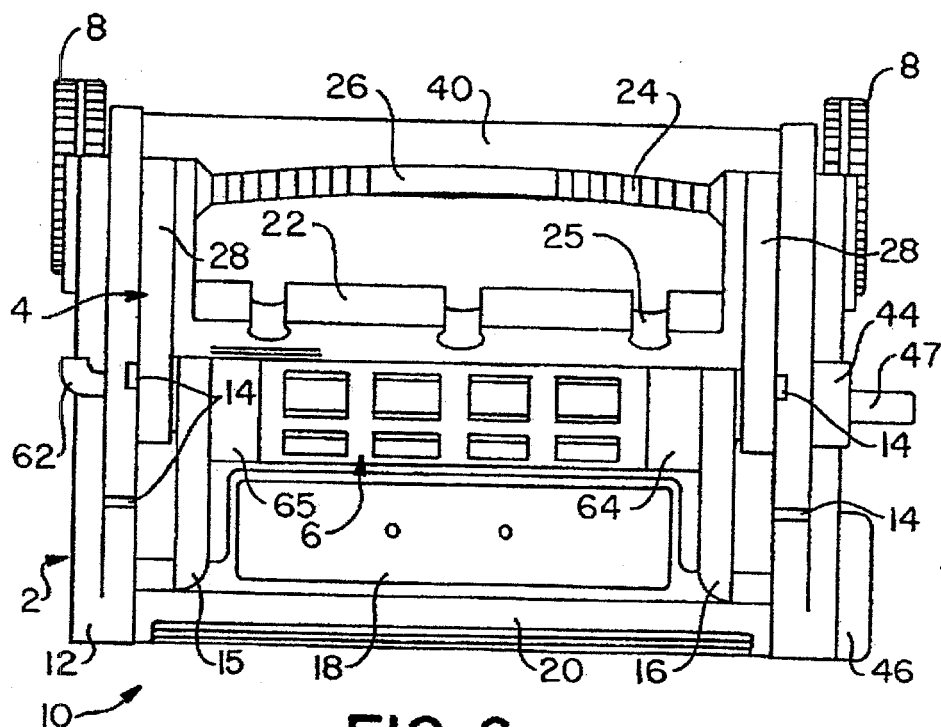


FIG. 6

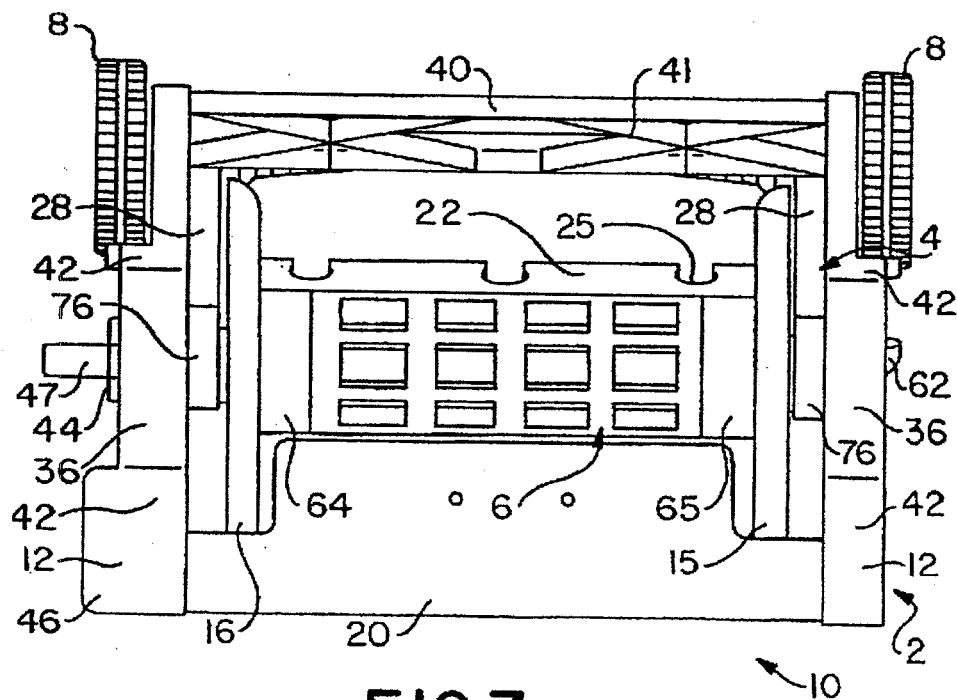


FIG. 7

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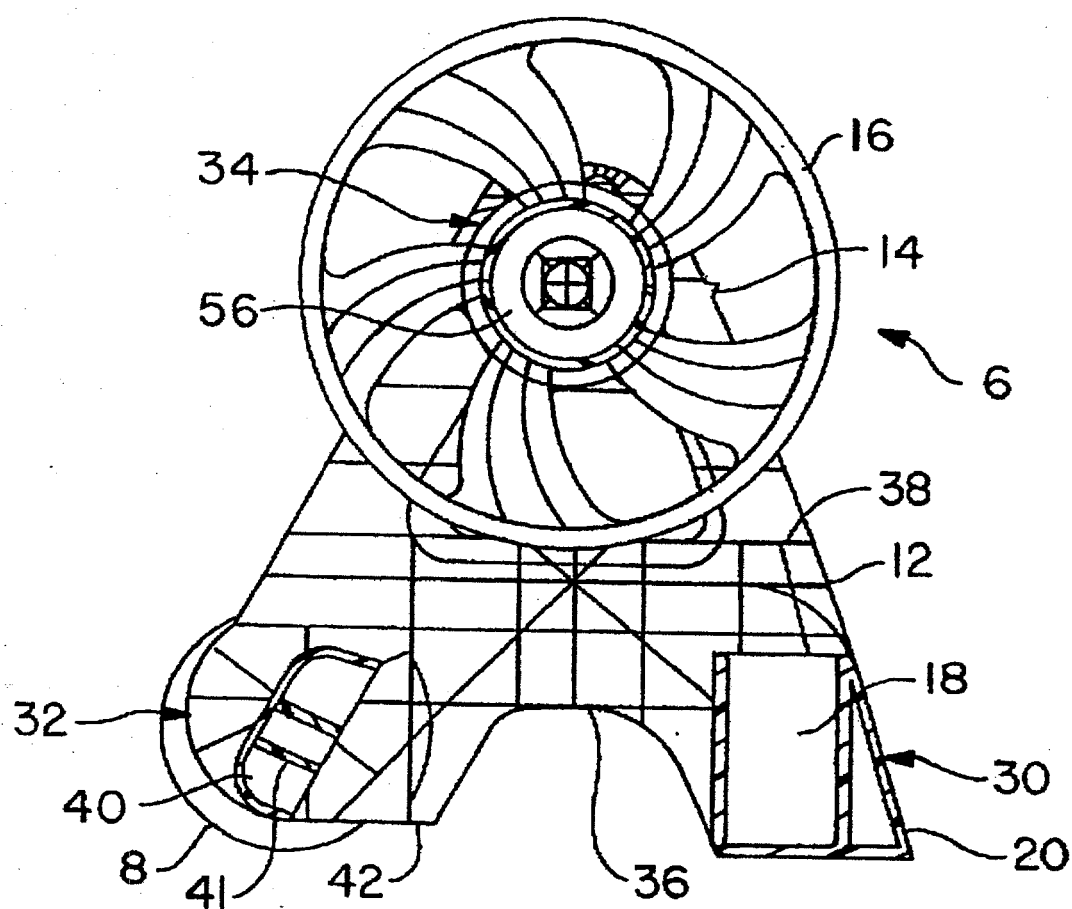


FIG. 8

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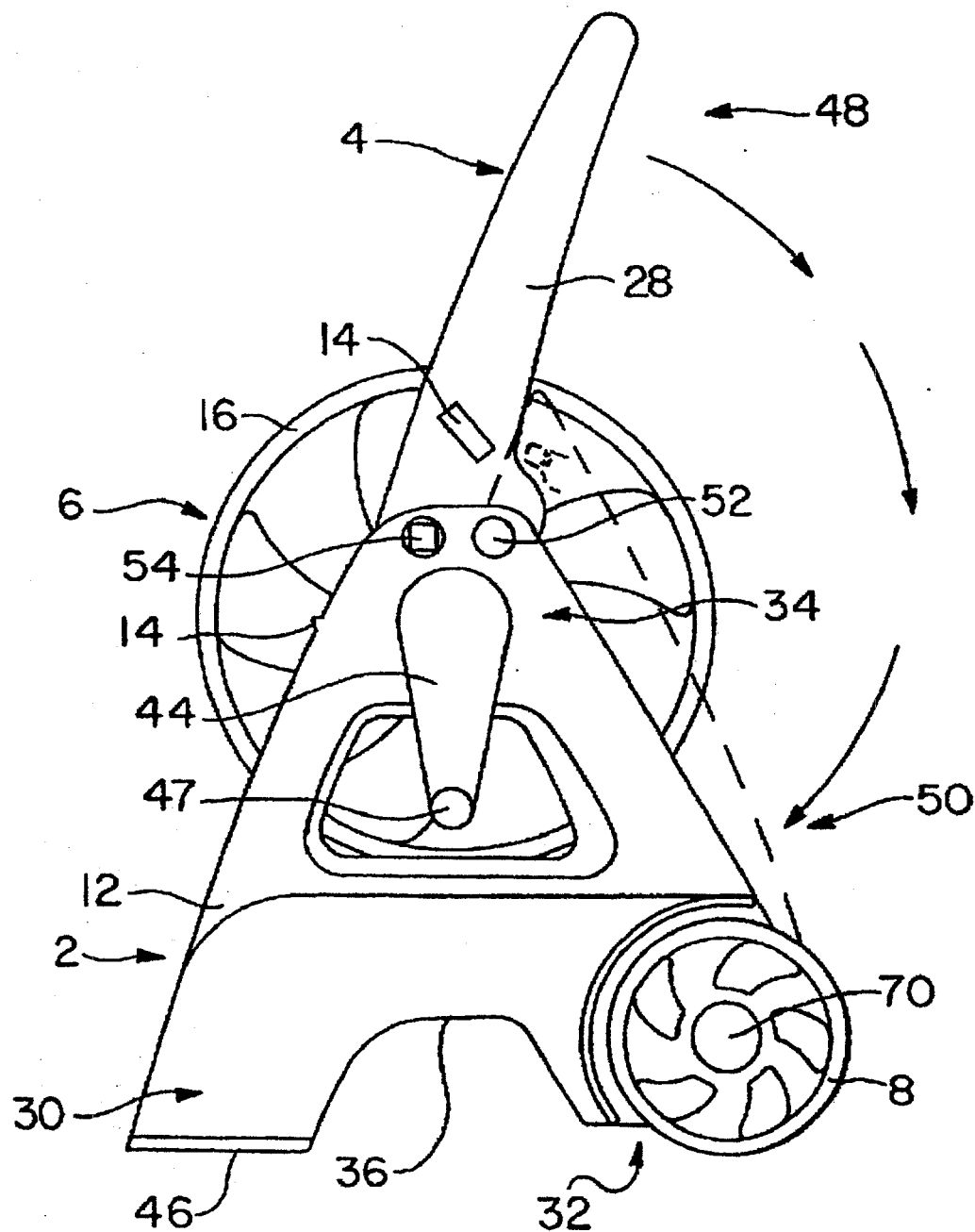


FIG. 9



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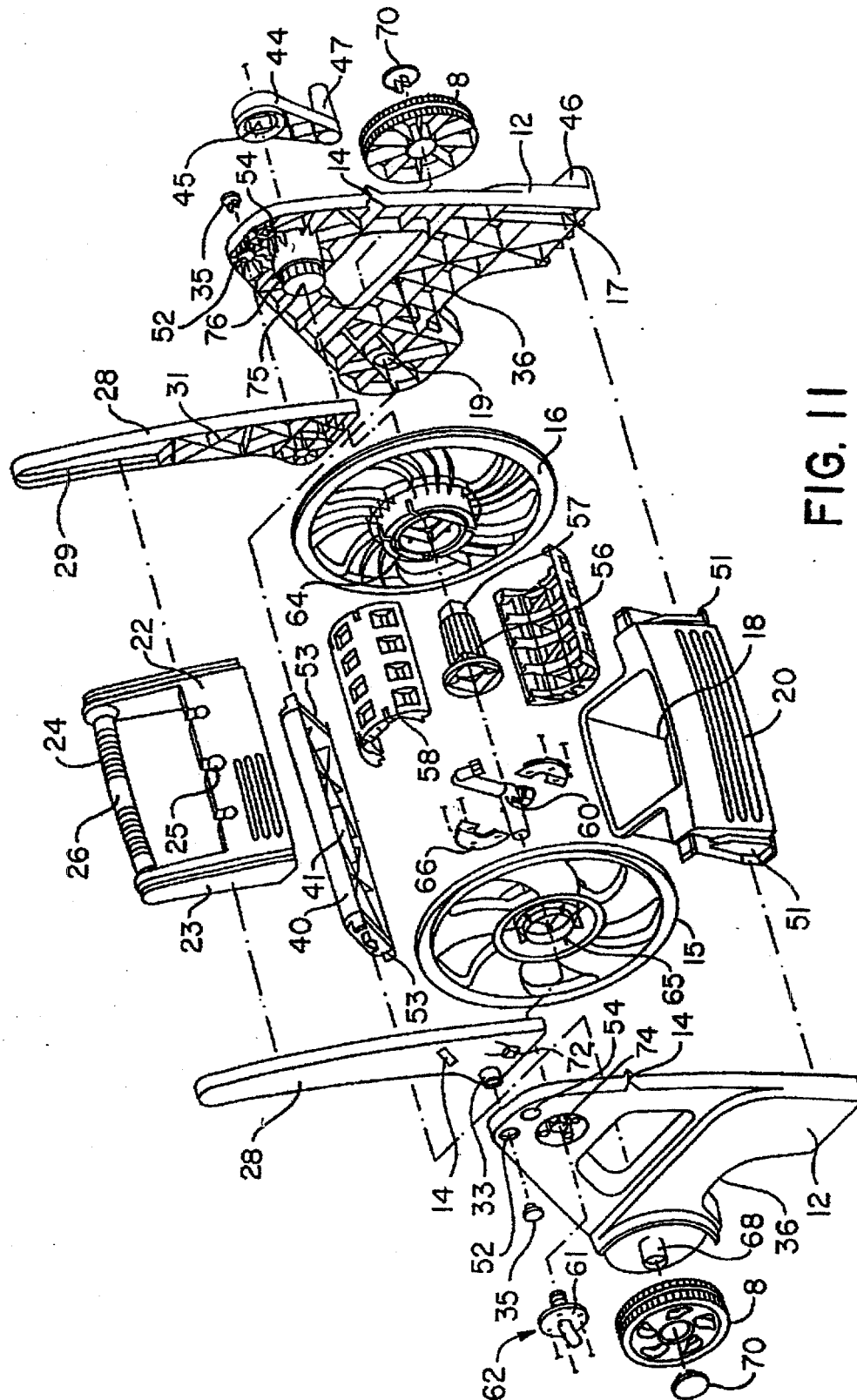


FIG. 11

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## PORTABLE HOSE CART ASSEMBLY

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [ ] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.

The present invention relates to hose carts and more particularly to hose carts of the portable type.

Portable hose carts have been commercially available for many years. Early portable hose cart designs utilized hose reels for receiving a coiled length of hose mounted within metal tubular frames. The metal frames were supported on wheels allowing them to be moved manually. Examples of these early portable hose carts are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,137,939, 2,512,756, and 2,488,425.

In recent years, frames and components made of molded plastic have been utilized to replace the metal frames and components of the earlier portable hose carts. Most plastic frames must be packaged unassembled and sent to retailers. Thus, the responsibility for assembly falls on either the retailer or the consumer. Examples of portable hose carts constructed of molded plastic are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,381,981, 5,056,553, and 5,007,598.

It is also known in the prior art to construct stackable portable hose carts that can be shipped and merchandised fully assembled. The sale of fully assembled portable hose cart obviates some problems associated with unassembled hose carts. For example, stackable hose carts reduce the inventory space occupied by an assembled hose cart. Also, consumers do not have to assemble a hose cart that is merchandised fully assembled.

One prior art reference, U.S. Pat. No. 5,425,391, discloses a hose cart that is capable of being shipped fully assembled. This reference teaches the use of a folding handle and a hose reel with oblong end flanges to permit stacking of multiple units. The irregular shape of a hose reel with oblong end flanges, however, makes it difficult to roll or unroll a length of hose. Lateral movement of the hose when unrolling it can cause the hose to extend over the shorter side of the oblong end flange. The hose can then become entangled with the higher side of the end flange as the hose reel rotates. This situation does not occur with circular end flanges because the edge of the flange is the same distance from the hose reel surface at any given point. The oblong end flanges, however, are vital to the '391 hose cart because the cart will not stack upon other such hose carts without the oblong end flanges.

The objective of the present invention is to provide a portable hose cart capable of stacking and nesting, yet having circular hose reel end flanges, thus obviating the problems of the prior art.

The present invention is a portable hose cart assembly comprising a supporting frame structure and a hose reel structure. The supporting frame structure is constructed and arranged to be nested on top of a similar supporting frame structure. The supporting frame structure is also constructed and arranged such that a similar supporting frame structure can nest on top of the supporting frame structure.

The hose reel structure has a surface for receiving a length of hose thereon. Circular end flanges are fixed to the end of the hose reel structure. The circular end flanges have a larger diameter than the hose reel structure surface. The hose reel structure is rotatably mounted within the supporting frame structure such that a portion of the circular end flanges are above the highest point of the supporting frame structure.

The portable hose cart assembly also comprises a handle structure and wheel structures. The handle structure con-

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nects to the supporting frame structure such that the handle structure can be moved from a stacking position, extending generally downwardly coextensive with respect to the supporting frame structure, to an operating position, extending upwardly from the supporting frame structure so that a hand grip portion is disposed above the circular end flanges. Also, the handle structure has a locking mechanism constructed and arranged to secure the handle structure in the operating position. The wheel structures connect to the supporting frame structure and are constructed and arranged to enable the portable hose cart assembly to be rolled manually by exerting force on the hand grip portion of the handle structure in the operating position.

These structures are constructed and arranged to allow a similar portable hose cart assembly to be stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the portable hose cart assembly with the handle structure in the stacking position and the supporting frame structure of the portable hose cart assembly in a nesting relation with the supporting frame structure of the similar hose cart assembly. When the portable hose cart assemblies are stacked, the circular end flanges of the portable cart assembly are closely spaced below the circular end flanges of the similar portable hose cart assembly.

These structures provide upwardly facing supporting surfaces constructed and arranged to support a similar portable hose cart assembly stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the portable hose cart assembly. In addition, these structures also provide downwardly facing stacking surfaces. The downwardly facing stacking surfaces are constructed and arranged to engage the supporting surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly when the portable hose cart assembly is stacked on top of the similar portable hose cart assembly with the handle thereof in a stacking position. Thus, the objective of providing a portable hose cart assembly capable of stacking and nesting, yet having circular hose reel end flanges, has been achieved.

Many of the patents relating to hose carts demonstrate the desirability of providing a tray structure on the cart to carry items related to gardening and lawn care including, but not limited to, such items as gloves, hose nozzles, weed killer, pesticide, and tools for digging. Two such prior art patents are U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,046,520 and 4,777,976. The '520 patent discloses a tray structure pivotally mounted within the handle. A tray structure located above the hose reel with a pivoting lid is taught in the '976 patent.

The carts disclosed in these patents are incapable of being stacked and all of the stackable carts heretofor proposed have not provided tray structures. Surprisingly, applicant has found that it is possible to incorporate a sizable tray structure on a stackable cart by positioning the tray structure in the lower portion of the hose cart. Applicant has also found that such placement presents advantages over the placement of the tray structure in the upper portion of the hose cart.

Placing a substantial amount of weight in the upper portion of the hose cart decreases the stability of the hose cart by raising its center of gravity. Because of this, tray structures located in the upper portion of the hose cart are unable to bear much weight. Another problem is that tray structures located above the hose reel tend to interfere with access to the hose and with the rolling and unrolling of the hose. Also, because the tray structure taught in the '520 patent is mounted on the handle, the dimensions of the tray structure are limited by the size and strength of the handle. Consequently, while the tray structure mounting of the present invention is shown as being preferably provided in a stackable hose cart, in its broadest aspect, the invention



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contemplates the placement of the tray structure in non-stackable hose carts as well.

Accordingly, it is a further object of the present invention to provide a cart having a tray structure which achieves the advantages indicated above. In accordance with the principles of the present invention, this objective is achieved by providing a portable hose cart assembly comprising a handle and frame structure and a hose reel structure. The hose reel structure has a surface for receiving a length of hose thereon. End flanges are fixed to the ends of the hose reel. Wheel structures connect to the handle and frame structure and are constructed and arranged to enable the portable hose cart assembly to be rolled manually. The present invention also has a tray structure located lower than the end flanges. The tray structure has a bottom wall with perforations thereon and a peripheral wall extending upwardly from the bottom wall. This tray structure is constructed and arranged to accommodate the carriage of items related to lawn care and gardening including, but not limited to, such items as gloves, hose nozzles, weed killer, pesticides, and tools for digging.

Thus, the objective of providing a portable hose cart assembly with a tray structure in the lower portion of the hose cart has been achieved. The principles of the present invention relating to the tray structure are applicable to portable hose carts and are not restricted to hose carts of the stackable and nestable type. Thus, the principles of the present invention may be applied to portable hose carts of the non-stackable variety, also.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the portable hose cart.

FIG. 2 is side view of the portable hose cart from the side with the hand crank.

FIG. 3 is a side view of the portable hose cart from the side with the water inlet pipe.

FIG. 4 is a front view of the portable hose cart.

FIG. 5 is a rear view of the portable hose cart.

FIG. 6 is a top view of the portable hose cart.

FIG. 7 is a bottom view of the portable hose cart.

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of FIG. 3 without the handle.

FIG. 9 is a side view from the side with the hand crank of the portable hose cart depicting the rotation of the handle.

FIG. 10 depicts two portable hose carts with the handles in the stacking positions wherein one hose cart is stacked upon the other.

FIG. 11 is an exploded view of the portable hose cart wherein the structural components of the hose cart can be seen.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring more particularly to the drawings, the preferred embodiment of the portable hose cart assembly 10 is shown in FIGS. 1-11. The major components of the portable hose cart assembly 10 include a supporting frame structure 2, a hose reel structure 6 rotatably mounted within the supporting frame structure 2, a foldable handle structure 4, wheel structures 8 allowing the portable hose cart assembly 10 to be rolled, upwardly facing supporting surfaces 14, and downwardly facing stacking surfaces 42.

The supporting frame structure 2 includes a pair of molded plastic side frames 12 shaped in a generally triangular configuration. Each side frame 12 is constructed from

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a single mold. The triangular shape gives the side frames 12 first 30, second 32, and third corner structures 34. The side frames 12 are generally mirror images with respect to each other.

Each side frame 12 includes a frame portion extending forwardly and downwardly from the third corner structure 34 to the first corner structure 30. A frame portion also extends rearwardly and downwardly from the third corner structure 34 to the second corner structure 32. A frame portion extending forwardly from the second corner structure 32 to the first corner structure 30 has an upward recess 36 in the center. Each recess 36 is formed to nest upon the third corner structure 34 of a similar side frame when stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of a similar portable hose cart assembly as shown in FIG. 10. Each of the side frame portions is of a generally channel-shaped configuration having strengthening ribs 38 in the interior as shown in FIG. 8. The channel-shaped configurations of the two side frames 12 open toward one another.

The first corner structure 30 of each side frame 12 has a socket structure 17 opening in a direction towards the corresponding socket structure on the other side frame 12. A socket structure 19 opening in a direction towards the corresponding socket structure on the other side frame 12 is also found on the second corner structure 32 of each side frame. The socket structures 17, 19 on the first and second corner structures 30, 32 are designed to receive and fit snugly the closed end portions 51, 53 of the transverse frame members 20, 40. The specific manner in which the transverse frame members 20, 40 fit snugly into the associated socket structures 17, 19 is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,007,598, which is hereby incorporated by reference into the present specification.

Molded plastic transverse members 20, 40 connect and separate the side frames 12 in parallel relation with each other. The transverse members 20, 40 are constructed in a generally channel-shaped configuration having strengthening ribs 41 in the interior as shown in FIG. 7. A box-shaped tray structure 18 with an open top and two perforations providing drainage is molded as part of the forward transverse member 20. The end portions 51, 53 of the transverse members 20, 40 and the associated socket structures 17, 19 have interengaging structures operable in response to the transverse movement of the end portion 51, 53 into the associated socket structure 17, 19. When all the end portions 51, 53 are retained in snugly fitting relation with the associated socket structures 17, 19, with the channel-shaped configuration of the transverse members 20, 40 open generally toward each other, the side frames 12 and the transverse members 20, 40 constitute a supporting frame structure 2 having a tray structure 18 within the supporting frame structure 2 and below the circular end flanges 15, 16 of the hose reel structure 6.

Each second corner structure 32 has a shaft 68 extending outward from the side frame 12. The shaft 68 is designed for attaching wheel structures 8 to the second corner structure 32. The wheel structures 8 are made of molded plastic with a hole through the center allowing them to be rotatably mounted upon the shafts 68. The wheel structures 8 are retained on the shaft 68 by suitable end caps 70 that attach to the ends of the shafts 68. The second corner structure 30 located on the same side as the hand crank structure 44 also has a platform 46 integral with the side frame 12 extending sideways from the bottom. When using the hand crank structure 44 to turn the hose reel structure 6, the user places his foot on the platform 46 in order to keep the forward portion of the portable hose cart assembly 10 in contact with the ground.

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The third corner structure 34 of each side frame 12 has a hole 74, 75 through its center. On the inside of each side frame 12 the hole 74, 75 extends through a hub 76. The hub 76 extends perpendicularly inward from the side frame 12. The hole 74, 75 and hub 76 on each third corner structure 34 are used to rotatably mount the hose reel structure 6.

Another circular hole 52 on each third corner structure 34 is located above and rearward of the hole 74, 75 used to rotatably mount the hose reel structure 6. As shown in FIG. 11, this circular hole 52 is designed to receive a shaft 33 extending from the handle structure 4, thereby rotatably mounting the handle structure 4. Each third corner structure 34 also has one other circular hole 54 located above and forward of the hole 74, 75 used for rotatably mounting the hose reel structure 6. This hole 54 is circular throughout, but has a square opening on the inner wall of the third corner structure 34. The square opening engages with the locking mechanism 72 located on the handle structure 4 to secure the handle structure 4 in the operating position 48. The circular opening is necessary so that users can access and manually disengage the locking mechanism 72 in order to fold the handle structure 4 down to the stacking position 50.

The handle structure 4 is made of two molded plastic side legs 28 and a single molded plastic transverse member 22. The side legs 28 are mirror images of each other and constructed in a generally channel-shaped configuration having strengthening ribs 31 on the interior. Socket structures 29 are located on the ribbed surface of the side legs 28. The transverse member 22 is formed by blow molding, which gives it a hollow center area with closed end portions 23. A tubular hand grip portion 26 of the transverse member 22 extends along the top of the transverse member 22 between the ends of the two side legs 28. This hand grip portion 26, intended to be the surface engaged by the user when moving the portable hose cart assembly 10, has a pattern 24 formed in the plastic to facilitate gripping. The transverse member 22 also has notches 25 designed to hold hose ends.

The closed end portions 23 of the transverse member 22 and the associated socket structures 29 have interengaging structures operable in response to the transverse movement of the closed end portions 23 of the transverse member 22 into the associated socket structures 29. When the closed end portions 23 of the transverse member 22 are fit snugly within the side leg socket structures 29, the handle structure 4 is thereby formed.

The side legs 28 of the handle structure 4 each have a shaft 33 located near the end opposite the socket structures 29 as shown in FIG. 11. The handle structure 4 is rotatably mounted, offset to the inside of the supporting frame structure 2, by inserting each shaft 33 into the aforementioned corresponding hole 52 located on the third corner structure 34. An end cap 35 engages the end of each shaft 33 in order to secure the shaft 33 within the hole 52.

The handle structure 4 has two positions as shown in FIG. 9. When the handle structure 4 is in the operating position 48, the hand grip portion 26 is elevated higher than the circular end flanges 15, 16. When the handle structure 4 is in the stacking position 50, the handle structure 4 is folded down such that it is coextensive with and inside the supporting frame structure 2.

A locking mechanism 72 is located on each side leg 28 directly forward of the shaft 33 when the handle structure 4 is in the operating position 48. Preferably, this locking mechanism 72 is designed as a tab, located on the side leg 28, with a generally square structure protruding outward

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from it. As the handle structure 4 is rotated from the folded stacking position 50 to the operating position 48, the locking mechanism 72 is folded backwards into the side leg 28 as the generally square protrusion touches the side frame 12. The locking mechanism 72 stays in this position until the handle structure 4 has been rotated such that the square protrusion has reached the hole 54 on the third corner structure 34 with the square opening on the inside. When the square protrusion has reached the square opening, the locking mechanism 72 unfolds into its original shape and the square protrusion fits into the square opening on the third corner structure 34. Thus, the handle structure 4 is secured in the operating position 48. The locking mechanism 72 is disengaged by pushing into the hole 54 and forcing the locking mechanism 72 out of the square opening and folding the handle structure 4 down into the stacking position 50.

A hand crank structure 44 turns the hose reel structure 6. The molded plastic hand crank structure 44 has a handle 47 and a socket structure 45. The socket structure 45 has a square shape within which the end of a rotatable shaft 56 forming a part of the hose reel structure 6 is received. A fastener fixes the hand crank structure 44 to the rotatable shaft 56.

Preferably, the hose reel structure 6 utilizes two semi-cylindrical hub sections 58, two circular end flanges 15, 16, a water outlet pipe 60, a rotatable, fluid connection between the inlet pipe 62 and the outlet pipe 60, and a rotatable shaft 56. The specific manner in which the hose reel structure is assembled is taught in U.S. Pat. No. 5,007,598.

The circular end flanges 15, 16 are made of molded plastic with a hub section 64, 65 and spokes extending outward to a circular rim. The diameter of the circular end flanges 15, 16 is great enough that when the hose reel structure 6 is rotatably mounted within the supporting frame structure 2, a portion of the circular end flanges 15, 16 is above the highest point of the supporting frame structure 2. A notch on the hub 65 section on the inlet-side end flange 15 allows the water outlet pipe 60 to be rotated fixedly with the hose reel structure 6. The inlet-side end flange 15 also has a circular opening allowing it to be rotatably mounted on a hub 76 extending inward from the side frame 12. The crank-side end flange 16 has a circular opening in the hub 64 allowing it to be rotatably mounted on a hub 76 extending inward from the side frame 12. The inside of the crank-side end flange 16 has a squared opening designed to receive the squared base of the rotatable shaft 56.

The semi-cylindrical hub sections 58 are made of molded plastic and designed to interlock with each other and form a cylindrical hub section. They are also designed to engage with the inside hub 64, 65 surfaces of the circular end flanges 15, 16 in order to form the hose reel structure 6. This cylindrical hub section is responsible for bearing the coiled length of hose. Thus, the hose reel structure 6 is designed to be capable of bearing the load of a substantial length of hose and to have a surface capable of engaging the hose as the hose reel structure 6 is rotated.

A rotatable shaft 56 of molded plastic is used to engage the circular end flange 16 and the hand crank structure 44, thereby rotating the hose reel structure 6 as the hand crank structure 44 is turned. The rotatable shaft 56 is cylindrical with a square end 57 for engaging the hand crank structure 44 and a square base for engaging the crank-side end flange 16.

The inlet-side end flange 15 is first rotatably mounted on the hub 76 extending inward from the inlet-side side frame 12. The water outlet pipe 60 is rotatably mounted by fluidly

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connecting it to the water inlet pipe 62 and aligning it in the notch on the inlet-side end flange 15. A two-piece gasket 66, secured by fasteners to the hub 76 extending inward from the inlet-side side frame 12, holds the outlet pipe 60 in connection with the inlet pipe 62. The gasket 66 also secures the inlet-side end flange 15 to the hub 76 extending inward from the side frame 12, but allows the inlet-side end flange 15 to rotate freely.

The two semi-cylindrical hub sections 58 are joined together to form a cylindrical hub section. This cylindrical hub section engages the inlet-side end flange 15 such that the center line of the cylindrical hub section is perpendicular to the end flange 15. The base of the rotatable shaft 56 is engaged with the squared opening in the crank-side end flange 16. The crank-side end flange 16, now engaged with the rotatable shaft, is joined to the end of the cylindrical hub section and rotatably mounted on the hub 76 extending inward from the crank-side side frame 12. By engaging the squared end 57 of the rotatable shaft 56 with the squared socket structure 45 of the hand crank 44 and securing it thereto with a fastener, the hose reel structure 6 is rotatably mounted within the supporting frame structure 2 with a portion of the circular end flanges 15, 16 above the highest point of the supporting frame structure 2.

Water flows from a water source through the inlet 62 and outlet pipes 60. The inlet pipe 62 is formed of molded plastic and has a ninety-degree bend near one end and a flange 61 near the bend. The end opposite the bend and flange 61 has ribs allowing it to create a seal when inserted into the outlet pipe 60. The inlet pipe 62 fits in the hole 74 in the third corner structure 34 of the inlet-side side frame 12, and extends into the hub 76 on which the hose reel structure 6 is rotatably mounted. Fasteners attaching the flange 61 to the inlet-side side frame 12 secure the inlet pipe 62 in a fixed position. A flexible hose can be secured by a clamp to the end of the inlet pipe 62 with the ninety degree bend. This hose can then be connected to a water supply.

The outlet pipe 60 is mounted in the notch on the inlet-side end flange 15. One end is rotatably and fluidly connected to the inlet pipe 62 by inserting the ribbed end of the inlet pipe 62 into the receiving end of the outlet pipe 60. A hose can be connected to the male connection found on the end of the outlet pipe 60. A ninety degree bend in the outlet pipe 60 allows the receiving end of the outlet pipe 60 to be fluidly and rotatably connected with the inlet pipe 62 while the end with the male connection extends radially from the surface of the hose reel structure 6. This arrangement allows the outlet pipe 60 to rotate fixedly with the hose reel structure surface. The outlet pipe 60 also bends near the end with the male connector to facilitate connection with a hose.

In the presently preferred embodiment of the invention, upwardly facing supporting surfaces 14 are located on the forward edge of each side frame 12 and on the outside of the handle leg 28. The location of the supporting surfaces 14 on the handle legs 28 is such that the supporting surfaces 14 are aligned horizontally with the supporting surfaces 14 on the side frames 12 when the handle structure 4 is folded down in the stacking position 50. The supporting surfaces 14 are ridges extending perpendicularly from the component surface and integrally formed with the component on which each is located. The ridges are aligned such that they support the weight of a similar portable hose cart assembly 11 stacked on top of the portable hose cart assembly 10 as shown in FIG. 10.

The downwardly facing stacking surfaces 42 are those surfaces on the bottom of the portable hose cart assembly

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that rest upon the supporting surfaces 14 of a similar portable hose cart assembly 11 when the portable hose cart assembly 10 is stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the similar hose cart assembly. These downwardly facing stacking surfaces are best shown in FIG. 7.

To stack the portable hose cart assemblies 10, 11 the handle structure 4 is folded down to the stacking position 50. As shown in FIG. 10, a top portable hose cart assembly 11 is aligned above a bottom portable hose cart assembly 10 such that when the top portable hose cart assembly 11 is lowered, the recess 36 formed in the frame portion between the first 30 and second corner structures 32 of the top portable hose cart assembly 11 will nest upon the third corner structure 34 of the bottom portable hose cart assembly 10. When the top portable hose cart assembly 11 is stacked and the recessed portion 36 is nested on the third corner structure 34 of the bottom portable hose cart assembly 10, the upwardly facing supporting surfaces 14 on the bottom portable hose cart assembly 10 support the downwardly facing stacking surfaces 42 on the bottom of the top portable hose cart assembly 11. The circular end flanges 15, 16 of the bottom portable hose cart assembly 10 are closely spaced below the circular end flanges 15, 16 of the top portable hose cart assembly 11. Thus, the difference in height between a portable hose cart assembly 10 and two portable hose cart assemblies 10, 11 stacked together is slightly greater than the diameter of the circular end flanges 15, 16.

Thus, the object of providing a portable hose cart assembly 10 of such a design that it can be stacked in a nesting arrangement as shown in FIG. 10 and still utilize a hose reel structure 6 with circular end flanges 15, 16, has been realized. Also, the object of providing a portable hose cart assembly 10 with a tray structure 18 located below the end flanges 15, 16 of the hose reel structure 6 has been accomplished.

Any United States patent applications or patents mentioned or cited hereinabove are hereby incorporated by reference into the present specification.

It will thus be seen that the objects of this invention have been fully and effectively accomplished. It will be realized, however, that the foregoing preferred specific embodiments have been shown and described for the purpose of illustrating the functional and structural principles of this invention and is subject to change without departure from such principles. Therefore, this invention includes all modifications encompassed within the spirit and scope of the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A portable hose cart assembly comprising:

a supporting frame structure constructed and arranged to be nested on top of a similar supporting frame structure;

said supporting frame structure constructed and arranged such that a similar supporting frame structure nests on top of said supporting frame structure;

a hose reel structure having a surface for receiving a length of coiled hose thereon;

said hose reel structure having circular end flanges;

said circular end flanges being fixed to the ends of said hose reel structure;

said circular end flanges having a diameter larger than that of the hose reel structure surface;

said hose reel structure being rotatably mounted within said supporting frame structure such that a portion of

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the said circular end flanges are above the highest point of said supporting frame structure;

a handle structure connected to said supporting frame structure such that said handle structure can be moved from a stacking position extending generally downwardly coextensive with respect to said supporting frame structure *to an operating position extending upwardly from said supporting frame structure* so that a hand grip portion is disposed above said circular end flanges;

said handle structure having a locking mechanism constructed and arranged to secure said handle structure in said operating position;

wheel structures connected to said supporting frame structure constructed and arranged to enable said portable hose cart assembly to be rolled manually by exerting force on the hand grip portion of said handle structure in said operating position;

said structures being constructed and arranged to allow a similar portable hose cart assembly to be stacked on top of said portable hose cart assembly with said handle structure in said stacking position and said supporting frame structure of said portable hose cart assembly in a nesting relation with the supporting frame structure of the similar portable hose cart assembly such that said circular end flanges of said portable hose cart assembly are closely spaced below the circular end flanges of the similar portable hose cart assembly;

said structures providing upwardly facing supporting surfaces constructed and arranged to support a similar portable hose cart assembly stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of said portable hose cart assembly;

said structures providing downwardly facing stacking surfaces constructed and arranged to engage the upwardly facing supporting surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly when said portable hose cart assembly is stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the similar hose cart assembly with the handle structure thereof in a stacking position;

wherein said upwardly facing supporting surfaces of said portable hose cart assembly when engaged by the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly determine that said circular end flanges of said portable hose cart assembly are closely spaced below the circular end flanges of the similar portable hose cart assembly.

2. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 wherein said upwardly facing supporting surfaces are ridges extending from said support frame structure positioned such that the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly engage said upwardly facing supporting surfaces when the similar portable hose cart assembly is stacked on top of said portable hose cart assembly.

3. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 wherein said supporting frame structure comprises side frame structures and transverse member structures;

said side frame structures and said transverse member structures constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structures engage with said side frame structures to form said supporting frame structure.

4. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 wherein said structures are made of plastic.

5. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 wherein said handle structure comprises side leg structures and a transverse member structure having a hand grip portion;

said side leg structures and transverse member structure being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structure engages with said side leg structures to form said handle structure.

6. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 having a water inlet pipe and a water outlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe rotating fixedly with the surface of said hose reel structure;

one end of said water outlet pipe being fluidly and rotatably connected to said water inlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe having a male connector on the end not fluidly connected to said inlet pipe;

said male connector being constructed and arranged such that a hose can be connected to said outlet pipe;

said inlet pipe having a source connector constructed and arranged such that said inlet pipe can be connected to a water source;

said source connector being located on the inlet pipe end not fluidly connected to said outlet pipe.

7. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 having a crank handle structure;

said crank handle structure engaging said hose reel structure;

said crank handle structure constructed and arranged such that manually turning said crank handle structure rotates said hose reel structure.

8. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 1 wherein said supporting frame structure includes a tray structure;

said tray structure being mounted lower than said circular end flanges;

said tray structure having a bottom wall with perforations;

said tray structure having a peripheral wall extending upwardly from said bottom wall;

said tray structure constructed and arranged to accommodate the carriage of items used in gardening and lawn care;

said tray structure constructed and arranged to allow said portable hose cart assembly to be stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of a similar portable hose cart assembly with the handle structure thereof in a stacking position such that said circular end flanges of said portable hose cart assembly are closely spaced above the circular end flanges of the similar portable hose cart assembly.

9. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8 wherein said upwardly facing supporting surfaces are ridges positioned such that the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly engage said upwardly facing supporting surfaces when the similar portable hose cart assembly is stacked on top of said portable hose cart assembly.

10. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8 wherein said supporting frame structure comprises side frame structures and transverse member structures;

said side frame structures and said transverse member structures constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structures engage with said side frame structures to form said supporting frame structure.

11. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8 wherein said structures are made of plastic.

12. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8 wherein said handle structure comprises side leg structures and a transverse member structure having a hand grip portion;

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said side leg structures and transverse member structure being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structure engages with said side leg structures to form said handle structure.

13. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8 5  
having a water inlet pipe and a water outlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe rotating fixedly with the surface of said hose reel structure;

one end of said water outlet pipe being fluidly and rotatably connected to said water inlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe having a male connector on the end not fluidly connected to said inlet pipe;

said male connector being constructed and arranged such that a hose can be connected to said outlet pipe;

said inlet pipe having a source connector constructed and arranged such that said inlet pipe can be connected to a water source;

said source connector being located on the inlet pipe end not fluidly connected to said outlet pipe.

14. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8  
having a crank handle structure;

said crank handle structure engaging said hose reel structure;

said crank handle structure constructed and arranged such that manually turning said crank handle structure rotates said hose reel structure.

15. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 8  
wherein said tray structure is integrally formed with a transverse member of said supporting frame structure.

[16. A portable hose cart assembly comprising:

a handle and frame structure;

a hose reel structure for receiving a length of coiled hose thereon;

said hose reel structure being rotatably mounted within said handle and frame structure;

said hose reel structure having end flanges;

wheel structures connected to said handle and frame structure constructed and arranged to enable said portable hose cart assembly to be rolled manually;

a tray structure being mounted on said handle and frame structure, said tray structure being disposed lower than said end flanges when said portable hose cart assembly is assembled and said wheel structures are engaged with the ground such that said portable hose cart assembly is in an upright position wherein said hose reel structure is disposed above said wheel structures; said tray structure having a bottom wall with perforations;

said tray structure having a peripheral wall extending upwardly from said bottom wall;

said tray structure being constructed and arranged to accommodate the carriage of items used in gardening and lawn care.]

[17. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 wherein said tray structure being integrally formed with a transverse member of said handle and frame structure.]

[18. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 wherein said structures are made of plastic.]

[19. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 wherein said handle and frame structure comprises a handle structure and a frame structure;

said handle structure not being formed integrally with said frame structure;

said handle structure connected to said frame structure.]

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[20. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 19 wherein said frame structure comprises side frame structures and transverse member structures;

said side frame structures and said transverse member structures being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structures engage with said side frame structures to form said frame structure.]

[21. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 19 wherein said handle structure comprises side leg structures and a transverse member structure having a hand grip portion;

said side leg structures and transverse member structure being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structure engages with said side leg structures to form said handle structure.]

[22. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 19 wherein said tray structure is integrally formed with a transverse member structure.]

[23. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 having a crank handle structure;

said crank handle structure engaging said hose reel structure;

said crank handle structure constructed and arranged such that manually turning said crank handle structure rotates said hose reel structure.]

[24. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 having a water inlet pipe and a water outlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe rotating fixedly with the surface of said hose reel structure;

one end of said water outlet pipe being fluidly and rotatably connected to said water inlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe having a male connector on the end not fluidly connected to said inlet pipe;

said male connector being constructed and arranged such that a hose can be connected to said outlet pipe;

said inlet pipe having a source connector constructed and arranged such that said inlet pipe can be connected to a water source;

said source connector being located on the inlet pipe end not fluidly connected to said outlet pipe.]

[25. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 16 wherein said handle and frame structure comprises a handle structure and a frame structure;

said frame structure being constructed and arranged to be nested with a similar frame structure;

said handle structure connected to said frame structure such that said handle structure can be moved from a stacking position extending generally downwardly coextensive with respect to said frame structure to an operating position extending upwardly from said frame structure so that a hand grip portion is disposed above said end flanges;

said handle structure having a locking mechanism constructed and arranged to secure said handle structure in said operating position;

said structures being constructed and arranged to allow a similar portable hose cart assembly to be stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of said portable hose cart assembly with said handle structure in said stacking position and said frame structure of said portable hose cart assembly and the frame structure of the similar portable hose cart in a nesting relation;

said structures providing upwardly facing support surfaces constructed and arranged to support a similar

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portable hose cart assembly stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of said portable hose cart assembly; said structures providing downwardly facing stacking surfaces constructed and arranged to engage the upwardly facing supporting surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly when said portable hose cart assembly is stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of the similar portable hose cart assembly with the handle structure thereof in a stacking position.]

[26. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said upwardly facing supporting surfaces are ridges positioned such that the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly engage said upwardly facing supporting surfaces when the similar portable hose cart assembly is stacked on top of said portable hose cart assembly.]

[27. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said supporting frame structure comprises side frame structures and transverse member structures;

said side frame structures and said transverse member structures constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structures engage with said side frame structures to form said supporting frame structure.]

[28. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said structures are made of plastic.]

[29. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said handle structure comprises side leg structures and a transverse member structure having a hand grip portion;

said side leg structures and transverse member structure being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structure engages with said side leg structures to form said handle structure.]

[30. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 having a water inlet pipe and a water outlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe rotating fixedly with the surface of said hose reel structure;

one end of said water outlet pipe being fluidly and rotatably connected to said water inlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe having a male connector on the end not fluidly connected to said inlet pipe;

said male connector being constructed and arranged such that a hose can be connected to said outlet pipe;

said inlet pipe having a source connector constructed and arranged such that said inlet pipe can be connected to a water source;

said source connector being located on the inlet pipe end not fluidly connected to said outlet pipe.]

[31. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 having a crank handle structure;

said crank handle structure engaging said hose reel structure;

said crank handle structure constructed and arranged such that manually turning said crank handle structure rotates said hose reel structure.]

[32. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said tray structure is integrally formed with a transverse member of said frame structure.]

[33. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 25 wherein said end flanges are circular;

said circular end flanges having a diameter larger than that of said hose reel structure.]

[34. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 33 wherein said hose reel is rotatably mounted within said

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frame structure such that a portion of said circular end flanges are above the highest point of said frame structure.]

[35. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 34 wherein said structures are constructed and arranged to allow a similar portable hose cart assembly to be stacked in a nesting arrangement on top of said portable hose cart assembly with said handle structure in said stacking position and said frame structure of said portable hose cart assembly and the frame structure of a similar portable hose cart assembly in a nesting relation such that said circular end flanges are closely spaced below the end flanges of the similar portable hose cart assembly.]

[36. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 wherein said upwardly facing supporting surfaces are ridges positioned such that the downwardly facing stacking surfaces of a similar portable hose cart assembly engage said upwardly facing supporting surfaces when the similar portable hose cart assembly is stacked on top of said portable hose cart assembly.]

[37. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 wherein said supporting frame structure comprises side frame structures and transverse member structures;

said side frame structures and said transverse member structures constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structures engage with said side frame structures to form said supporting frame structure.]

[38. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 wherein said structures are made of plastic.]

[39. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 wherein said handle structure comprises side leg structures and a transverse member structure having a hand grip portion;

said side leg structures and transverse member structure being constructed and arranged such that said transverse member structure engages with said side leg structures to form said handle structure.]

[40. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 having a water inlet pipe and a water outlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe rotating fixedly with the surface of said hose reel structure;

one end of said water outlet pipe being fluidly and rotatably connected to said water inlet pipe;

said water outlet pipe having a male connector on the end not fluidly connected to said inlet pipe;

said male connector being constructed and arranged such that a hose can be connected to said outlet pipe;

said inlet pipe having a source connector constructed and arranged such that said inlet pipe can be connected to a water source;

said source connector being located on the inlet pipe end not fluidly connected to said outlet pipe.]

[41. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 having a crank handle structure;

said crank handle structure engaging said hose reel structure;

said crank handle structure constructed and arranged such that manually turning said crank handle structure rotates said hose reel structure.]

[42. A portable hose cart assembly as defined in claim 35 wherein said tray structure is integrally formed with a transverse member of said frame structure.]

43. The combination comprising  
a plurality of portable hose reel assemblies,  
each of said plurality of portable hose reel assemblies including:



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a supporting frame structure constructed and arranged to be disposed in nested relation on a similar supporting frame structure,

a hose reel structure having (1) a hose engaging surface configuration shaped to receive a length of coiled hose thereon and (2) circular end flanges disposed at opposite ends of said hose engaging surface configuration and extending radially outwardly therefrom,

said hose reel structure being rotatably mounted within said supporting frame structure such that an upper portion of said circular end flanges are above the highest point of said supporting frame structure,

a handle structure connected to said supporting frame structure such that said handle structure can be moved between (1) a stacking position extending generally downwardly in generally coextensive relationship with respect to said supporting frame structure and (2) an operating position extending generally upwardly from said supporting frame structure so that a hand grip portion is disposed above said circular end flanges, and

a locking mechanism having structure constructed and arranged to effect securement of said handle structure in said operating position and to enable said handle structure to be manually released from such securement to allow said handle structure to be moved into said stacking position,

said plurality of portable hose reel assemblies having said handle structures thereof in the stacking positions thereof and being disposed in a stack wherein any pair of adjacent portable hose reel assemblies in said stack are disposed one above the other with the supporting frame structures thereof in nested relation,

said plurality of portable hose reel assemblies when in said stack including two portable hose reel assemblies having their circular end flanges in substantial vertical alignment,

each pair of adjacent portable hose reel assemblies in said stack having two spaced pairs of interengaging surfaces constructed and arranged to be positioned in stack supporting relation when said adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies are in said stack,

one pair of the two spaced pairs of the interengaging surfaces of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being disposed in stack supporting relation so as to prevent downward movement of a forward portion of the uppermost portable hose reel assembly with respect to the lowermost portable hose reel assembly of each pair,

the other pair of the two spaced pairs of the interengaging surfaces of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being disposed in stack supporting relation so as to prevent downward movement of a rearward portion of the uppermost portable hose reel assembly with respect to the lowermost portable hose reel assembly of each pair

said two spaced pairs of interengaging surfaces being configured and positioned to allow an unstacked portable hose reel assembly to be moved generally vertically downwardly with respect to an uppermost portable hose reel assembly of the stack to stack the supporting frame structure on the uppermost portable

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hose reel assembly thereof in nested relation and to position the two spaced pairs of interengaging surfaces of the two portable hose reel assemblies in said stack supporting relation.

44. The combination as defined in claim 43 wherein said interengaged surfaces include a pair of downwardly facing stacking surfaces which are spaced apart with respect to one another on each portable hose reel assembly and a pair of upwardly facing supporting surfaces which are spaced apart with respect to one another on each portable hose reel assembly, the pair of downwardly facing stacking surfaces of an upper portable hose reel assembly of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being interengaged with the pair of upwardly facing surfaces of a lower portable hose reel assembly of said pair.

45. The combination as defined in claim 44 wherein said pair of upwardly facing supporting surfaces of each portable hose reel assembly is provided on a pair of spaced integral projections on the supporting frame and handle structures thereof respectively.

46. The combination as defined in claim 45 wherein said pair of downwardly facing stacking surfaces of each portable hose reel assembly is provided by a pair of spaced integral lower portions of the supporting frame structure thereof.

47. The combination as defined in claim 46 wherein all of said portable hose reel assemblies in said stack have their circular end flanges in closely spaced substantial vertical alignment.

48. The combination as defined in claim 43, wherein each pair of adjacent portable hose reel assemblies in said stack has a total of four spaced pairs of interengaging surfaces constructed and arranged to be positioned in stack supporting relation when said adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies are in said stack,

two pairs of the interengaging surfaces of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being disposed in stack supporting relation so as to prevent downward movement of a forward portion of the uppermost portable hose reel assembly with respect to the lowermost portable hose reel assembly of each pair,

the other two pairs of the interengaging surfaces of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being disposed in stack supporting relation so as to prevent downward movement of a rearward portion of the uppermost portable hose reel assembly with respect to the lowermost portable hose reel assembly of each pair.

49. The combination as defined in claim 48 wherein said interengaged surfaces include (1) two pairs of downwardly facing stacking surfaces in which each stacking surface of said two pairs are spaced apart with respect to one another on each portable hose reel assembly and (2) two pairs of upwardly facing supporting surfaces in which each supporting surface of said two pairs are spaced apart with respect to one another on each portable hose reel assembly, the pair of downwardly facing stacking surfaces of an upper portable hose reel assembly of each adjacent pair of portable hose reel assemblies in said stack being interengaged with the pair of upwardly facing surfaces of a lower portable hose reel assembly of said pair.

\* \* \* \* \*



US006338360B2

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Spear et al.

(10) Patent No.: **US 6,338,360 B2**  
(45) Date of Patent: **Jan. 15, 2002**

(54) **HOSE REEL CARRIER ASSEMBLY**

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(\*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this  
patent is extended or adjusted under 35  
U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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**137/355.16; 137/355.17; 137/355.19; 137/355.2;**  
**242/395; 242/397.3**

(58) Field of Search ..... **137/355.12, 355.16,**  
**137/355.17, 355.19, 355.2, 355.22; 242/395,**  
**397.3**

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*Primary Examiner*—A. Michael Chambers

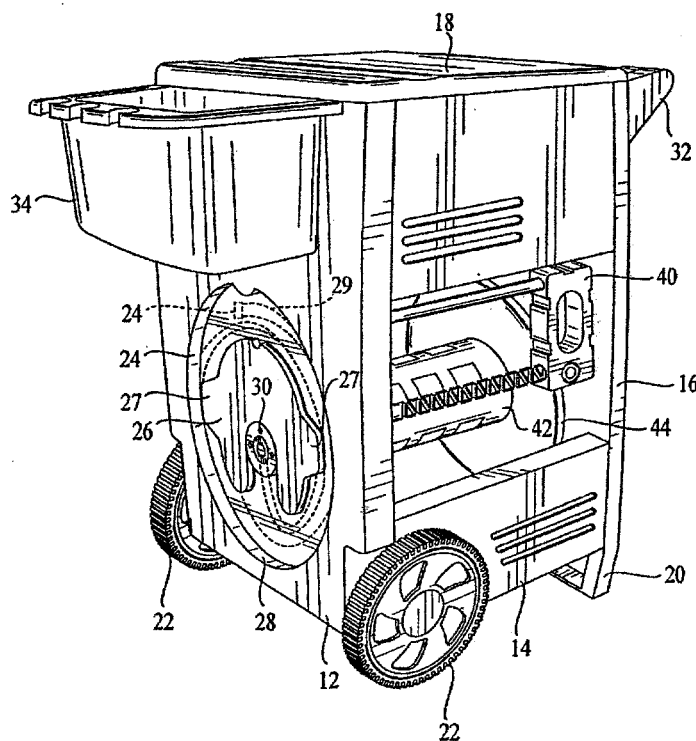
*Assistant Examiner*—Thomas L. McShane

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A hose reel carrier includes a wheeled structure having spaced apart side walls and a top wall covering a receptacle; a hose reel is rotatably mounted between the side walls and is rotated by a hand crank operated outside one of the side walls; a reciprocating hose guide carried on support rods is also driven by the crank; a fluid connection is provided through the other side wall to supply fluid to a hose carried on the reel.

**78 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets**







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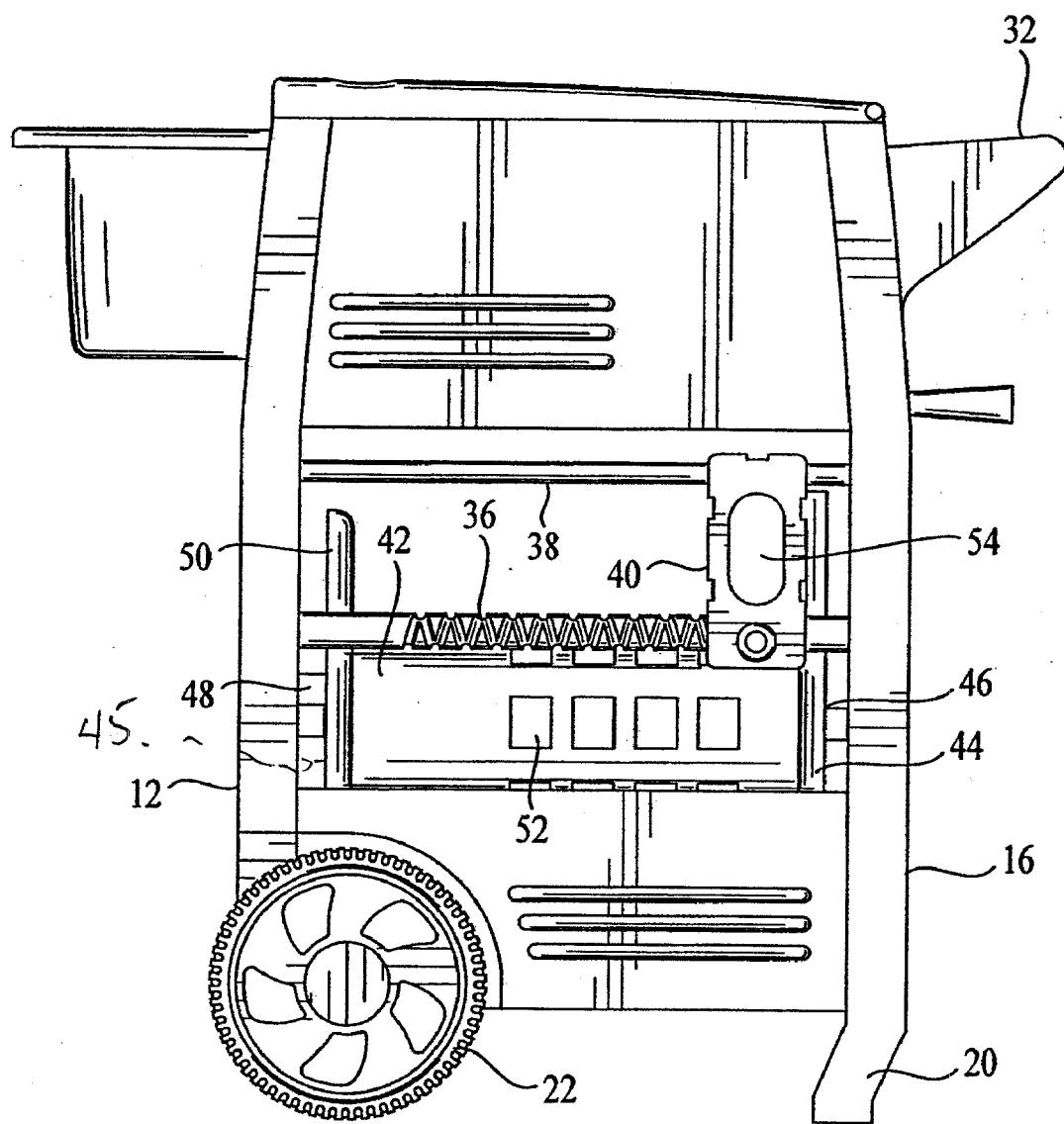


FIG. 2

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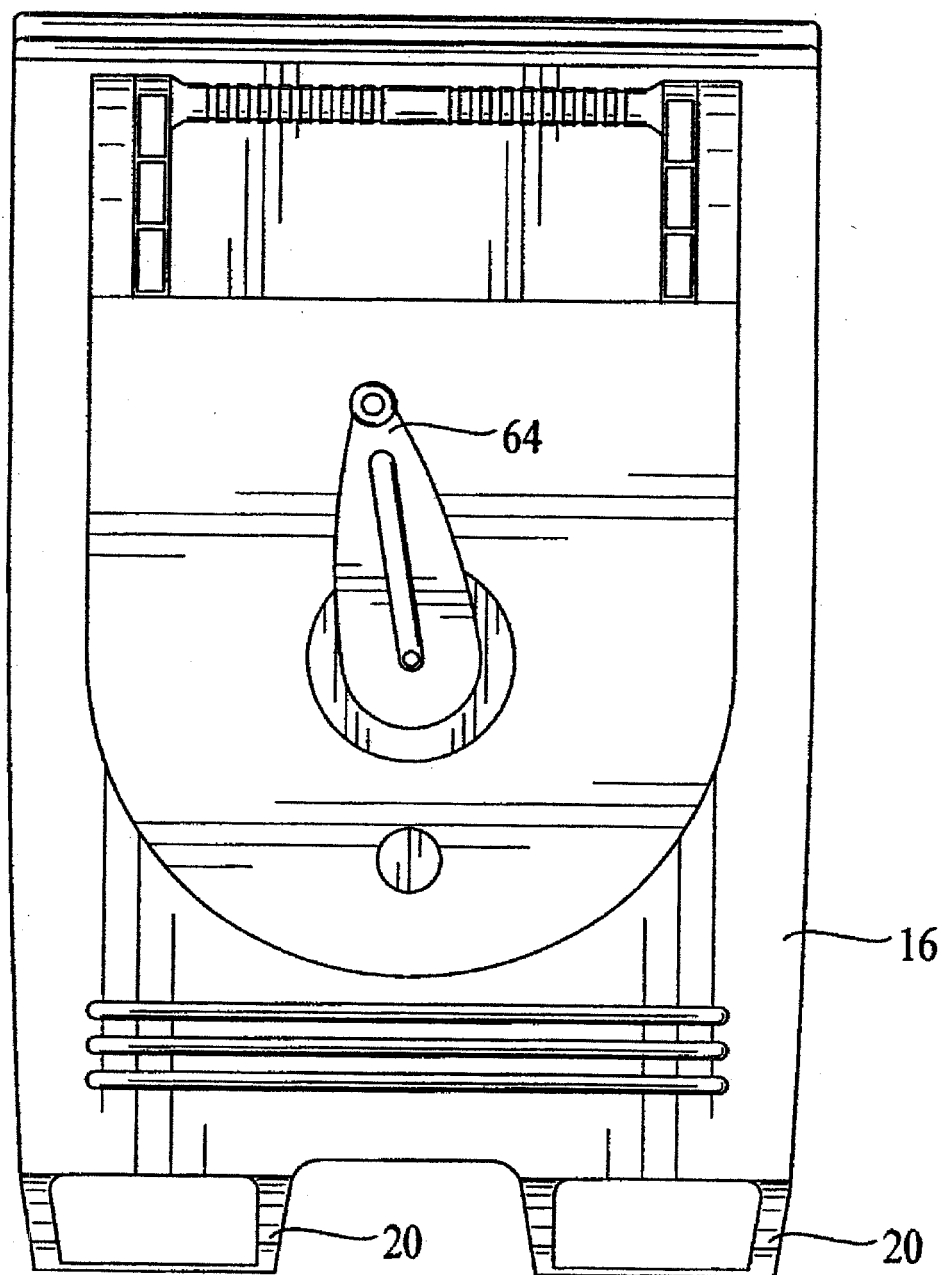


FIG. 3

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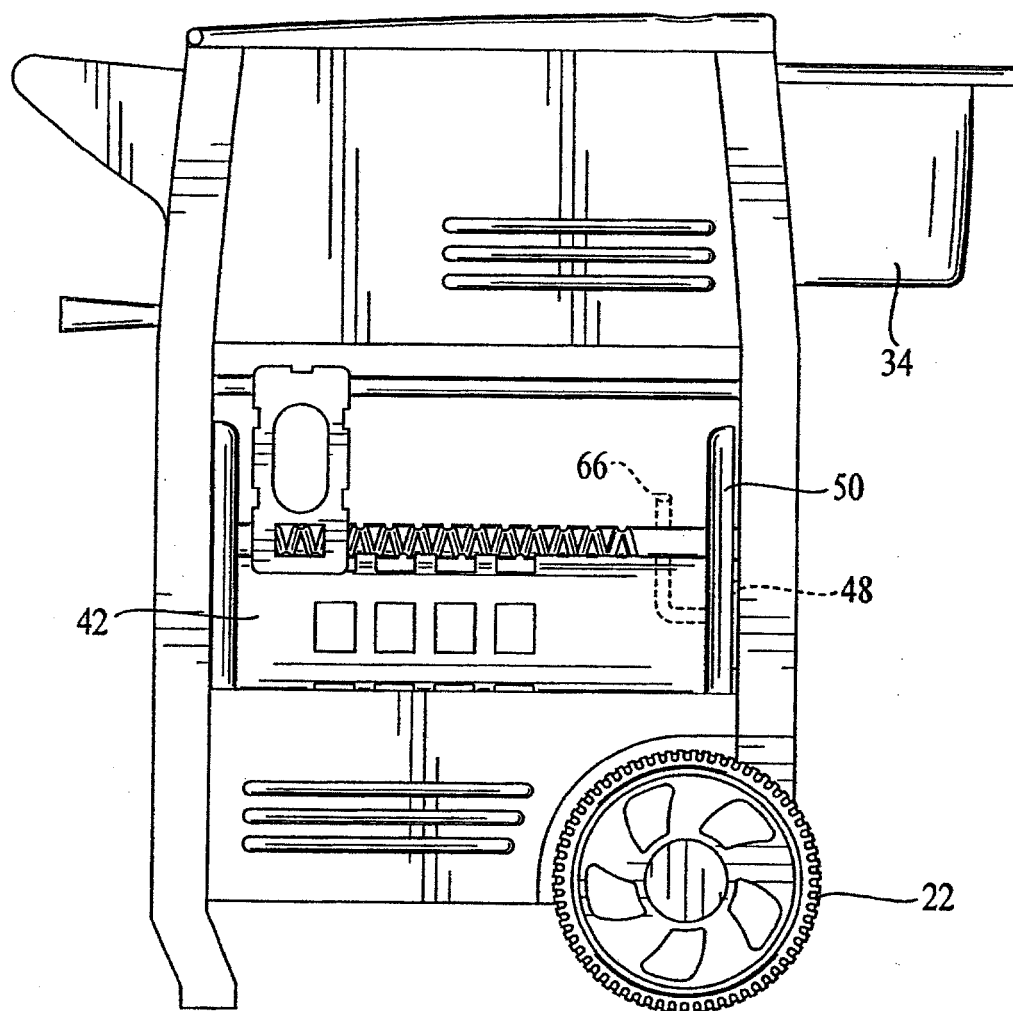


FIG. 4

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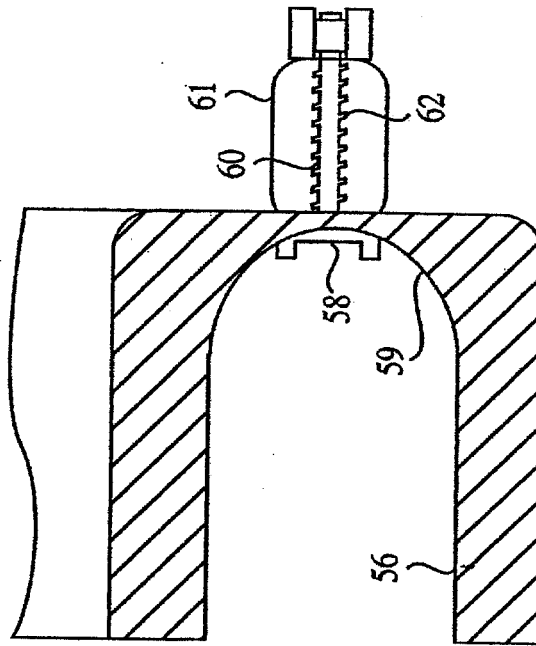


FIG. 6

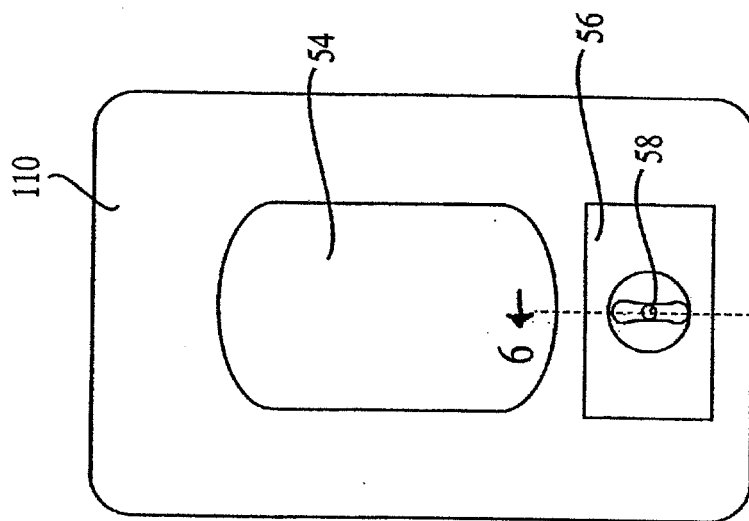


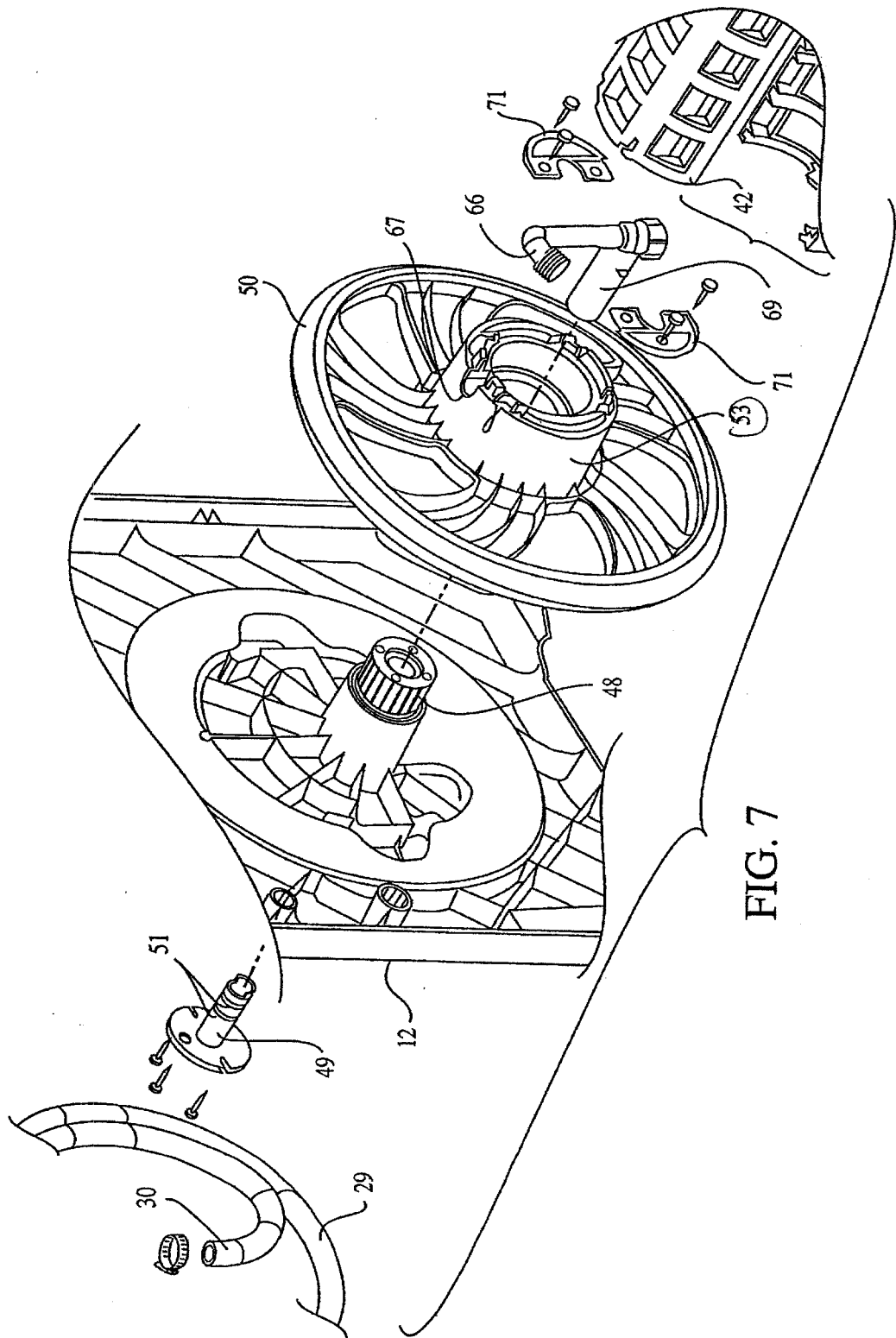
FIG. 5

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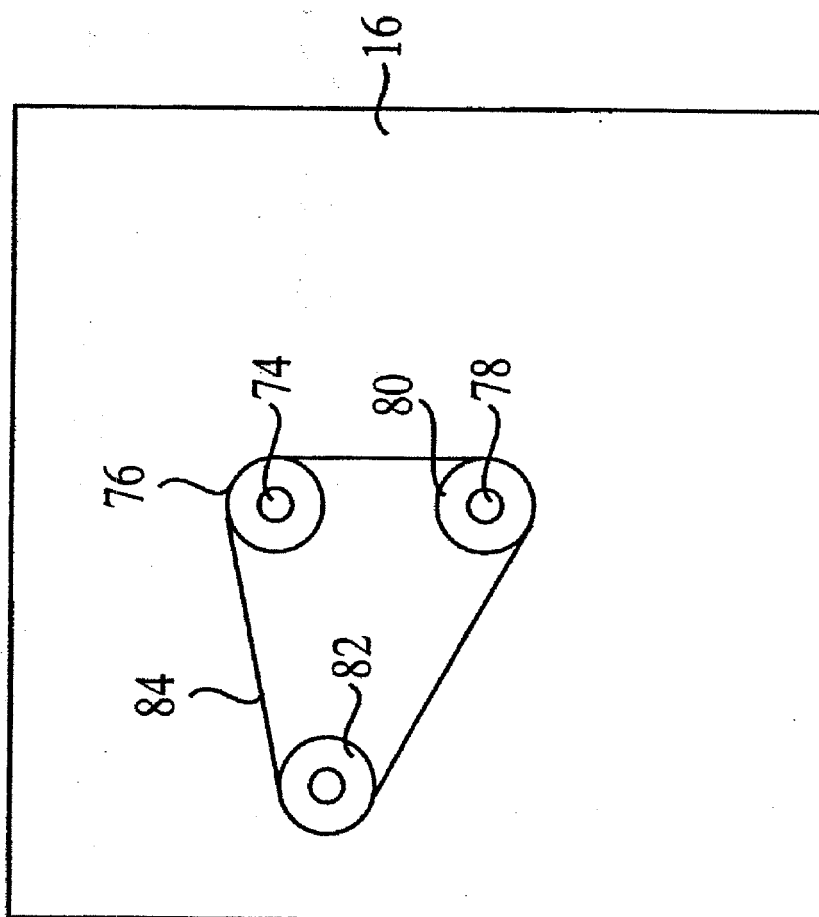


FIG. 8

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**HOSE REEL CARRIER ASSEMBLY**

The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application of Spear et al., Application No. 60/202, 881, filed May 10, 2000.

**FIELD OF INVENTION**

This invention relates to protective storage devices for flexible hoses particularly of the lawn and garden watering type. More specifically, the present invention relates to a housing that provides protection for a hose reel with the hose wrapped on the reel for storage and which is also capable of supporting and storing gardening tools as well. In addition, the device of the present invention will greatly facilitate wrapping the hose on the reel and will allow connection to a source of water under pressure without requiring disconnection of the inlet end of the hose wrapped on the reel in the housing.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

The prior art has proposed a number of different structures for storing a garden hose when not in use. The structures have generally included a reel about which the hose is wrapped for storage. In some of these devices, the hose reel has been rotatable about its axis to facilitate the wrapping and unwrapping of the hose for use. In general, the hose must be completely removed from the reel to enable connection to a source of water. While for relatively short lines of hose, these devices have been useful, for any significant increase in the hose length, these devices have not been satisfactory in view of the difficulty of manipulating the hose relative to the reel when moving between the stored and extended positions of the hose. Generally, manufacturers have avoided the use of complicated gear systems and drive mechanisms for the reel in view of the expense involved. Also, since these types of carrier structures have tended to be exposed to the weather or at least placed in storage conditions for a long period of time, the useful life of such drive mechanisms tends to be unacceptably short. In addition, manufacturers have avoided complications in manufacturing in order to keep the cost of these devices as low as possible.

In many communities, outside storage of a hose is not permitted for a number of reasons including aesthetic considerations, safety and the likelihood of theft. Even where a residential occupant utilizes a reel for storage, moving the wrapped reel out of sight tends to be infrequent where the hose is connected to the water supply. Also, presently available reels generally lack any facility for supporting gardening tools for ease-of-use. With many types of different hose materials, it is important to protect the hose during storage from exposure to direct sunlight to prevent deterioration of the material of the hose where the hose is manufactured with certain inexpensive plastics such as vinyl or woven nylon yet many reel type devices have no shielding for the hose.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention provides a hose reel carrier assembly which can be easily moved over the ground for use and operated to wrap the hose easily and which will allow easy extension of a length of hose relative to the reel without requiring connection of the length of hose directly to a water source. Instead, the carrier assembly itself is provided with an auxiliary hose length and a conduit system for connection to a water source while the end of the hose length carried on

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the reel has one end connected to an outlet carried by the reel. When it is desired to store the carrier assembly with the hose wrapped on the reel, the carrier assembly which is provided with wheels can be easily moved back to a storage position such as in a garage or shed. A number of compartments can be provided on the carrier assembly which also serve to shield the hose when wrapped on the reel from exposure to the elements and sunlight and provide storage of garden tools and the like.

In one embodiment, a reciprocating guide is provided that is linked to a manual drive for the reel so that when the reel is rotated by a user, the reciprocating guide will move back and forth across the reel to uniformly and smoothly wrap the hose on the reel to provide a compact storage configuration. Additionally, the carrier assembly includes a fluid joint that allows rotation of the outlet end of the joint with rotation of the reel thus greatly simplifying handling of the hose length. Operation of the reel is also greatly facilitated by an externally accessible handle, the rotary motion of which is linked to the hose guide for synchronous operation.

The foregoing as well as other advantages will become apparent as consideration is given to the following description and accompanying drawings, in which:

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the hose reel carrier assembly of this invention;

FIG. 2 is a side view in elevation;

FIG. 3 is a rear view in elevation;

FIG. 4 is a side view opposite to the side of FIG. 2

FIG. 5 is a front view in elevation of the hose guide;

FIG. 6 is a sectional view taken along lines 6—6 of FIG.

FIG. 7 is a perspective, exploded view of the reel and water connections; and

FIG. 8 is schematic illustration of the drive train for the reel and hose guide.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

Referring to the drawings, wherein like numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the several views, there is shown in FIG. 1 the carriage assembly 10 of the present invention. In this embodiment, the carrier assembly 10 includes a front wall 12, two side walls one which is shown at 14, a rear wall 16 and the top wall or lid 18 which may be removable to gain access to a storage area underlying the lid 18.

To facilitate use and movement of the assembly 10, the rear wall 16 may be formed with depending feet or legs 20 while adjacent the front wall 12, wheels 22 are rotatably mounted on either a common or separate axles, not shown. The front wall 12 is preferably provided with a storage recess 24 which is provided with a projecting post 26 having an extended width and wings 27 to support and retain a length of auxiliary hose wrapped about the post 26. The auxiliary hose 29 has an end 30 for attachment to a water spigot while the other end is connected to a conduit system connected to the main hose which will be wrapped on an interiorly located reel 42.

The reel 42 is connected to larger diameter wheels 44 and 50 at each end. The connection may be accomplished in a number of ways such as by epoxy adhesive, interlocking fingers or screws. The wheels 44 and 50 have hubs 45 and



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53, respectively, each of which is mounted on an axle, 46 and 48, respectively. The axles 46 and 48 extend concentrically relative to the axis of rotation of the reel 42 which is preferably hollow.

Support rods 36 and 38 are mounted one above the other and spaced slightly inwardly of the outer edges of front and rear walls 12 and 16 as shown more clearly in FIG. 1. Mounted astride the rods 36 and 38 is a hose guide member 40 which includes a large central opening 54 through which a hose will be positioned in use. As shown more clearly in FIG. 5, the lower opening of the hose guide 40 is provided with a recess 56 on which is mounted a reversing lug 58 which projects outwardly from the inner wall 59 as shown more clearly in FIG. 6. The lug 58 has a shaft 60 positioned in a bore formed through the base of the recess 56 and through an extension 61 and which is surrounded by a spring 62 to resiliently hold the lug 58 in the position shown. With this arrangement, rotation of the lug 58 and shaft 60 will easily be effected when the hose guide 40 reaches one end of its travel on the guide rods 36 and 38. The ends of the lug 58 will ride slidably in spiral grooves two sets of which are formed in the lower rod 36. The lower rod is rotated by a chain driven by the crank 64 in a selected direction. One set of grooves will effect translation of the guide 40 in one direction while the other set of grooves will effect translation in the opposite direction on the guide rods. When the guide 40 reaches one end of the rods, further rotation of the rod 36 will force the lug 58 to rotate about shaft 60 to engage the other set of grooves and commence movement of the guide 40 in the opposite direction while the crank's rotation can be continued in the same direction.

With reference to FIG. 3, wall 16 is shown with the spaced apart feet 20 and the hand crank 64 which will be operated by a user to rotate the reel 42 when it is desired to reel in a hose which is connected to the water outlet pipe extending through the surface of the reel 42 as shown at 66 in FIG. 4. Also, as apparent from FIG. 4 and 7, the pipe 66 extends within axle 48 which is hollow and makes sealing contact with a stationary connector tube 49 located within axle 48 by means of one or more than O-rings carried about the exterior of the tube 49 preferably in grooves 51 formed about the circumference thereof adjacent the end thereof that is inserted into the end 69 of pipe 66. As shown in FIG. 7, the reel 42 and wheel 50 are radially spaced from the pipe 66 and tube 49. With the connection end 69 of the pipe 66 disposed about the tube 49, a secure sealing will be effected that allows unhindered rotation of the reel and pipe 66 carried by a slot 67 provided in the inner edge of hub 53. Retaining plates 71 are secured about end 69 and are, in turn, secured as by screws to the axle 48.

In operation, a user will first connect the auxiliary hose 29 to a spigot at the end 31. The other end 30 of the auxiliary hose 29 is connected to the connecting tube 49 which extends within the axle 48 where the interfitting with the connection end of the pipe 66 takes place. Since the axle 48 as shown in FIG. 7 has a larger diameter than that of tube 49 and the end of pipe 66, no stresses will be transmitted to the seal between these elements. A user will then connect one end of a hose to the opposite end of the pipe 66 that projects through the reel 42 as shown in FIGS. 4 and 7. The opening 54 in the hose guide 40 should be of a size to allow the connecting end of a hose to be inserted therethrough to facilitate this connection. When desired, the hand crank 64 will be rotated to rotate the reel 42 as well as simultaneously reciprocate the hose guide 40 along the guide rods 36 and 38 until the desired length of hose is wound on the reel 42. As shown in schematic form in FIG. 8, the hand crank 64 will

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have its inner end mounted on a hub 74 to which is connected a sprocket gear or wheel 76. The reel 42 will be connected to freely rotatable pinion 78 which is connected to another sprocket gear 80. Rod 36 is directly connected to a sprocket gear 82 and may be rotatably mounted the wall 16 of the carrier 10. About each of these sprocket gears or wheels 76, 80 and 82 is a sprocket chain 84. With this arrangement, rotation of the sprocket gear 76 by the hand crank 64 will directly effect rotation of the reel 42 connected to the shaft 78 with translation being transmitted through the rod 36 to the hose guide 40. It will be understood that a flexible belt may be substituted for the sprocket chain 84 although a sprocket chain tends to be more durable.

In the carrier assembly 10, above the reel 42 is a compartment for storage of gardening tools or other artifacts such as alternate nozzles of the hose. The lid 18 may be hinged along one edge. An open basket 34 may be removably suspended by hooks (not shown) from the front wall 12 adjacent the lid 18 in a manner shown in FIGS. 1-4.

To facilitate assembly as well resistance to weather conditions, the carrier 10 should be made substantially of a plastic of the type that is suitable for injection molding such as a polyvinyl carbonate, polyvinyl chloride of relatively high molecular weight.

Having described the invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in this art that various modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A hose carrier for use in lawn and gardening care, said hose carrier including a pair of spaced apart side walls, a hose support member rotatably mounted between said pair of side walls, a fluid connection being carried by said support member and extending through one of said side walls, the opposite side wall having an opening, a shaft member extending from said support member through said opening in an axial direction with respect to a rotational axis of said support member and including a handle for rotating said support member, said carrier including a hose winding guide and a pair of mounting shafts extending between said side walls and on which said winding guide is carried with a first one of said shafts extending through a receiving channel in one portion of said winding guide and a second one of said shafts extending through a transmission channel in another portion of said winding guide, said opposite side wall also supporting a transmission transmitting rotary motion of said handle to said second one of said shafts, said second one of said shafts including at least one tracking groove and said winding guide including a follower member engaging said at least one tracking groove in said second one of said shafts, wherein, upon rotation of said handle, said winding guide will traverse said shaft by movement transmitted by said tracking groove through said follower member to said winding guide.

2. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said support member is a cylindrically shaped body having end walls, said body having a hollow interior.

3. The invention as claimed in claim 2 wherein said cylindrically shaped body includes a peripheral surface having an opening, a fluid conduit having one end extending through said opening and an opposite end extending through a said end wall and being slidably connected to a conduit extending through said one of side walls.

4. The invention as claimed in claim 3 wherein said conduit is connected to a length of hose and said one of said side walls is formed with a recess for allowing storage of said length of hose, said recess including a post about which said length of hose can be wrapped.

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5. The invention as claimed in claim 4 wherein said post includes fluid joint associated with said fluid conduit to allow relative rotation between said fluid conduit and said length of hose.

6. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said second one of said shafts includes two tracking grooves each defining a spiral path from one end of said second shaft to the opposite end thereof with one of said tracking grooves corresponding to movement in one direction on said shafts by said winding guide and the other of said tracking grooves corresponding to movement in a direction opposite to said one direction.

7. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said follower member comprises a reversing lug carried in a recess provided in said winding guide and including a projecting end for engaging a said tracking groove.

8. The invention as claimed in claim 7 wherein said recess includes a spring for urging said projecting end outwardly of said recess in said winding guide.

9. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said transmission includes a plurality of pulleys rotatably mounted on said opposite side wall and a flexible belt connected to said pulleys, one of said plurality of pulleys being connected to said handle.

10. The invention as claimed in claim 9 wherein another of said pulleys is connected to said second one of said shafts.

11. The invention as claimed in claim 10 wherein a further one of said pulleys is an idler pulley.

12. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said carrier is provided with two ground engaging wheel members.

13. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said carrier is provided with a receptacle between said side walls and a lid for said receptacle.

14. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said winding guide includes an opening between said channels through which a hose may be passed.

15. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said carrier includes a top and a hand grip adjacent the top thereof, said hand grip being located on said opposite side wall of said carrier.

16. A hose carrier for use in lawn and gardening care, said hose carrier including a pair of spaced apart side walls, a hose support member rotatably mounted between said pair of side walls, one of said side walls having an opening, a shaft member extending from said support member through said opening in an axial direction with respect to a rotational axis of said support member and including a handle for rotating said support member, said carrier including a hose winding guide and a support shaft arrangement extending between said side walls and on which said winding guide is carried, said one side wall also supporting a transmission transmitting rotary motion of said handle to said support shaft arrangement, said support shaft arrangement including at least one tracking groove and said winding guide including a follower member engaging said at least one tracking groove, wherein, upon rotation of said handle, said winding guide will traverse said support shaft arrangement by movement transmitted by said tracking groove through said follower member to said winding guide.

17. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said support member is a cylindrically shaped body having end walls, said body having a hollow interior.

18. The invention as claimed in claim 17 wherein said cylindrically shaped body includes a peripheral surface having an opening, a fluid conduit having one end extending through said opening and an opposite end extending through

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a said end wall and being slidably connected to a conduit extending through said one of side walls.

19. The invention as claimed in claim 18 wherein said conduit is connected to a length of hose and said one of said side walls is formed with a recess for allowing storage of said length of hose, said recess including a post about which said length of hose can be wrapped.

20. The invention as claimed in claim 19 wherein said post includes fluid joint associated with said fluid conduit to allow relative rotation between said fluid conduit and said length of hose.

21. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said second one of said shafts includes two tracking grooves each defining a spiral path from one end of said second shaft to the opposite end thereof with one of said tracking grooves corresponding to movement in one direction on said shafts by said winding guide and the other of said tracking grooves corresponding to movement in a direction opposite to said one direction.

22. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said follower member comprises a reversing lug carried in a recess provided in said winding guide and including a projecting end for engaging a said tracking groove.

23. The invention as claimed in claim 22 wherein said recess includes a spring for urging said projecting end outwardly of said recess in said winding guide.

24. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said transmission includes a plurality of pulleys rotatably mounted on said opposite side wall and a flexible belt connected to said pulleys, one of said plurality of pulleys being connected to said handle.

25. The invention as claimed in claim 24 wherein another of said pulleys is connected to said second one of said shafts.

26. The invention as claimed in claim 25 wherein a further one of said pulleys is an idler pulley.

27. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said carrier is provided with two ground engaging wheel members.

28. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said carrier is provided with a receptacle between said side walls and a lid for said receptacle.

29. The invention as claimed in claim 16 wherein said winding guide includes an opening between said channels through which a hose may be passed.

30. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said carrier includes a top and a hand grip adjacent the top thereof, said hand grip being located on said opposite side wall of said carrier.

31. A hose carrier for use in lawn and gardening care, said hose carrier including a pair of spaced apart side walls, a hose support member rotatably mounted between said pair of side walls, one of said side walls having an opening, a shaft member extending from said support member through said opening in an axial direction with respect to a rotational axis of said support member and including a handle for rotating said support member, said carrier including a hose winding guide and a support shaft arrangement extending between said side walls and on which said winding guide is carried, said one side wall also supporting a transmission transmitting rotary motion of said handle to said support shaft arrangement, said support shaft arrangement including a first and a second tracking groove and said winding guide including a follower member engaging said one of said first and second tracking grooves, said follower member being shiftable on said winding guide so that, upon rotation of said handle, said winding guide will traverse said support shaft arrangement by movement transmitted through said fol-

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lower member engaging one of said first and second tracking grooves, until said support shaft arrangement is fully traversed by said winding guide.

32. A hose carrier assembly for use in gardening and lawn care comprising:

a carrier body having a lower end including a leading edge and wheel structure rotatably mounted adjacent said leading edge, an upper end having a trailing edge and handle structure for use by an operator to grasp and move said carrier body over the ground,

a first side face and a second opposite side face with said first side face including storage structure for a hose and a hose inlet conduit,

an interior space located between said first and second side faces, a hose reel rotatably mounted in said interior space, means for rotating said reel extending through said second side face and terminating in a handle for use by an operator.

33. The invention as claimed in claim 32 further including a storage compartment for lawn and garden tools and extending over said interior space between said first and second side faces.

34. The invention as claimed in claim 32 further including a movable guide member for guiding a hose as the hose is fed to or from said reel.

35. The invention as claimed in claim 34 wherein said movable guide member is mounted for reciprocating movement on guide rods extending between said first and second faces.

36. The invention as claimed in claim 35 wherein one of said guide rods is provided with guide grooves and said guide member includes a shiftable boss for engaging in one of said guide grooves during one reciprocation of said guide member.

37. The invention as claimed in claim 36 wherein said one of said guide rods has a longitudinal axis and is mounted for rotation about said longitudinal axis, said one of said guide rods being linked to said reel so that, upon rotation of said reel, rotation of said one of said guide rods will be effected.

38. The invention as claimed in claim 1 wherein said one of said side walls includes an article bin supported thereon.

39. A hose reel apparatus for use in lawn and gardening care for winding and dispensing a length of hose, said hose reel apparatus comprising:

a frame comprising downwardly facing ground engaging surfaces and at least a pair of opposing side walls that extend generally vertically when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground;

a hose reel rotatably mounted between said side walls for rotation about a hose reel axis, said hose reel axis extending in a transverse direction between said side walls and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said hose reel providing a hose engaging surface configured to enable a length of hose to be wound thereon by rotation of said hose reel about said transversely extending hose reel axis in a winding direction and to enable said hose reel to be rotated in an opposite unwinding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis for unwinding the length of hose therefrom;

a fixed inlet connection member carried on said frame for connection to a water supply and a movable outlet connection member carried on said hose reel for connection to a proximal end of the hose when wound on said hose reel, said fixed inlet connection member

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being fluidly connected to said movable outlet connection member such that water from said water supply can be delivered to and through the hose;

a winding handle rotatably mounted adjacent one of said side walls exteriorly thereof for rotation about a handle axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said winding handle manually rotatable about said transversely extending handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis;

a hose guide having an opening therethrough for receiving an unwound portion of the length of hose therethrough;

a hose guide mounting structure extending in said transverse direction between said side walls, said hose guide being mounted on said hose guide mounting structure in spaced apart relation from said hose engaging surface for movement along said hose guide mounting structure in said transverse direction to move the unwound portion of the length of hose transversely during said winding and said unwinding so that the hose is wound onto and unwound from said hose engaging surface in an evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction;

said hose guide mounting structure comprising a transmission shaft having a tracking groove formed therein and being rotatable about a transmission shaft axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said transversely extending transmission shaft axis being parallel to and in spaced relation from said transversely extending handle axis and said transversely extending hose reel axis;

said hose guide including a follower element received in said tracking groove, said tracking groove being configured and arranged such that rotation of said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis causes said follower element to travel along said groove so that said hose guide is moved in a reversing reciprocating manner in said transverse direction along said hose guide mounting structure;

a transmission carried on said one of said side walls, said transmission being operatively connected to said transmission shaft and being constructed and arranged such that (a) rotation of said handle about said transversely extending handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis simultaneously rotates said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis so that said hose guide guides the unwound portion of the hose onto said hose engaging surface of said hose reel in said unevenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction and (b) said transmission shaft rotates about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis simultaneously with rotation of said hose reel about said transversely extending hose reel axis in said unwinding direction during unwinding of said hose so that said hose guide guides the unwound portion of the hose to unwind the length of hose in said evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction.

40. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said handle axis is spaced radially from said hose reel axis.

41. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said transmission includes a circular transmission member

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rotatable with said transmission shaft, a circular transmission member rotatable with said hose reel, and a circular transmission member rotatable with said handle.

42. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 41, wherein said circular transmission members are each toothed gears.

43. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said transmission includes a flexible element wound about said toothed gears so as to simultaneously transmit rotation therebetween.

44. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 43, wherein said flexible element is a sprocket chain.

45. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 41, wherein said transmission includes a flexible element wound about said circular transmission members so as to simultaneously transmit rotation therebetween.

46. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 45, wherein said flexible element is selected from the group consisting of a sprocket chain and a belt.

47. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 42, wherein said handle, said frame and the side walls thereof, said hose reel, said toothed gears, said hose guide, and said transmission shaft are each molded from plastic.

48. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said hose reel mounting structure further comprises a fixed shaft mounted in spaced apart relation from said transmission shaft, said hose guide being mounted on said fixed shaft for sliding movement therealong in said transverse direction and said fixed shaft and said transmission shaft cooperating to prevent rotation of said hose guide.

49. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 47, wherein said hose guide has a first opening extending therethrough in which said fixed shaft is received and a second opening extending therethrough in which said transmission shaft is received, said follower element extending into said second opening for engagement with said tracking groove.

50. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said transmission and said fixed shafts are spaced apart vertically.

51. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said follower element is a shiftable lug and said hose guide includes a spring biasing said lug into engagement with said tracking groove.

52. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said tracking groove is defined by a pair of spiral grooves formed in counterspiraling relation with respect to one another along said transmission shaft, said grooves being communicated at each opposing end thereof to provide for reversal of said hose guide as it moves therealong in said reversing reciprocating manner during winding and unwinding of the hose.

53. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said handle include an inner portion extending through said one of said side walls, a lever portion extending generally radially with respect to said handle axis from said inner portion, and a hand grip portion extending generally parallel to said handle axis from said lever portion and away from said one of said side walls.

54. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said frame further comprises a pair of wheels rotatably mounted thereto for enabling said hose reel apparatus to be rollingly transported, said ground engaging surfaces including surfaces of said wheels.

55. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 54, further comprising a transport handle mounted to an upper portion of said frame for facilitating rolling transport of said hose reel apparatus.

56. A hose reel apparatus for use in lawn and gardening care for winding and dispensing a length of hose, said hose reel apparatus comprising:

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a frame comprising downwardly facing ground engaging surfaces and at least a pair of opposing side walls that extend generally vertically when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground;

a hose reel rotatably mounted between said side walls for rotation about a hose reel axis, said hose reel axis extending in a transverse direction between said side walls and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said hose reel providing a hose engaging surface configured to enable a length of dispensable hose to be wound thereon by rotation of said hose reel about said hose reel axis in a winding direction and to enable said hose reel to be rotated in an opposite unwinding direction for unwinding the length of dispensable hose therefrom;

a leader hose having a free end fluidly connectable to a water supply;

a fixed inlet connection member carried on one of said side walls of said frame and having an opposite end of said leader hose fluidly connected thereto;

a leader hose storage structure provided on an exterior surface of said one of said side walls of said frame adjacent said fixed inlet connection member, said leader hose storage structure being constructed and arranged to enable said leader hose to be wound therearound in a stored position and providing structure positioned in spaced apart from said one of said side walls to define a space for receiving said leader hose therein when said leader hose is wound in said stored position to thereby retain said leader hose on said storage structure;

a movable outlet connection member carried on said hose reel for rotation therewith and for connection to a proximal end of the dispensable hose when wound on said hose reel, said fixed inlet connection member being fluidly connected to said movable outlet connection member such that water from said water supply can be delivered to and through said dispensable hose via said leader hose.

57. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 56, wherein said one of said side walls has a storage recess defined on the exterior surface thereof, said storage structure being positioned within said storage recess.

58. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 57, wherein said storage structure extends outwardly from said one of said side walls and wherein said structure defining said space is provided by a plurality of wings extending radially therefrom towards a periphery of said recess.

59. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 56, wherein said storage structure extends outwardly from said one of said side walls and wherein said structure defining said space is provided by a plurality of wings extending radially therefrom.

60. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 56, further comprising a winding handle rotatably mounted adjacent one of said side walls exteriorly thereof for rotation about a handle axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said winding handle being manually rotatable about said handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said hose reel axis.

61. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 60, further comprising:

a hose guide having an opening therethrough for receiving an unwound portion of the length of hose therethrough;

a hose guide mounting structure extending in said transverse direction between said side walls, said hose guide

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being mounted on said hose guide mounting structure in spaced apart relation from said hose engaging surface for movement along said hose guide mounting structure in said transverse direction to move the unwound portion of the length of hose transversely during said winding and said unwinding so that the hose is wound onto and unwound from said hose engaging surface in an evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction;

said hose guide mounting structure comprising a transmission shaft having a tracking groove formed therein and being rotatable about a transmission shaft axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said transversely extending transmission shaft axis being parallel to and in spaced relation from said transversely extending handle axis and said transversely extending hose reel axis;

said hose guide including a follower element received in said tracking groove, said tracking groove being configured and arranged such that rotation of said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis causes said follower element to travel along said groove so that said hose guide is moved in a reversing reciprocating manner in said transverse direction along said hose guide mounting structure;

a transmission carried on said one of said side walls, said transmission being operatively connected to said transmission shaft and being constructed and arranged such that (a) rotation of said handle about said transversely extending handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis simultaneously rotates said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis so that said hose guide guides the unwound portion of the hose onto said hose engaging surface of said hose reel in said evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction and (b) said transmission shaft rotates about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis simultaneously with rotation of said hose reel about said transversely extending hose reel axis in said unwinding direction during unwinding of said hose so that said hose guide guides the unwound portion of the hose to unwind the length of those in said evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction.

62. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 61, wherein said follower element is a shiftable lug and said hose guide includes a spring biasing said lug into engagement with said tracking groove.

63. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 61, wherein said tracking groove is defined by a pair of spiral grooves formed in counterspiraling relation with respect to one another along said transmission shaft, said grooves being communicated at each opposing end thereof to provide for reversal of said hose guide as it moves therealong in said reversing reciprocating manner during winding and unwinding of the hose.

64. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 61, wherein said handle include an inner portion extending through said one of said side walls, a lever portion extending generally radially with respect to said handle axis from said inner portion, and a hand grip portion extending generally parallel to said handle axis from said lever portion and away from said one of said side walls.

65. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 71, wherein said frame further comprises a pair of wheels rotatably

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mounted thereto for enabling said hose reel apparatus to be rollingly transported, said ground engaging surfaces including surfaces of said wheels.

66. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 65, further comprising a transport handle mounted to an upper portion of said frame for facilitating rolling transport of said hose reel apparatus.

67. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 60, wherein said handle axis is spaced radially from said hose reel axis.

68. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 67, wherein said transmission includes a circular transmission member rotatable with said transmission shaft, a circular transmission member rotatable with said hose reel, and a circular transmission member rotatable with said handle.

69. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 68, wherein said transmission includes a flexible element wound about said circular transmission members so as to simultaneously transmit rotation therebetween.

70. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 69, wherein said flexible element is selected from the group consisting of a sprocket chain and a belt.

71. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 68, wherein said circular transmission members are each toothed gears.

72. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 71, wherein said transmission includes a flexible element wound about said toothed gears so as to simultaneously transmit rotation therebetween.

73. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 72, wherein said flexible element is a sprocket chain.

74. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 71, wherein said handle, said frame and the side walls thereof, said hose reel, said toothed gears, said hose guide, and said transmission shaft are each molded from plastic.

75. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 61, wherein said hose reel mounting structure further comprises a fixed shaft mounted in spaced apart relation from said transmission shaft, said hose guide being mounted on said fixed shaft for sliding movement therealong in said transverse direction and said fixed shaft and said transmission shaft cooperating to prevent rotation of said hose guide.

76. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 75, wherein said hose guide has a first opening extending therethrough in which said fixed shaft is received and a second opening extending therethrough in which said transmission shaft is received, said follower element extending into said second opening for engagement with said tracking groove.

77. A hose reel apparatus according to claim 76, wherein said transmission and said fixed shafts are spaced apart vertically.

78. A hose reel apparatus for use in lawn and gardening care for winding and dispensing a length of hose, said hose reel apparatus comprising:

a molded plastic frame comprising downwardly facing ground engaging surfaces and at least a pair of opposing side walls that extend generally vertically when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground;

a molded plastic hose reel rotatably mounted between said side walls for rotation about a hose reel axis, said hose reel axis extending in a transverse direction between said side walls and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said hose reel providing a hose engaging surface configured to enable a length of hose to be wound thereon by rotation of said hose reel about said transversely extending hose reel axis in a winding direction and to enable said hose reel to be rotated in an opposite

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unwinding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis for unwinding the length of hose therefrom;

a fixed inlet connection member carried on said frame for connection to a water supply and a movable outlet connection member carried on said hose reel for the connection to a proximal end of the hose when wound on said hose reel, said fixed inlet connection member being fluidly connected to said movable outlet connection member such that water from said water supply can be delivered to and through the hose

a molded plastic winding handle rotatably mounted adjacent one of said side walls exteriorly thereof for rotation about a handle axis, and handle axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground, said handle axis being spaced radially from said hose reel axis, said winding handle being manually rotatable about said transversely extending handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis;

a molded plastic hose guide having an opening therethrough for receiving an unwound portion of the length of hose therethrough;

a hose guide mounting structure extending in said transverse direction between said side walls, said hose guide being mounted on said hose guide mounting structure in spaced apart relation from said hose engaging surface for movement along said hose guide mounting structure in said transverse direction to move the unwound portion of the length of hose transversely during said winding and said unwinding so that the hose is wound onto and unwound from said hose engaging surface in an evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction;

said hose guide mounting structure comprising (a) a molded plastic transmission shaft having a tracking groove formed therein and being rotatable about a transmission shaft axis extending in said transverse direction and generally horizontally when said ground engaging surfaces are engaged with the ground and (b)

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a molded plastic fixed shaft spaced apart from said transmission shaft, said transversely extending transmission shaft axis being parallel to and in spaced relation from said transversely extending handle axis and said transversely extending hose reel axis;

said hose guide being mounted on said fixed shaft and said transmission shaft for movement therealong in said transverse direction with said fixed shaft and said transmission shaft cooperating to prevent rotation of said hose guide, said hose guide including a follower element received in said tracking groove, said tracking groove being configured and arranged such that rotation of said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis causes said follower element to travel along said groove so that said hose guide is moved in a reversing reciprocating manner in said transverse direction along said fixed shaft and said transmission shaft;

a transmission carried on said one of said side walls and including a molded plastic toothed gear rotatable with said handle, a molded plastic toothed gear rotatable with said hose reel and a molded plastic toothed gear rotatable with said transmission shaft, said toothed gears enabling (a) rotation of said handle about said transversely extending handle axis to rotate said hose reel in said winding direction about said transversely extending hose reel axis simultaneously rotates said transmission shaft about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis so that said hose guide guides the unwound portion of the hose onto said hose engaging surface of said hose reel in said unevenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction and (b) said transmission shaft rotates about said transversely extending transmission shaft axis simultaneously with rotation of said hose reel about said transversely extending hose reel axis in said unwinding direction during unwinding of said hose so that said hose guides the unwound portion of the hose to unwind the length of hose in said evenly distributed manner with respect to said transverse direction.

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