

Buggy Makes Garden Work Easier

When Robert Hettler set out to design his "straddle buggy," he wanted it to be both versatile and low-cost. After 10 years of use, the Armstrong, B.C. vegetable grower says the buggy has made planting and weeding much easier and more efficient.

"You lie down on it and pedal with both feet," he explains. "It's a low-tech machine with an 18 by 4-ft. plywood shelf across the rear for hauling planting material, harvested crops, or just extra weight for traction."

Hettler lies on a wooden platform fitted with a thick foam pad. A metal rod framework allows him to stretch a tarp over the top for sun and rain protection.

The unit is 48 in. wide to match the width of his rototiller and vegetable beds. It's supported by four front tires (3 by 21-in.) taken from dirt bikes, but he suggests mountain bike tires would also work well. He paid only about \$20 per tire, rim and bolt assembly.

"The drive mechanism is made up of single-speed and 10-speed recycled bike parts, and the frame is thin-wall 3/4-in. tubing with 2-in. tube legs, which the wheels are mounted to," he explains. "The whole thing was built with a buzz box welder and a metal chop saw."

Hettler says the key to the design's success is gearing down the drive. He used

double reduction so that four pedal turns equals one wheel revolution.

"I used the 5 or 6-tooth single-speed bike sprockets with the largest 10-speed sprockets, holding them with purchased pillow blocks and welding them to round rod," he says.

Because Hettler's design called for only one rear wheel to be driven, construction was simpler, with no need for a differential. The only drawback is occasional slippage on muddy soil.

The pedals have stirrup straps and are easily rotated with the feet, leaving the operator's hands free to work in the field. Metal steering arms reach to the front and are hand-operated when a direction change is necessary. Hettler says a tie rod across the front keeps the front tires aligned.

"We use the straddle buggy mainly for planting garlic, onions, lettuce, broccoli and strawberries," he explains. "We also like it for weeding young crops and for harvesting low-lying crops like strawberries and cucumbers."

The unit cost Hettler between \$300 and \$400 for materials.

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Robert Hettler built this "straddle buggy" to take some of the pain and drudgery out of planting and weeding. Overhead tarp provides sun and rain protection.



Buggy's drive mechanism is made up of recycled bike parts. A double reduction chain sprocket system means four turns of the pedal equals one wheel revolution.

Swedish Work Cart Lets You Lay Down On The Job

Laying face down on a work cart when working a vegetable or berry patch isn't just for people with bad backs. It helps get work done faster and easier.

"It does save your back but it also helps you do a better job," says John Bashaw, Pendragon Fabrication, importer and distributor of the Swedish Drangen Lay Down Cart.

The operator steers and controls the speed of the cart with their feet. Both hands are free.

"The first customer I had was a third generation cut flower grower," recalls Bashaw. "He put in 25,000 plants a year. The next year after buying the cart he doubled production. Another young couple in Oregon bought a cart when they started their vegetable farm. They farm 17 acres by themselves using our cart."

Bashaw points to a University of Wisconsin study that found a person could pick 23 percent more snap beans in a 20-minute period with the cart than they could without the cart. "If that was the first 20 minutes, think how much more productive they would be at the end of the day," he says.

Bashaw says the way the machine fits a body's natural position is what makes the

difference between it and other such carts. Designers looked at what shape the body takes in zero gravity. They adapted that shape to their cart. The angle of the legs to the chest and the knees on the Drangen is a natural stress-free position, explains Bashaw.

"It gives you stability that you don't get laying flat," he says. "The Drangen can be quickly adjusted to fit the individual body shape, whether short or tall. If you get sore on it, it's because you haven't adjusted it to your body."

The Drangen cart comes with wheels or tracks and with a seat for sitting upright. A base unit with tracks sells for \$9,500. The upright seat adds another \$1,200. Other accessories include trays and platforms for seedling flats or harvest containers, rotary brush weeders, harvesting conveyers, canopies and four-wheel steer trailers. Custom-built equipment is also available. Carts can be equipped with either gas or electric motors. They can be equipped for one to four workers.

"The only problem with them is that once a person uses it, you don't want to give it up," says Bashaw.



Drangen work cart makes it easier to work vegetable and berry patches. The operator steers and controls speed of cart with his feet.

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Hybrid Tractor Painted Yellow & Green

Irvin Seibel's G-955 tractor attracts both Minneapolis Moline and Oliver fans. That's because the tractor was built in Charles City, Iowa, by White after it took over the two tractor companies. The hybrid tractor has a 100 hp Minneapolis Moline front end and motor, and an 1855 Oliver rear end. It was sold under three different brand names: green and white as an Oliver, yellow and white as a Minneapolis Moline, and red and white as a Cockschtut.

When Seibel purchased his Minneapolis Moline version from a Connecticut farmer last year, he decided to make the unique tractor's history more visible by painting it in both Oliver and Minneapolis Moline colors.

"There's not too many of them left any-

more. This is the only Minneapolis Moline that ran 2,200 rpm's," Seibel says. "The farmer that sold it to me pulled a six-bottom plow with it and said it was good on fuel. It's a heavy tractor, 15,000 lbs., and he said it also did well at county fair tractor pulls."

Seibel, a retired Bethel, Penn., farmer, has restored between 30 and 40 tractors through the years. He farmed with both Oliver and Minneapolis Moline so he appreciates the hybrid tractor.

He plans to show it at the Rough and Tumble Engineers Historical Association Threshermen's Reunion Aug. 12-15 in Kinzers, Penn., and at the Hart-Parr Oliver Collectors Association Summer Show Sept. 3-6 in Mechanicsburg, Penn.

Seibel's hybrid is the 402nd tractor of the



Irvin Seibel's unusual G-955 tractor has a Minneapolis Moline front end and an 1855 Oliver rear end.

930 G-955s built. He's interested in hearing from other owners of the hybrid tractor. Seibel, 99 Beagle Rd., Bethel, Penn. 19507 (ph 717 202-7400). Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Irvin