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(54) **DRIPPER GRIPPER**

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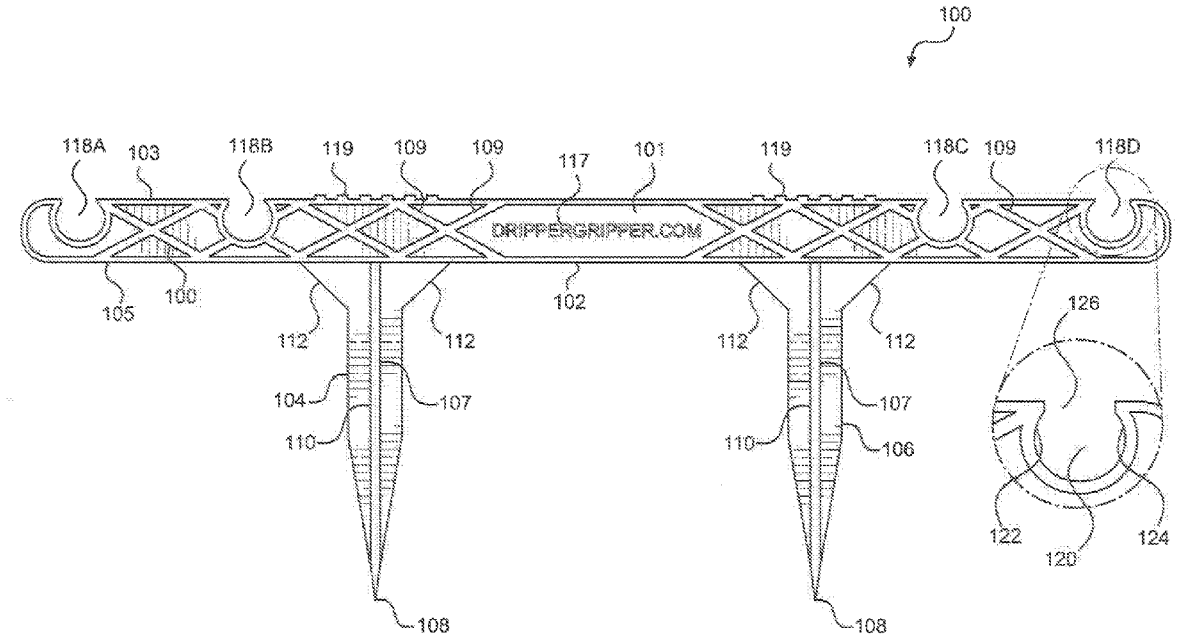
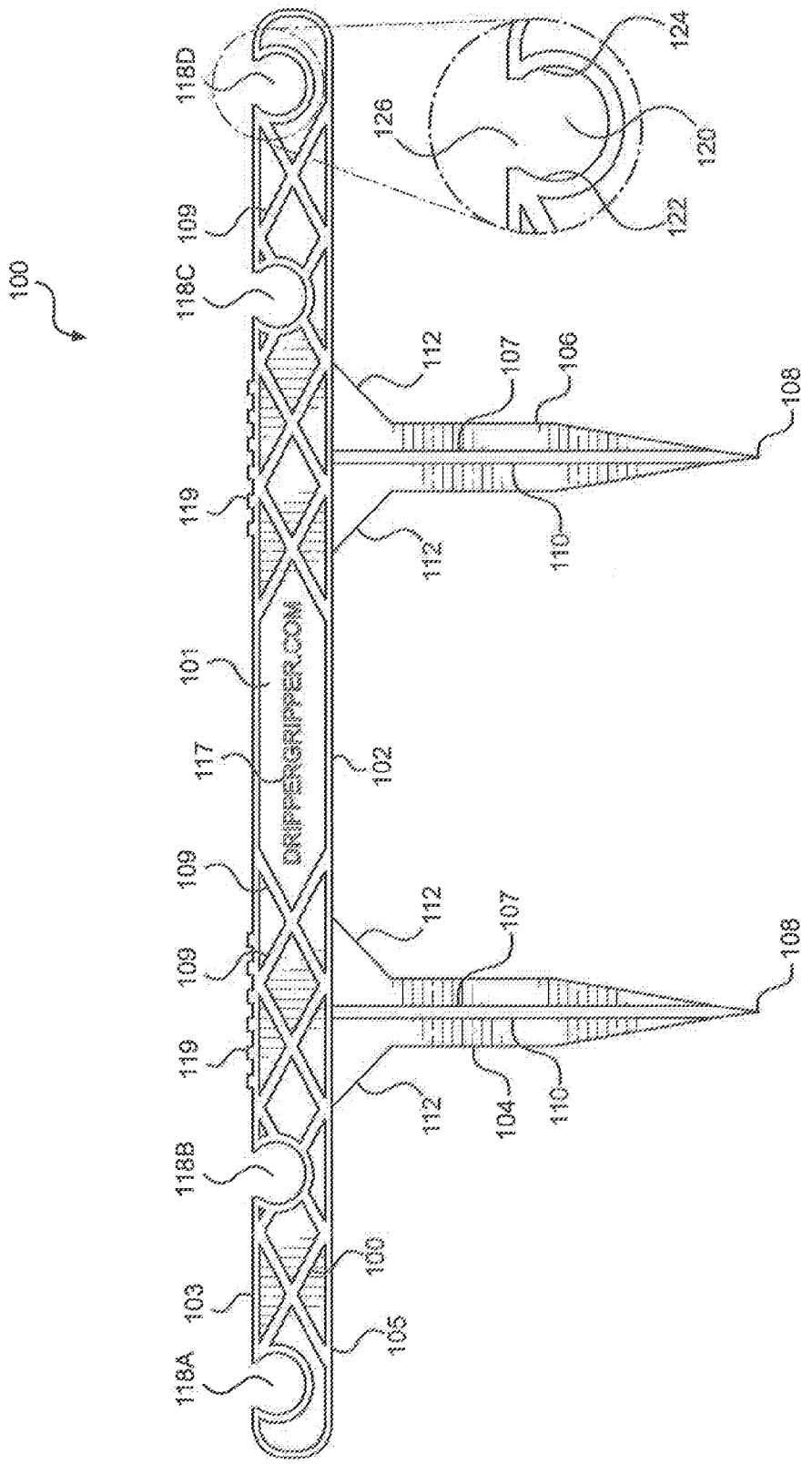
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A water line support device includes a pair of stakes that extend perpendicularly downward from a horizontal support member and a plurality of water line retention mechanisms that may be positioned on the top or bottom side of the horizontal member. In simple form, the plurality of integral retention mechanisms have a recessed channel that is oriented parallel to the ground and perpendicular to the horizontal member. The horizontal member has a top side and a bottom side connected on opposite sides of a middle support such that the top side, middle support and bottom side form an I-beam configuration when viewed as a cross section of the horizontal member. The middle support can be reinforced or braced with diagonal supports that also are connected to and support the top side and the bottom side of the horizontal member. A logo can be added to the horizontal support member.




100
118D
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122
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FIG. 1

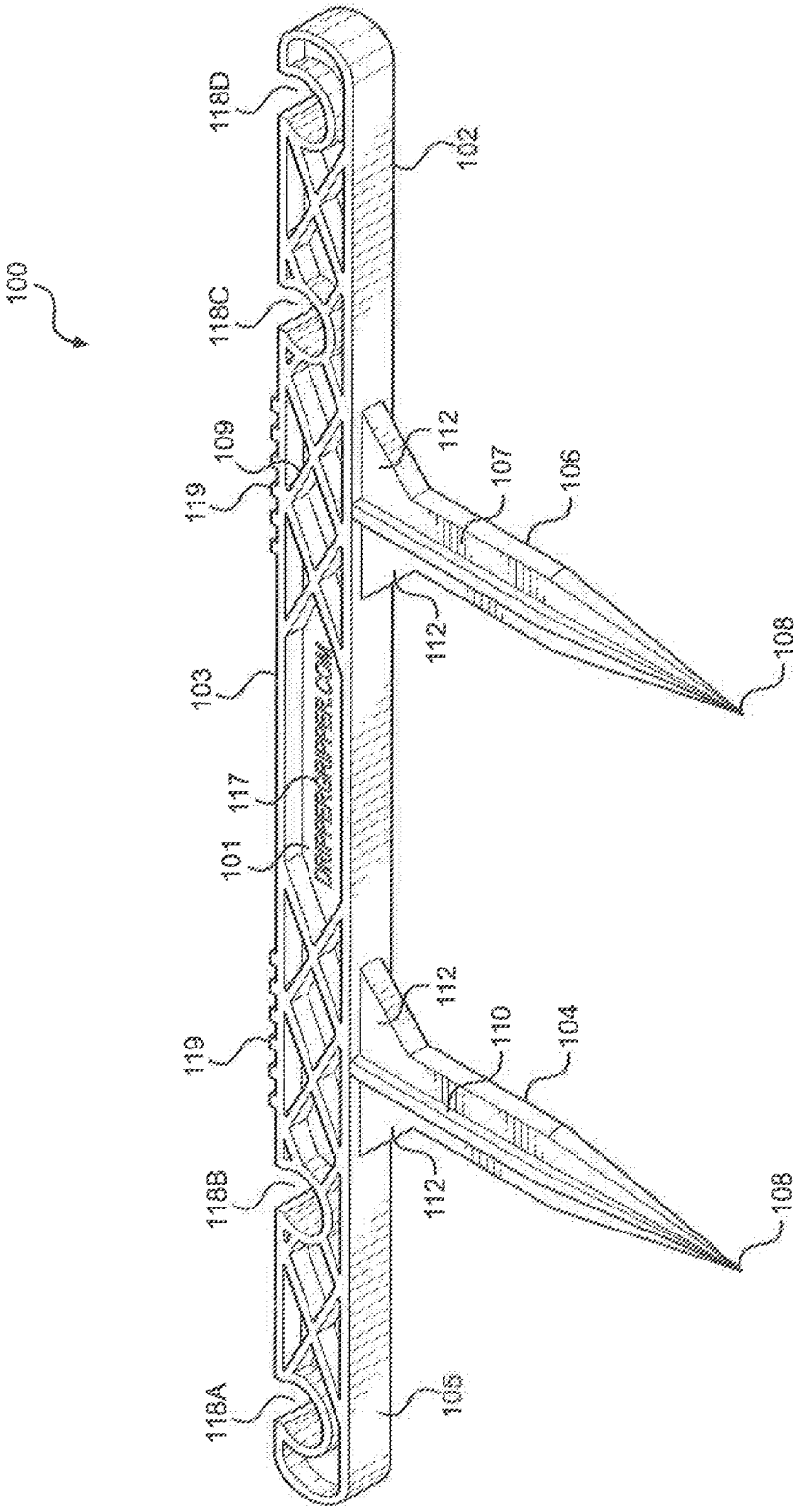
100
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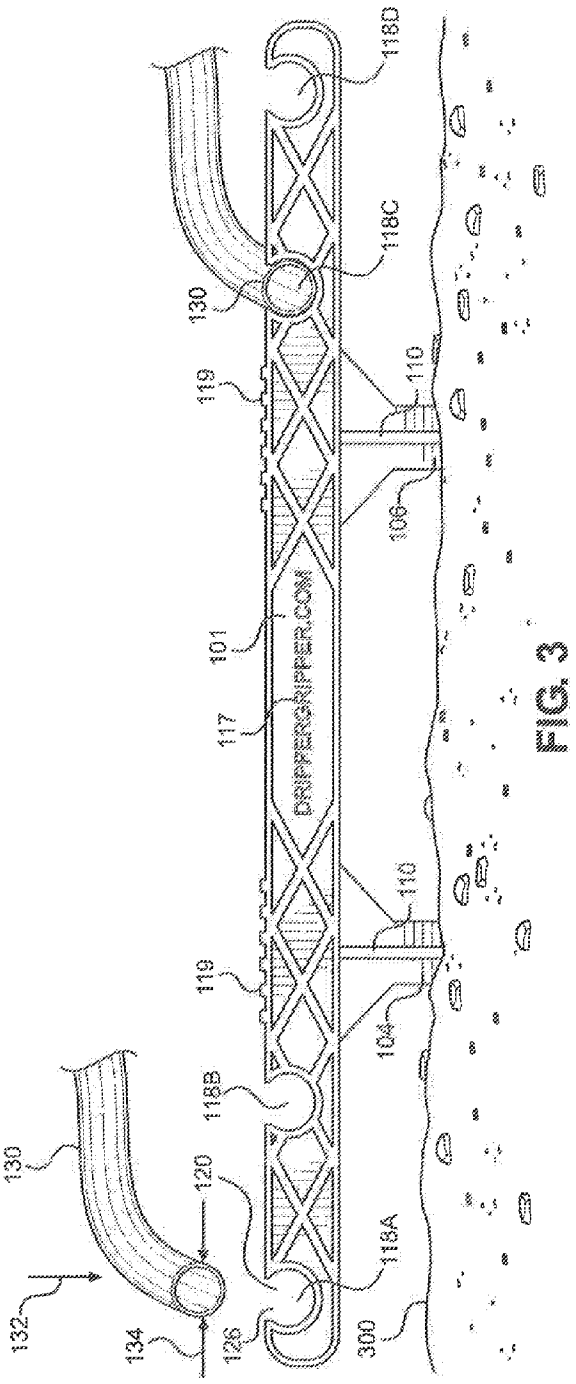
FIG. 2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130
132
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120
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118B
118A
118C
118D
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104
101
117
300

FIG. 3

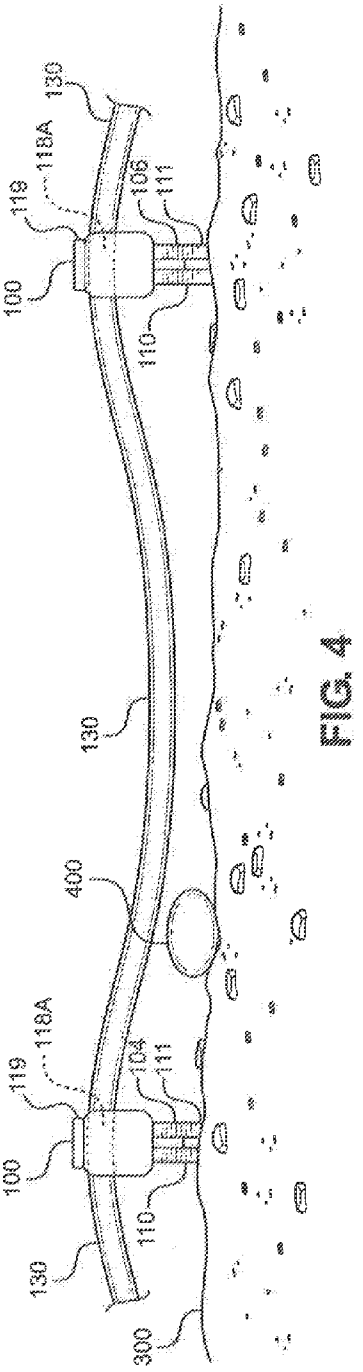
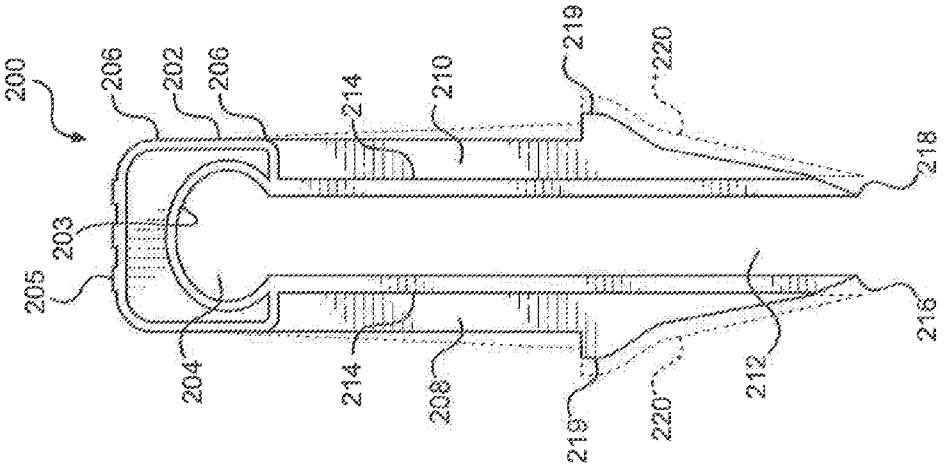

130
118A
119
106
111
100
110
400
104
300

FIG. 4


200
206
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212
216

FIG. 6

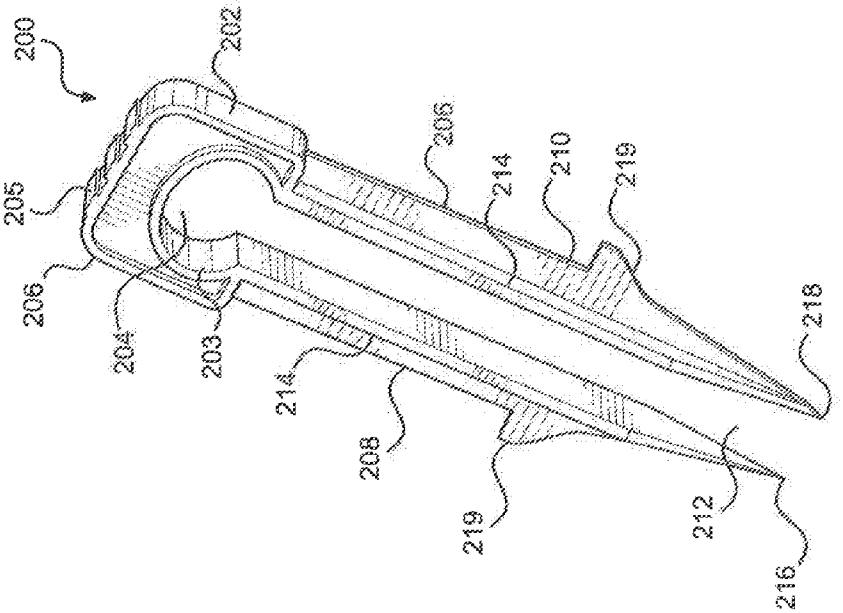
200
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FIG. 5

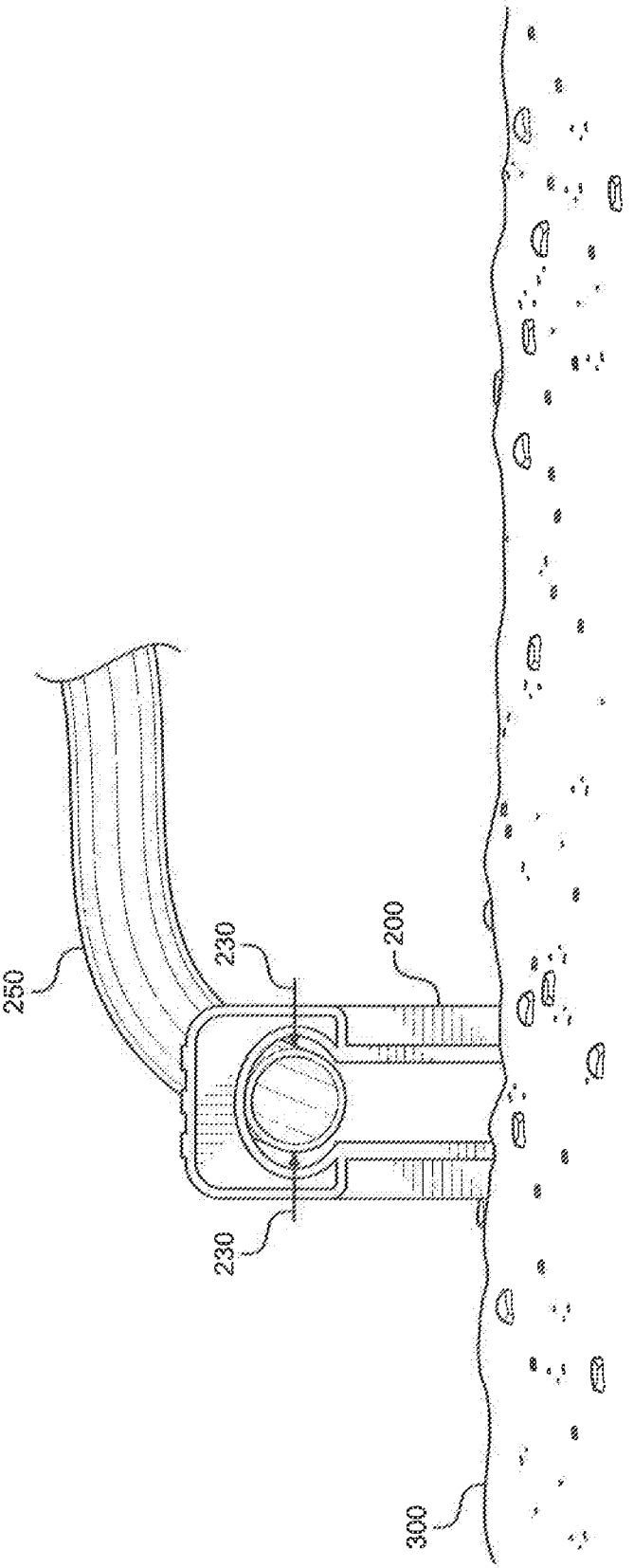

FIG. 7

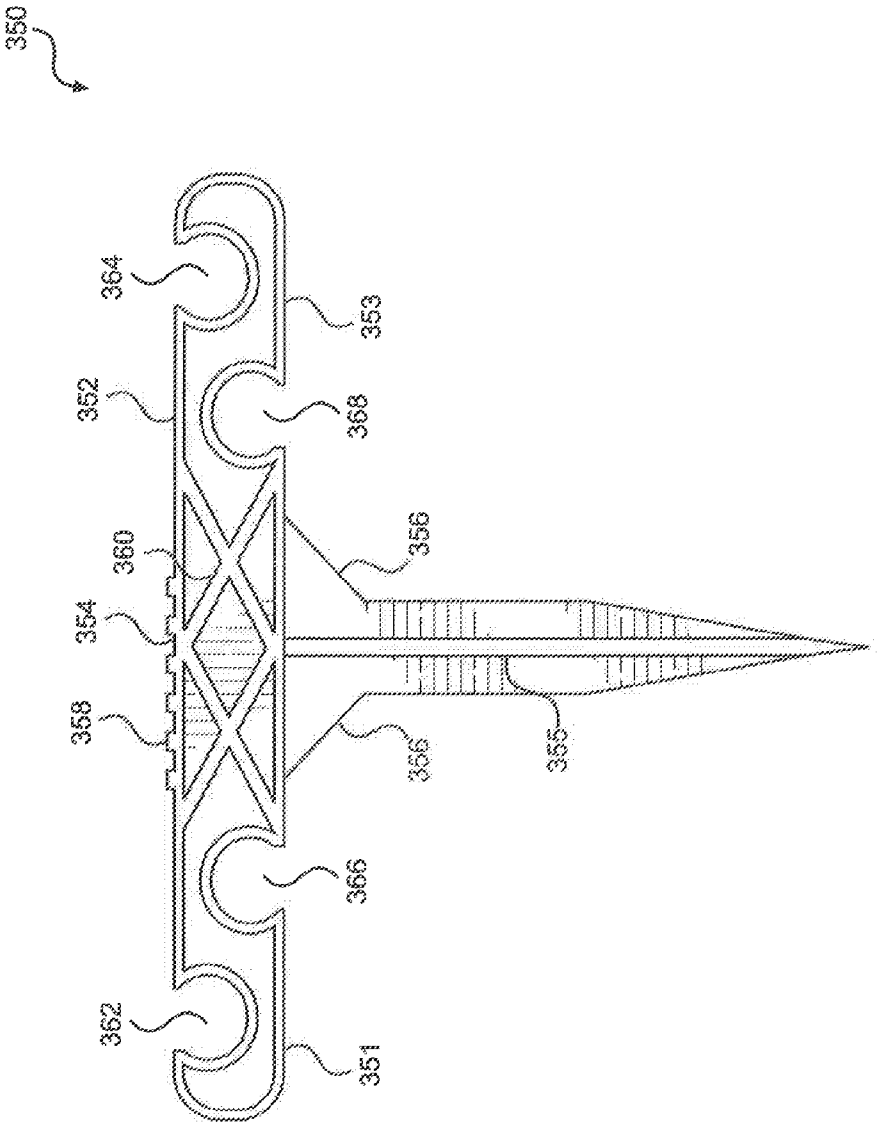

FIG. 8

DRIPPER GRIPPER

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a conversion of, and claims the benefit of priority to, the United States Provisional Patent Application for "Dripper Gripper," Ser. No. 62/168,409, filed on May 29, 2015, and currently co-pending, and also is a conversion of, and claims the benefit of priority to, the United States Provisional Patent Application for "Dripper Gripper," Ser. No. 62/292,780, filed on Feb. 8, 2016, and currently co-pending. Both applications are incorporated fully herein by this reference.

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to an agricultural support device and system. More particularly, the present invention pertains to a water line support device that is driven into the ground. The invention may securely retain water lines along the ground in an orderly fashion and resist unwanted rotation and tangling of water lines. Additionally, the water line support device has a plurality of water line retention mechanisms for retaining individual water lines therein, and a pair of stakes that secure the device to the ground. The invention provides the users with a superior means of retaining and supporting hose and water lines.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates to a water line support device. In many farm, orchid, and agricultural estates, water and other fluids need to be transported and delivered to plants and vegetation far from a water source. Typically, hoses and water lines are utilized to deliver the water from the source to sprinklers in the fields. The sprinklers then disperse the water onto the desired area. Various water and hose line retention devices can be used to organize and arrange the various lines. It is important to organize the hoses to ensure that the hoses are not destroyed by tractors or other vehicles that my run over the hoses. Farmers often bury the hoses to keep them in place out of path of travel of tractors. However, the practice of burying the irrigation hoses often leads to damage from pests, such as gophers.

[0004] Over the years, there have been other variations of hose and water line retention devices. Most commonly, these devices include a stake member that is driven into the ground, while at the same time is rigid and removable. These devices generally comprise a rigid metal stake with a substantially pointed end that is configured for insertion into the ground, and which have a retention mechanism adapted to retain a water line. These metal stakes are prone to failure from rust or metal fatigue.

[0005] Hose and water line retention devices are frequently inserted manually into the ground with the stake end facing downwardly. The user may then selectively insert a hose or water line within the retention mechanism. The hose and water lines are typically tubular, hollow, and flexible cylinders that are adapted to transport and house fluid therein. Hoses and water lines may be attached to a water source, such as a spigot at a first end, and to a dispensing apparatus, such as a sprinkler at the second end. The hose and water line retention devices are selectively placed between the two ends to prevent them from twisting. The retention devices also enable a farmer to organize the lines in such a way as to ensure that tractors and other vehicles do not unnecessarily run over and damage the water line. In addition, the retention devices enable a farmer to more precisely deliver the fluid contents to a desired location, wasting less water in the process.

[0006] While these known prior art retention devices are a convenient way to retain hose and water lines, they do not work very well with certain gauge/capacity water lines because when large volumes of water flow through hoses, it exerts a force on the single stake retention device that may dislodge the hose from the device and/or remove the stake from the ground. Heretofore, various forms water line retention devices have been constructed with retention mechanisms and stakes. These prior art devices are typically single stake devices with a single retention mechanism located on the side or underside of the device. These devices, however, do not allow for multiple hose and water lines to be individually secured within a plurality of retention mechanisms on the same device.

[0007] Therefore, where there is a need to use multiple water lines, such as in a commercial orchard, the prior art retention devices lack the ability to retain multiple lines within the same device. This in turn requires installation of more retention devices and less organization. An additional shortcoming of the prior art is the relative location of the retention mechanism on the prior art devices, which are not in an optimal location for retaining, securing, and changing a water line held therein.

[0008] In light of the above, it would be advantageous to provide a water line support device with multiple stakes capable of retaining multiple lines within the same device. It would be further advantageous to provide to a water line support device with an optimal location for securely retaining a water line held therein while also facilitating easy removal and insertion of a water line in the water line support device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The present invention offers a water line support device that includes a pair of stakes that extend perpendicularly downward from a horizontal support member and a plurality of water line retention mechanisms. The plurality of retention mechanisms may be positioned on the top side of the horizontal member. In simple form, the plurality of integral retention mechanisms have a recessed channel that is oriented parallel to the ground and perpendicular to the horizontal member.

[0010] The horizontal member has a top side and a bottom side connected on opposite sides of a middle support such that the top side, middle support and bottom side form an I-beam configuration when viewed as a cross section of the horizontal member. The middle support can be reinforced or braced with diagonal supports that also are connected to and support the top side and the bottom side of the horizontal member. A logo can be added to the horizontal support member.

[0011] In an embodiment, the stakes are positioned with respect to one another so as to trifurcate the horizontal support member into three equal portions; a first third portion, a second third portion and a middle third portion. The stakes have an elongated member with a substantially pointed distal end that is adapted to penetrate and remain in the ground. The stakes are connected to the bottom side of the horizontal member, opposite the substantially pointed distal end of the elongated member. Stake flare supports can

optionally be provided to connect the elongated body of the stakes and bottom side of the horizontal support member. The stakes may also be provided with a projected member that runs along the length of the elongated member. In an embodiment, a projected member can be provided on either side of the elongated member such that the two projected members coupled with the elongated member form an "x" cross section in the stake. A striking surface texture is provided on the top side of the horizontal support member opposite the stakes to enable a user to easily drive the stakes into the ground using a foot or tool such as a hammer.

[0012] The integral retention mechanisms have a recessed channel that has a hollow partially complete circle within the middle support of the horizontal member that has an entrance way through an aperture in the top side of the horizontal member. Alternatively, or additionally, the integral retention mechanisms may be formed on the bottom side of the horizontal member. The entrance way has two curved members that are biased towards each other. In use, a water line is deformed to pass the two curved members so as to rest in the recessed channel. As the water line expands to its original circular geometry, it is retained in the recessed channel by the two curved members. In one embodiment, the integral retention mechanisms are located within the first third portion and second third portion of the horizontal member.

[0013] In an alternative embodiment, the present invention offers a water line support device that has two stakes connected together at a body with a hose or water line receiving aperture located in the body between the two stakes. The hose or water line receiving aperture has a reinforced surface. The top of the reinforced surface has a textured surface for striking with a foot, hammer or other tool when driving the alternative water line support device into the ground.

[0014] The stakes extend away from the body and are substantially parallel to one another to define a channel. The channel of the stakes has an inner edge formed with a reinforced rail that extends along the surface of each stake and also an interior wall of the aperture in the body. The stakes are formed with pointed tips that enable the water support device to be easily driven into the ground when struck at the textured surface.

[0015] In use, the stakes are flexed at the body to an open position to enable a user to pass a water line or hose through the channel and into the hose or water line receiving aperture. The stakes then return to their original un-flexed position and retain the water line within the hose or water line receiving aperture. The stakes are held in the original un-flexed position when driven into the ground, thus securing the hose or water line within the hose or water line receiving aperture. Barbs may be formed to extend laterally from the stakes to inhibit removal of the water line support device from the soil.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0016] The novel features of this invention, as well as the invention itself, both as to its structure and its operation, will be best understood from the accompanying drawings, taken in conjunction with the accompanying description, in which similar reference characters refer to similar parts, and in which:

[0017] FIG. **1** is a front view of the hose and water line support device of the present invention showing the two separate stakes extending from the body and having a point to facilitate positioning of the hose and water line support device into the ground;

[0018] FIG. **2** is a lower perspective view of the hose and water line support device of the present invention showing a body having two stakes apart and extending perpendicular from the body and tapered to a point to facilitate insertion of the hose and water line support device of the present invention into position on the ground, and also formed with multiple hose-receiving apertures sized to securely receive a hose or water line and maintain that hose or water line above the ground;

[0019] FIG. **3** is a front plan view of the hose and water line support device of the present invention showing a first hose being positioned above an integral retention mechanism and showing a second hose within an integral retention mechanism;

[0020] FIG. **4** is a side view of a first hose and water line support device and a second hose and water line support device and showing a hose secured in an integral retention mechanism in each device such that the hose is firmly held above ground to enable an almond to pass freely beneath the hose;

[0021] FIG. **5** is an isometric view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention that includes a body formed with a hose or water line receiving aperture and two stakes extending downward from the aperture, and barbs may be formed to extend laterally from the stakes to inhibit removal of the water line support device from the soil;

[0022] FIG. **6** is a front view of the alternative embodiment shown in FIG. **5** and showing stakes flexing at body to an open position to allow placement of a hose into the aperture;

[0023] FIG. **7** is a front view of the alternative embodiment shown in FIGS. **5** and **6** and showing the hose and water line support device secured in the ground by its stakes and securely holding a hose within the aperture; and

[0024] FIG. **8** is a front view of an alternative embodiment of the hose and water line support device of the present invention having a body formed with integral retention mechanisms formed on both the upper and lower side of the body and showing a single stake extending from the body and having a point to facilitate positioning of the hose and water line support device into the ground.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0025] Referring now to FIG. **1** and FIG. **2**, there is shown a front view and lower perspective view of the hose and water line support device **100**. The hose and water line support device **100** comprises a horizontal support member **102** having a top side **103** and a bottom side **105** connected on opposite sides of a middle support **101** such that the top side **103**, middle support **101** and bottom side **105** form a typical I-beam configuration. A first stake **104** and a second stake **106** each extend perpendicularly downward from the bottom side **105** of horizontal support member **102**. In an embodiment, first stake **104** and second stake **106** are positioned with respect to one another so as to trifurcate the horizontal support member **102** into three equal portions; a first third portion, a middle third portion and a final third portion. Overall, the device is shaped like the Greek letter "π" (Pi). Middle support surface **101** is shown braced with diagonal supports **109**. Diagonal supports **109** also support

the top side **103** and bottom side **105** of horizontal support member **102**. A logo **117** can also be placed on middle support surface **101**.

[0026] First stake **104** and second stake **106** each is comprised of an elongated member **107** with a substantially pointed distal end **108** that is adapted to penetrate and remain in the ground **300**. The elongated member may have a circular, rectangular, or polygonal cross section. A projected member **110**, disposed toward each distal end **108** of stakes **104** and **106**, serves to increase the frictional engagement between the stakes **104** and **106** and ground **300**, and provide resistance to uplifting forces. A second projected member **111** (shown in FIG. **4**) can be located on stakes **104** and **106** on the opposite side of projected member **110**. The elongated member **107** coupled with projected member **110** and second projected member **111** form "X" shaped cross sectional area for stakes **104** and **106**. Stakes **104** and **106** can also be equipped with stake flare supports **112** opposite distal end **108**. Stake flare supports **112** ensure strong bond between horizontal support member **102** and stakes **104** and **106**. The stake flare supports **112** coupled with projected member **110** also increase the torsional rigidity of the stakes **104** and **106** to decrease risk of rotation of the horizontal support member **102** with respect to stakes **104** or **106**. Barbs may be formed to extend laterally from the stakes **104** and **106** to inhibit removal of the hose and water line support device **100** from the soil, as shown below in conjunction with FIGS. **5** and **6**.

[0027] The hose and water line support device **100** may be constructed from plastic, metal, wood, or other similarly semi-rigid material. The first and second stakes **104** and **106** are adapted to secure the hose and water line support device **100** to the ground **300**.

[0028] The horizontal support member **102** has a plurality of integral retention mechanisms **118**A, **118**B, **118**C and **118**D. The plurality of integral retention mechanisms **118**A, **118**B, **118**C and **118**D are each sized to receive and secure a drip line, water line, and the like. In an embodiment, integral retention mechanisms **118**A and **118**B are located in the first third portion of the horizontal support member **102**. Similarly, integral retention mechanisms **118**C and **118**D are located in the final third portion. Each integral retention mechanism **118**A, **118**B, **118**C, **118**D consists of a recessed channel **120** that is oriented perpendicular to the horizontal member **102** and parallel to the ground **300** (Shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**). This recessed channel **120** forms a hollow, partially complete circle that has an entrance way. The entrance way consists of a pair of curved members **122** and **124** biased toward each other, and a recess channel **120** accessible by an aperture **126** on the top side **103** of the horizontal member **102**.

[0029] The top surface **103** of the horizontal support member **102** has striking surface texture **119** located opposite the first and second stakes **104** and **106** making the hose and water line support device **100** adapted to be stepped on or otherwise pressed downwardly. The striking surface texture **119** also provides a user with a visual target to strike with a hammer or his or her foot when driving stakes **104** and **106** into the ground **300** as well as increase friction to prevent slippage of the hammer head or foot when striking the hose and water line support device **100**.

[0030] Referring now to FIG. **3**, in operation, stakes **104** and **106** are pressed into the ground **300** by apply pressure on striking surfaces **119**. When inserted into the ground, the pair of stakes **104** and **106** resist rotational and torsional forces that may act against the hose and water line support device **100**. Next, the retaining mechanisms **118**A, **118**B, **118**C and **118**D receive a tubular member therein, such as an irrigation hose **130**. Sufficient pressure is applied to the hose **130** in direction **132** such that the walls of irrigation hose **130** are deformed in directions **134** when passing through aperture **126** in retaining mechanism **118**A. Once the hose **130** has passed through the aperture **126**, the hose **130** returns to its original configuration and rests securely within the recessed channel **120**.

[0031] The inclusion of multiple retention mechanisms **118** on the first third and the final third of the horizontal support member **102** provides the ability to move drip lines after the hose and water line support device **100** has been secured to the ground **300**. More specifically, irrigation hoses **130** can initially be placed in support members **118**B and **118**C and then as the irrigated trees and their roots grow beyond the location of irrigation hoses **130**, those irrigation hoses **130** can be moved from support members **118**B and **118**C to **118**A and **118**D respectively to allow irrigation water to again reach the grown roots of the trees.

[0032] Referring now to FIG. **4**, a first hose and water line support device **100** is shown connected to a second hose and water line support device **100** by way of hose **130**. The hose **130** is held sufficiently above ground **300** to enable nut **400** to pass underneath the hose **130** without interference from the hose **130**. In addition, the act of holding hose **130** above or on the ground reduces the likelihood of gopher damage to the hose **130**.

[0033] Referring now to FIG. **5**, a single hose and water line support device of the present invention is shown and generally designated **200**. Hose and water line support device **200** includes a body **202** formed with a hose or water line receiving aperture **204** and having a reinforced surface **206** to provide a region of the device **200** capable of withstanding the pounding of the device into the soil. The top of the reinforced surface **206** has textured surface **205**.

[0034] Extending away from body **202** are a pair of stakes **208** and **210** which are substantially parallel and spaced apart to define a channel **212**. The stakes **208** and **210** adjacent the inner edge of channel **212** are formed with a reinforced rail **214** to provide additional strength to the device **200** as it is inserted into the soil. The reinforced rail **214** extends along the inner surface of each stake **208** and **210** as well as the interior wall **203** of aperture **204**. Additionally, stakes **208** and **210** are formed with pointed tips **216** and **218** respectively to facilitate the placement of the stakes into the soil **300**. Barbs **219** may be formed to extend laterally from the stakes **208** and **210** to inhibit removal of the water line support device from the soil. While barbs **219** are depicted extending laterally from stakes **208** and **210**, it is to be appreciated that barbs **219** may extend from reinforced rails **214** in addition, or as an alternative. Multiple barbs **219** on each stake **208** and **210** may also be used.

[0035] From FIG. **6** it can be appreciated that stakes **208** and **210** can flex at body **202** to an open position **220** (shown in dashed lines) to facilitate the placement of the hose or water line within the device **200**. With this flexibility, a hose or water line **250** can be positioned on the ground, and the hose and water line support device **200** may be positioned

over the hose or water line, separated to accept the hose or waterline within channel **212** and into position within the aperture **204** of body **202**.

[0036] In application, device **200** is used as shown in FIG. **7**. A hose or water line **250** is shown positioned in aperture **204** of device **200**. In order to place the hose or water line **250** into aperture **204**, the stakes **208** and **210** are first flexed to open position **220** as shown in FIG. **6**. Once flexed into the open position **220**, the hose or water line **250** easily is passed up through channel **212**. The hose or water line **250** is then compressed in direction **230** to enable the hose or water line **250** to pass into aperture **204**. Next, the stakes **208** and **210** are placed into soil **300**, such as by pounding on the reinforced area **206** at textured surface **205** of the device **200** driving it into the soil **300**. It is not necessary to completely bury stakes **208** and **210**. The hose or water line **250** is held securely within aperture **204** or device **200**.

[0037] Referring now to FIG. **8**, an alternative embodiment of the hose and water line support device generally designated **350**. Hose and water line support device **350** comprises a horizontal support member **351** having a top side **352** and a bottom side **353** connected on opposite sides of a middle support **354** such that the top side **352**, middle support **354** and bottom side **353** form a typical I-beam configuration. A first stake **355** extends perpendicularly downward from the bottom side **353** of horizontal support member **351**. Middle support surface **351** is shown braced with diagonal supports **360**. Diagonal supports **360*** also support the top side **354** and bottom side **353** of horizontal support member **351**.

[0038] Stake **355** is comprised of an elongated member, as was more fully discussed above, with a substantially pointed distal end that is adapted to penetrate and remain in the ground.

[0039] The horizontal support member **351** has a plurality of integral retention mechanisms **362** and **364** formed adjacent the top side **352**, and **366** and **368** formed adjacent the bottom side **353**. The plurality of integral retention mechanisms **362**, **364**, **366**, **368** are each sized to receive and secure a drip line, water line, and the like. Each integral retention mechanism **362**, **364**, **366**, **368**, as more fully described above, consists of a recessed channel that is oriented perpendicular to the horizontal member **351** and parallel to the ground **300** (Shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**).

[0040] As more fully discussed above, this recessed channel forms a hollow, partially complete circle that has an entrance way. The entrance way consists of a pair of curved members biased toward each other, and a recess channel accessible by an aperture **126** on the top side **103** of the horizontal member **102**. The placement of integral retention mechanisms **366** and **368** on the bottom side **353** provide a measure of safety when excessive force is applied downward on a retained hose or water line, such as when stepped on or driven over with farming equipment. In those circumstances, the hose or water line can disengage from the integral retention device due to the deformation of the hose or water line to exit the recess channel. This avoids excessive forces being applied to the hose and water line support device **350**, thereby reducing breakage in the field.

[0041] The foregoing descriptions of specific embodiments of the present invention have been presented for purposes of illustration and description. They are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the present invention to the precise forms disclosed, and obviously many modifications, combinations and variations are possible in light of the above teaching. The exemplary embodiments were chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the present invention and its practical application, to thereby enable others skilled in the art to best utilize the present invention and various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. While there have been shown what are presently considered to be the preferred embodiment of the present invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made herein without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.

What we claim is:

1. A support device comprising:
- a horizontal support member with a top and a bottom;
- at least one stake connected to and extending from the bottom of the horizontal support member; and
- at least one retention mechanism sized to receive and secure a drip line and located in the horizontal support member.

2. The support device of claim **1** wherein each stake has an elongated member with a pointed distal end that is adapted to penetrate a ground surface.

3. The support device of claim **2** wherein each elongated member has a least one projected member disposed toward the distal end wherein the at least one projected member increases the frictional engagement of each elongated member of each stake.

4. The support device of claim **3** wherein the at least one projected member further comprises a first projected member and a second projected member and wherein the first projected member and the second projected member are each connected to the elongated member so as to create an x pattern cross-section of the stake.

5. The support device of claim **1** wherein the at least one retention mechanism further comprises a recessed channel having a partially complete circle with an entrance way and wherein the recessed channel is accessible by an aperture on the top of the horizontal member.

6. The support device of claim **5** wherein the entrance way of the recessed channel further comprises a pair of curved members biased towards each other.

7. The support device of claim **6** having two integral retention mechanisms in the horizontal support member.

8. The support device of claim **6** having a plurality of integral retention mechanisms in the horizontal support member.

9. A support device comprising:
- a horizontal support member with a top side and a bottom side connected on opposite sides of a middle support such that the top side, middle support, and bottom side form an i-beam configuration;
- a first stake and a second stake, each connected to and extending from the bottom of the horizontal support member spaced apart so as to trifurcate the horizontal support member into a first third portion, a second third portion and a middle third portion between the first third portion and the second third portion;
- a first integral retention mechanism sized to receive and secure a drip line and located in the first third portion of the horizontal support member; and
- a second integral retention mechanism size to receive and secure a drip line and located in the second third portion of the horizontal support member.

10. The support device of claim **9** wherein the horizontal support member is braced with diagonal supports.

11. The support device of claim **9** further comprising a logo placed on the middle support of the horizontal support member.

12. The support device of claim **9** wherein the top surface of the horizontal member has a striking surface texture located opposite the first and second stakes.

13. The support device of claim **9** wherein the stakes each has an elongated member with a pointed distal end that is adapted to penetrate a ground surface.

14. The support device of claim **9** wherein the at least one retention mechanism further comprises a recessed channel having a partially complete circle with an entrance way and wherein the recessed channel is accessible by an aperture on the top of the horizontal member.

15. The support device of claim **14** wherein the entrance way of the recessed channel further comprises a pair of curved members biased towards each other.

16. A support device comprising:

a body formed with a water line receiving aperture and having a reinforced surface; and

a pair of stakes connected to and extending away from the body and which are substantially parallel and spaced apart to define a channel with an inner edge.

17. The support device of claim **16** further comprising a reinforced rail that extends along the inner edge of the channel and along an inner surface of each stake.

18. The support device of claim **16** wherein the reinforced surface of the body has a top textured surface.

19. The support device of claim **16** wherein the stakes are formed with pointed tips to facilitate the placement of the stakes into the ground, and having barbs extending from the stakes and positioned to inhibit removal of the stakes from the ground.

20. The support device of claim **16** wherein the stakes can flex at the body to an opening position to facilitate the placement of the water line within the receiving aperture of the support device.

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