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## Trench-Digging Wheels Added To Ford Bronco

"I turned my Ford Bronco into a ditching machine by removing the stock wheels and bolting on home-built 3 1/2-ft. high, 3-in. wide steel wheels. It lets me drive through rice and soybean fields making trench tracks that drain unwanted water off the fields," says Perry Smith, Church Point, La.

Smith uses the steel wheels on his 1985 4-WD Bronco, which is powered by a Windsor 351 cu. in. engine and a C6 automatic transmission with 5.60 gears. The big steel wheels increased the rig's clearance from 10 to 24 in., which keep the truck from getting hung up in deep mud.

"I paid \$100 per wheel, which was well

worth the money," says Smith. "The big steel wheels leave a 3-in. wide trench up to 12 in. deep as I drive through mud and standing water. In rice fields I generally use the wheels after the rice has germinated and most of the water has been drained off the field. Any standing water in the low spots has to be removed. I also use the wheels to drain standing water in soybeans after heavy rains."

He had a local machine shop make the wheels, which mount on the Bronco's original wheel hubs. The wheels are equipped with metal ribs on both sides, which provides traction in deep mud. In addition, a piece of

rebar is welded to the outer edge of each wheel in a wavy, zig zag pattern to improve their grip.

Smith cut the front and rear fenders out in order to make room for the big wheels. He welded in a 1/4-in. thick steel plate above each wheel to support the wheel wells. "I had to cut out 6 in. of the floorboard to make room for the wheels when turning," says Smith.

"I can drive across soybean fields at 20 mph. However, the solid steel wheels make for very rough riding on the road, so the only time I drive on a road is to cross it."

Driving slow through deep mud can cause the transmission oil to get hot, so Smith

mounted the radiator and fan off a small car on front of the Bronco's radiator for extra cooling capacity. The radiator is protected by a home-built rectangular bumper made from 2-in. steel pipe.

The Bronco doesn't have any doors or windows. "One time I was driving on a levee and accidentally rolled the Bronco over, damaging the hood, windshield and doors. Instead of spending the money for new doors and windows I just removed them," notes Smith.

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## "How I Made My Tractor Better"

Bryan Kennedy, Vance, Ala., recently sent us photos of three "enhancements" he made to his new Kubota M6040 tractor. "All three ideas make my tractor better," says Kennedy, who had help from his wife Susan.

### Rollbar-Mounted Stereo System

For about \$250, Kennedy set up a stereo system with components that mount on a removable, vinyl-covered "box" that's U-bolted to the tractor's rollbar. The box supports a JVC CD/radio equipped with a remote control and Pioneer 6 by 9-in. speakers, all purchased at Best Buy. A simple rubber radio antenna from a local parts store rounds out the package.

The box is made from 3/4-in. thick mdf board, with the joints glued with Liquid Nails and held together with 1 5/8-in. sheetrock screws. The box is covered with black vinyl

and held in place by U-bolts - 1 on each side and 1 on top.

"I drilled three 4-in. dia. holes on back of the box and used pvc drain grates to hold the speakers in place," says Kennedy. "The holes allow heat to escape and provide the speakers with 'breathing room'."

"I keep this tractor parked in a shed the chances are I won't have to worry about rain. However, I did install a marine shield over the radio. Also, I plan to keep a piece of vinyl on hand to snap over the speakers if I ever get caught in bad weather."



Stereo system components mount on a removable, vinyl-covered "box" that's U-bolted to tractor's rollbar. PVC drain grates on back hold speakers in place.

"Any time I'm bush hogging there's a chance I'll come across rodents or reptiles that need to be eliminated for one reason or another," says Kennedy. "So I bought an

### Rollbar-Mounted Gun

H&R .410 gauge youth single shot shotgun at a pawn shop for \$50 and refurbished it. Then I attached a plastic gun rack to the rollbar so I can keep the gun with me on the tractor."

### Quick-Tach Grapple Bucket

"New 6-ft. grapple buckets cost \$1,500 or more, but I built mine for only about \$700," says Kennedy. "I bought a used 6-ft. Bobcat bucket with the bottom severely bent. I cut out the bottom of the bucket and cut the sides back at a lower angle. Then I bought several feet of 2-in. sq. tubing, 1/4-in. thick, and cut and welded it into place. I built my own bucket teeth by cutting 45 degree angles in the tubing and closing up the ends with welding material."

The grapple arm is a 36-in. long commercial unit called the "Thumb" that he bought from Greens Machine of Centralia, Ill. (ph 618

532-4631; www.greens-machine.com). It came complete with mounting bracket, grapple arm, and hydraulic cylinder. The grapple arm can either be welded or bolted in place.

"After assembly I sprayed the entire unit with Rustoleum semi gloss black paint and installed hydraulic hoses that I had made up at a local shop," says Kennedy.

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Plastic gun rack attaches to tractor rollbar, allowing Kennedy to keep a .410 gauge shotgun with him on tractor. He also built his own 6-ft. quick-tach grapple bucket for only about \$700.



## Take Us To Your Barber

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