

# Physics could be behind the secrets of crop-circle artists

August 1 2011

---

In this month's edition of Physics World, Richard Taylor, director of the Materials Science Institute at the University of Oregon, takes a serious, objective look at a topic that critics might claim is beyond scientific understanding – crop circles.

As the global crop-circle phenomenon grows alongside advances in science and technology, Taylor notes how physics and the arts are coming together to produce more impressive and spectacular crop-circle patterns that still manage to maintain their mystery.

Today's crop-circle designs are more complex than ever, with some featuring up to 2000 different shapes. Mathematical analysis has revealed the use of construction lines, invisible to the eye, that are used to design the patterns, although exactly how crop circles are created remains an open question.

According to Taylor, [physics](#) could potentially hold the answer, with crop-circle artists possibly using the Global Positioning System (GPS) as well as lasers and microwaves to create their patterns, dispensing with the rope, planks of wood and bar stools that have traditionally been used.

Microwaves, Taylor suggests, could be used to make crop stalks fall over and cool in a horizontal position – a technique that could explain the speed and efficiency of the artists and the incredible detail that some crop circles exhibit.

Indeed, one research team claims to be able to reproduce the intricate damage inflicted on crops using a handheld magnetron, readily available from microwave ovens, and a 12 V battery.

As Taylor writes, "Crop-circle artists are not going to give up their secrets easily. This summer, unknown [artists](#) will venture into the countryside close to your homes and carry out their craft, safe in the knowledge that they are continuing the legacy of the most science-oriented art movement in history."

Matin Durrani, Editor of [Physics World](#), says, "It may seem odd for a physicist such as Taylor to be studying crop circles, but then he is merely trying to act like any good scientist – examining the evidence for the design and construction of crop circles without getting carried away by the side-show of UFOs, hoaxes and aliens."

Provided by Institute of Physics

Citation: Physics could be behind the secrets of crop-circle artists (2011, August 1) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-physics-secrets-crop-circle-artists.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--