

“Snowmtractor” Gearing To Go 50 Mph He Makes Custom Ice Sculptures

To build a wintertime family-friendly recreational vehicle, Kevin Alberts put snowmobile skis on the front of a Wheel Horse 1054 tractor.

First, he replaced the original rear wheels with used dune buggy paddle tires. The 1054 frame was wider and heavier than most standard Wheel Horse frames, so it handled the size and weight well. After reconfiguring the sheet metal, he redrilled the hubs to make them work.

He pieced together the better parts from two early 90's Polaris Indy 440 snow sleds he had in his boneyard to make one working engine.

“The sleds ran a maximum rpm red line just under 8,000,” says Alberts. “Online, they're rated between 70 and 75 hp., which I knew would be plenty.”

He used 2 by 4 tubing mounted to the bottom of the engine with 2-in. spacers added to bring the crankshaft centerline up to where it needed to be. Flipping the exhaust manifold gained enough vertical clearance to accommodate the steering.

Albert's next goal was to link the Polaris engine to the Wheel Horse transmission. By adapting the centrifugal clutch and outer plate, he lined everything up and trimmed the clutch spacers to make it work without the stock Wheel Horse clutch.

After some trial and error, he got the fuel system to operate as planned, and even the hood still fit over the motor.

The seat came from a friend. Alberts believes it's the only red, white and blue 1054 seat made.

“The Snowmtractor is mainly just a fun machine,” he says. “I even put 2-wheel dollies on the front to scoot around on the dirt.”

Albert's goal is to make it go faster, in the 50 mph. range.



Snowmtractor was made from a 1054 Wheel Horse tractor and parts from Polaris Indy 440 snowmobiles.

“The whole idea was to have another recreational vehicle to fly around, but the power transmission for more speed has been a bear,” he says. “The issue I'm fighting is too much power through a V-belt but too much speed for a chain. I'll be investigating a snowmobile chain box with lubrication to bring the jackshaft speeds down, then modify the jackshaft transmission to chain drive.”

Alberts says the Snowmtractor might never truly be done as he continues to tinker with it. He estimates he's put about \$2,000 into the machine, with most of the cost (\$1,500) going to tires and wheels.

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“Stan the Iceman” is a world-class professional ice sculptor who runs a “choose & cut” Christmas tree farm near Jordan, New York. He also operates “The Ice Farm” alongside his Christmas tree farm.

At The Ice Farm, Stan Kolonko creates spectacular hand-carved ice sculptures for weddings, banquets, corporate functions, birthdays, anniversaries, festivals, and other special events.

“Our ice is unmatched in quality and purity because we use reverse-osmosis filtration and Clinebell ice machines, which provide the clearest ice south of the Arctic Circle,” Kolonko says. While his sculptures can be enormous, most sculptures are approximately 40 in. high and 20 in. wide and weigh about 125 to 175 lbs. A circulating pump keeps ice clear as it's slowly freezing over several days. The typical cost for a sculpture is \$300 to \$500.

Kolonko says he first learned about carving ice sculptures when he was in culinary school. “After I saw them, I just had a passion for making them,” he says. Kolonko says the majority of his training came from “the school of hard knocks.” Now he competes in ice-sculpting events whenever possible and says he learns a lot watching and talking to other carvers from around the world. He says most sculptures take about 1 hr., “but I can spend days on large, elaborate pieces.”

Sculptures for special events and festivals are carved in advance and carefully delivered in pieces and assembled on-site. Incorporating corporate logos into a sculpture is one of The Ice Farm's specialties. Once removed from the freezer, a typical sculpture will last between 4 and 6 hrs. for peak viewing.

Kolonko says he's experimented with a variety of tools for ice sculpting, “using anything that will alter ice,” but the primary tool for roughing out a sculpture is an electric chainsaw. Once the basic shape is established, he uses an array of shaping and grinding



Stan Kolonko is a world-class ice sculptor who, in addition to operating a Christmas tree farm, produces his own ice blocks and carves custom ice sculptures as a year-round business.

tools. One of his most popular products is a party luge, a simple ice sculpture that can be used as a drink or shot chiller. They're popular for parties, bars, and martini displays.

The Ice Farm's Christmas tree business is open from the day after Thanksgiving through the holidays and focuses on helping families carry on the age-old tradition of walking a tree farm and choosing and cutting their own special live tree. “We've planted 15,000 trees in the past three years, so there will be plenty of trees to cut for years to come,” Kolonko says.

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Tow Rope Doubles Sledding Fun

Boyd Brue's 14 grandchildren, their spouses, and five great-grandchildren get double the fun out of downhill sledding thanks to his pickup-powered sled tow that pulls sledders back up after every downhill run.

“The tow will pull up to three sledders at a time up the hill on their sleds,” says Brue. “Meanwhile, I stay warm in the cab.”

The sled tow consists of a length of 3/4-in. poly rope with three grab bars attached to it with carabiner clips. The rope is attached to the upper end of a 3/16-in. steel cable and at the lower end of the return rope. The cable and rope total about 800 ft. for a 400-ft. long loop. The cable passes through two pulleys at the top of the hill and the return rope through two pulleys at the bottom of the loop.

When the grab bars for sledders are near the top of the hill, the rope portion of the loop is at the lower of the two pulleys, about 7 ft. above ground. From there, the steel cable passes through the lower pulley to a second, higher pulley attached to a tree farther up the hill.

The steel cable portion of the loop travels down the slope and across a fairly level area, where it's attached to the front of the pickup. A rope attached to the rear of the pickup runs to two pulleys on a wooden yoke close to the ground. The two pulleys are spaced about 4 ft. apart and are required to keep the return rope of the loop out of the path of the pickup. A separate rope attaches the wooden yoke



Ski tow cable and rope total about 800 ft. for a 400-ft. long loop.

to a hand winch that is mounted to a 2 by 6 board. It, in turn, is anchored to a stake in the ground. The winch allows Brue to tighten the loop for sledding use or for storing the cable off the ground.

“With the cable and rope attached to the pickup, it's part of the loop,” says Brue. “As I back up, the grab bars and the sledders travel up the slope. Driving forward retracts the grab bars to the start position.”

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Ever Heard Of Nutritious Tiger Nuts?

A backyard weed might be worth a second look. Yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) produces a spikey crown of thin leaves and yellow flowers and can quickly overtake a lawn. But dig some up, and you'll find several marble-sized brown tubers at its roots. These are tiger nuts, and they can be used to make a traditional Spanish beverage. They fall between tubers and nuts in terms of nutrition, as they have a moderate amount of starch and protein and impressive levels of magnesium, potassium, and vitamins C and E. The nuts are gaining a reputation as an excellent health food.

Despite their name, tiger nuts are not nuts but rather a member of the sedge family. They have been cultivated since at least the time of ancient Egypt, as many mummies have been found buried with them.

Unlike other ancient grains like quinoa or millet, tiger nuts never gained widespread popularity. Yellow nutsedge is hard to grow densely, so it's challenging to cultivate enough for a profit. Today, the nuts remain a niche product across parts of Africa and Spain, where they are the prized ingredient in a milky drink known as horchata de chufa.

It takes 6 to 7 months to grow tiger nuts. The seeds germinate best when first soaked overnight in lukewarm water. After an early spring planting, the tubers will germinate in about 10 days. You can dig the tubers up like potatoes once the plant has died back in late fall. Tiger nuts can also be grown in pots filled with nutrient-rich soil and placed in warm, sunny locations. Keep the soil moist and mulched to prevent it from drying out.



Aged tiger nuts are used in horchata. Dried nuts are soaked for at least twelve hours and then ground into a paste that is squeezed in cheese bags and strained out, leaving a pale white beverage.

They taste great fresh but are traditionally dried to preserve their shelf life. They get sweeter as they age, as the sugars become concentrated. Their consistency resembles dried coconut, with a flavor like roasted chestnuts. You can eat peeled tiger nuts on their own, mixed into oatmeal, or as a yogurt topping. Unpeeled nuts should be soaked overnight.

Aged tiger nuts are used in the Spanish drink called horchata. Dried nuts are soaked for at least 12 hours and then ground into a paste that is squeezed in cheese bags and strained out, leaving a pale white beverage. Water, sugar, vanilla, and a dash of lemon and cinnamon are all added. Expect to get 5 or 6 liters of horchata from 1 kilo of nuts.

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