

Mini Sculptures Made Out Of Mud

Mud can make a mess of things around the farm, but for making sculptures it can't be beat, says Bonnie Prus, Athertonville, Ky., who transforms mud clay into figures of humans and animals that brim with personality.

Prus's self-taught hobby has sprouted into a full-time venture called "Mud Fancies". She sells figures of old mountain women with pipes in their mouths wearing sun bonnets and long dresses while hoeing corn or bending over washtubs. She also makes statuettes of men with straw hats lying back and taking a snooze, and figures of horses, bears, chickens, cats, and turtles. She uses acorn caps for baskets, grass hay string for belts and bucket handles and carves accessories like pipes, rifles and canes from wood.

"I've never had any formal training, and I don't copy from photographs," says Prus. "I just use my imagination and memories of people and places I've seen. It takes about three hours to form each piece."

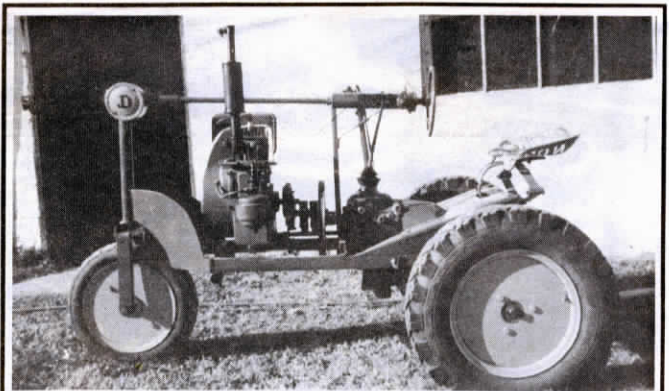
Prus uses clay mud dug from a muddy field next to her home. After the pieces are sculpted, Prus sets them in the sun to dry, or



Mud clay figures of animals like this "I Love You" bear brim with personality.

in winter dries them on a wood stove. Then she coats them with clear glue to prevent chipping and a light spray of matte finish paint to help preserve them. She mounts each sculpture on a small, flat rock. Every piece is signed and dated.

"Mud Fancies" sell for about \$15 each. For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill and Bonnie Prus, 2757 Youngers Creek Road, New Haven, Ky. 40051 (ph 502 549-5253).



This 4-ft. high tractor has 15-in. mud grip car wheels on back and a single 13-in. solid rubber car spare tire in front. It's powered by a 1 1/2 hp gas engine.

Home-Built "Toy" Tractor

"My three sons learned to drive tractor on this 4-ft. high toy tractor that I built in 1952. I now use it to pull a trailer and 50-gal. barrel to water small trees," says Dean Fechter, Belvue, Kan.

The tractor is powered by a Fairbanks Morse 1 1/2 hp gas engine off an old bale elevator. It has 15-in. mud grip car wheels on back and a single 13-in. solid rubber automotive spare tire in front. The 3-speed transmission was salvaged from a 1928 Chevrolet car and the rear end from an old Model T. A large pulley mounted on the front of the transmission gears the transmission down, as does a large chain-drive

sprocket between the transmission and rear end.

The cast iron seat was borrowed from an old horse-drawn Rock Island plow. A right angle gearbox, salvaged from the straw spreader on an old 1940s-era Deere combine, is used to steer the tractor. The letters "JD" are stamped on the gearbox cover and are merged together to look like the letter "D". "Deere used this logo on some of its older model equipment," notes Fechter. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dean Fechter, 21855 Oregon Trail, Belvue, Kan. 66407 (ph 913 456-7622).

GRADUAL REDUCTIONS HAVE STARTED

Dutch Government Outlaws Farm Chemicals

Dutch farmers are bracing themselves for big changes in the way they farm since their government virtually outlawed farm chemicals - including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and nearly every other chemical applied to farm crops and fields.

The change won't happen immediately. The goal is to cut chemical usage by one third by 1995 and to one half by the end of the 1990's. If all still goes well at that point, the government plans to further reduce their usage until they are totally eliminated.

It's a risky experiment for the tiny country which exports up to 70 percent of all its agricultural production, accounting for a major part of total trade revenue. But pressure from non-ag groups, and the strength of the organic farming movement, have prompted the strong action, making the Netherlands the most strongly anti-chemical country in the world.

Government researchers throughout the country are concentrating on projects designed to reduce chemical usage. Already, new methods used in some studies have resulted in an overall reduction of 60 percent in herbicides and a 50 to 60 percent reduction in fungicides without hurting yields. Crop rotation and use of rotary hoes and other mechanical weeders have been the most effective, as well as later planting (one study showed fewer broadleaf weeds germinate in late-sown wheat, for instance) and using mixes of different varieties to cut down on diseases.

One big problem is coming up with a way to encourage farmers to quickly

adopt the new methods. At this time it looks like the government will either offer a premium for crops produced with less chemicals or direct payments will be made to farmers who adopt the new "integrated" systems. (Excerpted from FARMER'S WEEKLY)

IV FEEDING HELPS SCIENTISTS FIND "OUTER LIMITS" OF CROPS

These Soybean Plants Are In "Intensive Care"

Intravenous feeding of soybeans and corn helps plant scientists find "outer limits" of crop improvement so they know just what's possible to achieve under ideal conditions.

Dale Blevins, professor of agronomy at the University of Missouri says feeding



Nutrients can be fed directly into "veins" of soybeans.

nutrients directly into the "veins" of crops is the perfect way to feed them. Although he explains that the idea obviously will never be practical for field crops, he thinks the idea could be justified on high-value horticultural or orchard crops.

In soybeans, he adds methionine, the limiting amino acid in soybean protein, and has been able to increase methionine content in soybeans by 20 percent. If that level could be achieved consistently in the field, poultry and swine farmers wouldn't have to add supplements to soybean meal to make up for methionine.

"We've also tried boric acid in the IV's and found more branching and more pods on branches," says Blevins.

In other experiments, IV's were used for phosphorous feeding and in corn, direct-feeding of the hormone cytokinin has shown good results.

By "pushing" crops to their peak levels of performance, the scientists say they're discovering just how far they've still got to go in plant breeding programs or in developing new plant feeding techniques.

Climatologist Predicts Drought In '93

By Bill Gergen, Associate Editor

If weather history repeats itself, this summer will be drier than normal. But it won't be nearly as dry as 1993, says Dr. Louis Thompson, Emeritus Associate Dean of Agriculture at Iowa State University.

Fifteen years ago, while working as an editor at Successful Farming Magazine, I attended a speech by Thompson during which he predicted a drought in 1992. I never forgot his dire prediction and when this summer started out dry, I decided to track Thompson down and see what he'd have to say now about his prediction.

Thompson was an Iowa State agronomist for 30 years and gained a national reputation for his success in predicting weather patterns. He predicted the drought cycle of the 1970s and the wet cycle that followed from 1978 to 1982. He also predicted the resulting buildup in grain surpluses and falling commodity and land prices. He bases his predictions on studies of cyclical weather patterns over the past 200 years. Although Dr. Thompson retired from teaching, he's still conducting an Iowa State research project and has

participated in 60 seminars over the past five years.

"According to my calculations, we're right in the middle of a dry cycle," says Thompson. "If it weren't for the El Nino that's occurring now (an abnormal warming of the Pacific Ocean), we'd have a severe drought this summer."

Thompson says the really dry weather will occur next year. "All major droughts in the past 100 years have normally followed years when we had an El Nino and were already in a dry cycle, so I think we're likely to have a severe drought next year."

What do his predictions mean to you?

"Although this summer will be drier than normal, most of the Corn Belt has good subsoil moisture so the effects will be moderate. Still, I'm expecting a bull market for corn and soybeans. The driest areas will be the central part of the Corn Belt, including Illinois, eastern Iowa, and surrounding areas."

The good news is that he predicts another wet cycle the last half of this decade.