

“Furniture Farm” Turns Live Trees Into Chairs

A British company has come up with a radically different way of creating furniture. They shape living trees into chairs, tables and lamps, and then “harvest” the furniture in one solid piece without joints or any hardware connectors.

Founder Gavin Munro started experimenting with the idea of making furniture out of living trees in 2006. “We’ve done a complete rethink of how wood is used as a material,” Munro says. In 2008, the company planted 3,000 willow and other species of trees in a 2.5-acre field in central England. Using furniture-shaped molds, Munro and his staff guide and graft branches into desired shapes.

The company’s goal is to create the world’s most eco-friendly furniture. “My chairs and tables are formed from one solid piece of wood, with no joints, no weak points and no unnecessary waste,” says Munro. “By the time the first pieces go on sale in 2016, it will represent 4 years of careful tending by us and 4 years of growth by Mother Nature.” At present, the company has about 400 pieces of furniture being grown.

While waiting 8 years for a chair to be made might test one’s patience, Munro adds the perspective of time and cost required to make a chair the conventional way. “First you’ve got to grow the trees, so allow about 50 years. Then you’ve got to chop them down. Next you have to transport the logs to a sawmill, so you’ll need to build roads and buy trucks. You’ll need to build a large facility to store the planks. The wood is then transported somewhere else and chopped up and stuck together, creating joints that will eventually come loose and fall apart.”

The company’s website offers this contrasting 4-stage recipe for “growing” furniture: 1) Plant trees and water well; 2) Train and graft chosen shoots around the frame; 3) Once the chair has formed, leave to thicken for a few years; 4) HARVEST! Season well, plane and polish to your chosen finish.

“We’ll only make 50 or so pieces per year but for every 100 trees there are 1,000 branches to care for, and 10,000 shoots to prune at the right time. It’s an art form in itself keeping track of everything.”

When available, chairs will cost \$3,500 to \$4,000 and lamps \$1,500 to \$2,000.

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Furniture-shaped molds form living trees into chairs, tables and lamps. Like the partially finished chair at left, they will have no joints so there’s no need for glues or metal fasteners, says company founder Gavin Munro.

“Toothed” Collars Protect Guard Dogs From Predators

Jesus Burgos Peñasco is a Spanish artisan blacksmith with a unique skill: He builds custom protective collars for any size or breed of livestock guard dog. His custom products are in demand all over the world.

Peñasco says that even though guard dogs are typically large, strong and well-trained to protect the livestock they’re guarding, they have limited defense against a large dominant wolf or a pack of wolves. He says a wolf will attack a dog’s neck or throat and can often maim or kill the dog.

Peñasco makes rigid metal collars that look like armour for a medieval warrior. The sturdy metal collars have razor-sharp metal teeth protruding around the outside, but they’re smooth on the inside with buffed edges so the collar doesn’t irritate the dog wearing it. Each one is custom-made to the exact size of a dog’s neck. The metal spikes are 3/8 to 1/2-in. long and circle the full collar. Peñasco also makes a custom-sized metal chest and throat protector with protruding spikes.

Both of the devices have holes to allow the animal’s coat to protrude through. The collar is hinged and locked on with a padlock so the dog can’t accidentally lose it. The throat



Jesus Burgos Peñasco makes custom protective collars for any size or breed of livestock guard dog. The rigid metal collars have razor-sharp teeth protruding around the outside.

protector connects to the collar on top and is held on the bottom with a leather strap.

Peñasco says any dog wearing one of his custom collars will probably only get bitten in the neck or chest one time. Even though the razor sharp teeth are stationary, one hard bite to the device would cause serious damage to the attacker’s mouth. Even though the collars are rigid metal and provide serious protection for the guard dogs, Peñasco says the collars don’t inhibit the dog’s movement.

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