

Discovering Garden Weasel

The Garden Weasel was “discovered” in 1974 at the Cologne Hardware Show in Germany, as it was being demonstrated by its inventor, Gerhardt Guetschow. The tool, and even its unusual name, Garden Weasel, caught the eye of Gordon T. Beaham III, who was president of Faultless Starch Company at the time. It was a serendipitous moment, as Beaham was “in the market” for new products and ways to diversify his company; noting that “people may not be starching their own shirts in the not-too-distant future.” What struck Beaham was just how revolutionary the Garden Weasel really was. Not only was it new and different, it literally revolved--there was absolutely nothing like on the US market. Beaham and Mr. Guetschow struck up an instant friendship, and Beaham ordered a container of Garden Weasels on the spot. The deal was solidified with a handshake. Mr. Guetschow communicated the news of the sale to his boss, Mr. Hans vom Braucke, whose family company owned Garden Weasel, and the Beaham family befriended the vom Braucke family. The handshake relationship remains between the two family companies to this day.

Garden Weasel Goes To America

Back in the U.S., the arrival of a container load of German garden tools caused quite a commotion at the staid laundry starch company, whose expertise was selling ironing aids to grocery stores. Beaham, and Alfred Kohler, the Faultless International Director, struggled for several years to find the correct way to take the Garden Weasel to market. They tried mail order, and several other sales channels, with only minimal success. The Garden Weasel then caught the eye of Joe Pedott, the owner of an advertising agency, who convinced Beaham that the way to market the Garden Weasel was through the use of television. Pedott would later be known as the marketer of the Chia Pet®, The Clapper®, the Chimney Sweeping Log, and other products seen on TV. After using TV in several local markets to promote Garden Weasel in drug stores, grocery stores, and other stores, it was apparent that the TV formula was the correct marketing method for the tool.

In 1976, Beaham hired Web Thompson, a sales person with close ties to the hardware industry, to help expand the sales and distribution of Garden Weasel. The rest, as they say, is history. Garden Weasel went on to sell millions of units in drug, food, hardware, mass-merchandise, home centers, and other outlets; eventually spawning a whole team of successful garden tool products, including: **WeedPopper®**, **Garden Claw®** and the **Weasel Edger Chopper®** among others. Garden Weasel was acquired by General Tool and Instruments in May of 2020.

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