Tad Schreiner converted a Bolens garden tractor into this tracked tractor, adding an automotive rear end and tracks made from tractor tires.

To make the tracks, Schreiner cut the sidewalls off a pair of 6 by 30 bias-ply tires.

Tracked Tractor Built For $150

"When I opened up a copy of FARM SHOW a couple issues ago, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the home-built tracked tractor put together by Jim Brown of Lincoln, Vermont," says Tad Schreiner, Prior Lake, Minn. "I had just finished building my own tracked tractor and I was surprised we had both used some of the same ideas."

Schreiner converted a Bolens garden tractor, adding an automotive rear end and tracks made from tractor tires.

"It was a fun project. Getting everything to work together was a bit of a challenge but it was worth every minute of it the first time I took it for a ride. It's powerful for its size and extremely maneuverable," says Schreiner.

He obtained a 1963 Bolens 800 garden tractor with a blown engine and went to work on it. He took off the front axle, replacing it with the rear end off a Dodge Caravan, which he narrowed up to fit the frame. The axle bolts solidly in place. He put donut-type 15-in. spare tires on front and left the 23-in. tractor tires on back.

He installed an 8 hp Briggs & Stratton engine, reworking the mounting blocks and modifying the hood. The original transmission remained in place.

A steel pipe subframe under the tractor's original frame allows the front axle to slide back and forth. "To put the tracks on, I slide the front axle all the way back so that the front and rear tires touch each other. After installing the tracks, I pull the front axle forward and drop a steel pin into place on each side to lock the tracks in place," says Schreiner.

To make the tracks, Schreiner cut the sidewalls off a pair of 6 by 30 bias-ply rear tires off a rear engine Allis Chalmers cultivating tractor. He ran a row of sheet metal screws through the inside middle part of the track, spacing the screws about 3 1/2 in. apart. The screw heads dig into the tires and help keep them from coming off when turning.

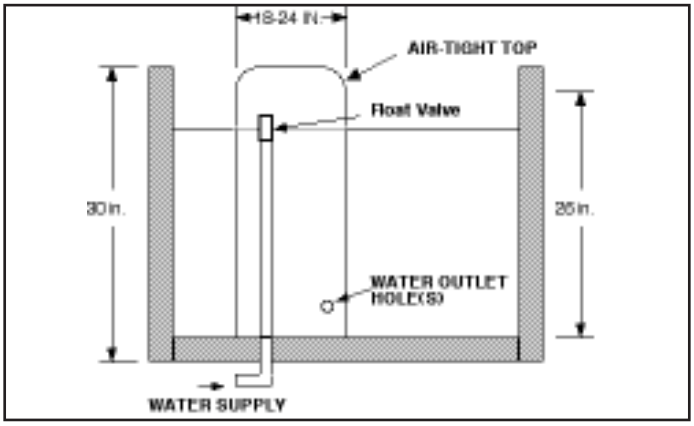
A pair of steering levers are used to control the drum brakes on the tractor's rear axle.

He used 11 ga. steel to build a 50-in. wide, 16-in. high blade on front of the tractor. The blade can be raised up and down and locked into place at six different positions, by pulling on a lever that used to raise and lower the mower deck. The blade can also be angled from side to side. A spring-loaded pin inside a steel cylinder mounted behind the blade is used to control blade angle. A cable runs from the pin back to a lever on the hood. Pulling on the lever releases the pin. Pushing another lever that's attached by linkage to the blade moves it either to the left or right.

"It works surprisingly well and does very little damage to the ground. It's also very maneuverable," says Schreiner, who finished building the rig last summer. "I painted it Caterpillar yellow and applied decals on the sides and front that read Taderpillar T 850. I call it the 850 because it has an 8 hp engine and a 50-in. blade.

"I chose the Bolens tractor because it has a cast iron rear end and transmission which is much stronger than aluminum and should keep the tracks from snapping the rear axle. The tractor was given to me. I paid $35 for the front axle and $70 for the tractor tires that I used to make the treads. I already had the engine. My total cost was only about $150."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tad Schreiner, 16258 Svel Lane, Prior Lake, Minn. 55372 (ph 952 447-5421).



Flowing Water Keeps Tank Ice-Free

Frozen floats and valves in livestock watering tanks used to be a problem for Paul Albrecht, Walnut, Illinois. But he solved the problem with a no-energy solution that stops ice from forming.

He started with the fact that water coming into the tank was above freezing. Albrecht figured that if he could keep that warmer water around the float and valve, they wouldn't freeze.

He found a 30-gal. steel drum and cut out the bottom of the drum and also cut holes in the sides of it toward the bottom so water could flow out of it into the tank.

The inlet for the tank is a 3/4-in. pipe at the bottom of the tank, with a Ritchie tank float valve assembly on it. He simply sets the drum over the valve and as long as the cattle drink from it regularly, the water inside the barrel doesn't freeze.

"The top of the drum is held in place with a clamp, so it's easy to get to the valve if I need to," he says.

Albrecht says this setup keeps the valve open and the float working, but ice still freezes on the tank in the coldest months. "I still have to chop open a hole for the cattle to drink from once or twice a day in the middle of the winter," he says. "But since I no longer need the tank heater to keep the water flowing, it costs a lot less to operate."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul Albrecht, R.R.1, Box 162, 106 Pleasant Court, Walnut, Ill. 61376 (ph 815 379-2598).

Make Your Own Chicken Plucker

When Herrick Kimball decided to raise a few chickens for home use, the Moravia, New York, farmer soon came face to face with the messy job of chicken plucking.

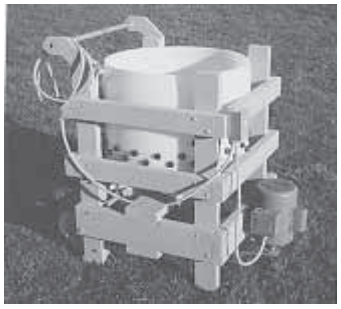
He borrowed a table-top chicken plucker only to find it didn't work as well as he'd expected. He decided he was better off plucking them by hand.

Then he discovered a friend's tub-style mechanical plucker. This simple home-built machine was patterned after a commercial plucker. It worked great so he decided to build one of his own.

After building three prototype machines, he came up with what he calls the Whizbang Chicken Plucker. It consists of a wooden frame and an electric motor, as well as rubber plucking fingers, rubber belts, bearings and pulleys, all of which were off-the-shelf parts. He figures you can build a Whizbang plucker for under $500.

Kimball put together a detailed, 58-page plan book that was published by Back Home Magazine. It's available for $24, including shipping and handling. Kimball says there's also a Yahoo discussion group for people interested in building a chicken plucker for in home or small-farm poultry processing. The address is: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/whizbangchickenpluckers/

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Herrick Kimball, Tradesman Publications, Box 1117, Moravia, N.Y. 13118 (E-mail: hckimball@baldcom.net); to order contact: FARM SHOW Followup, BackHome Plans, Box 70, Hendersonville, N. C. 28793 (ph 800 992-2546).



Tub-style Whizbang Chicken Plucker is housed inside a wooden frame and powered by an electric motor.

Rubber plucking fingers remove feathers.