



Charlie Melton is well known throughout central Ohio for his collection of imaginatively restored Wheel Horse tractors, shown here in his back yard.

10 WHEEL HORSE GARDEN TRACTORS “REDESIGNED” IN FANTASTIC WAYS

“Believe It Or Not” Tractor Collection

This group of 10 Wheel Horse tractors, put together by Ohio resident Charlie Melton, is one of the most unusual tractor collections we’ve ever seen. Every one of the tractors has received a radical “makeover”.

“I like to recycle things and enjoy the challenge of making something different without spending a lot of money,” says Melton. “I buy Wheel Horse tractors in junked-out condition so I get them cheap. I put new engines in them and usually new tires, too, and paint them with the original Wheel Horse red and white colors. All the tractors in my collection were originally built in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. The manufacturer kept the same grille for all those years so all my tractors have a common look.”

Melton credits David Cross of Bainbridge, Ohio, for supplying him with Wheel Horses. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charlie Melton, 6941 Eyman Rd., Washington Court House, Ohio 43160. Thanks to photographer Gail Streitenberger for supplying most of the photos.



Tractor Airplane. Melton mounted a kit plane on back of a 1970 Wheel Horse equipped with dual rear wheels. The plane, which has a 21-ft. wingspan, still has its original 36 hp Volkswagen gas engine and is decorated with French Maltese crosses on back. Melton grabs the prop and turns it to start the engine. “It’s made a new aviator out of me. I can ride in the cockpit and drive it all around,” says Melton. “I bought the plane used. It has actually been flown and still has the original altimeter and all the gauges.”



Antique Steel Wheeler. This 1970 Wheel Horse is equipped with 6-spoked steel wheels and used to pull a steel-wheeled, 3-bottom, horse-drawn cultivator plow. The front wheels are off an old horse-drawn implement while the rear wheels are handmade. The tread for the rear wheels was made by cutting apart the flywheel off an old threshing machine. Power is supplied by an 8 hp Briggs & Stratton gas engine.



6-WD 2 Plus 2. This 6-WD model is equipped with two 1968 Wheel Horse rear ends, two 5 hp Briggs & Stratton engines, and two seats, one facing backward. The rear axle is belt-driven off



Half Track. This 1966 Wheel Horse is equipped with 8-in. wide, 24-in. long “half tracks” and twin steering axles. The track was made by cutting up tractor tires. “This tractor has a lot of flotation and will go almost anywhere in the snow. It also does nice wheelies,” says Melton.



Twin Engine, Twin Auger Drive. “Everyone wants to see me drive this one,” says Melton. At first glance you would think this tractor would go sideways, because it’s equipped with an auger on each side instead of wheels. However, one auger turns clockwise and the other one counterclockwise to cancel each other out, moving the tractor straight ahead. The augers were made by cutting apart water pressure tanks and then welding on 1-in. high steel spirals. Each auger is driven by a gearbox – one off an Oliver 2-row pull-type corn picker and the other off a grain auger. Steel cones on front of the augers help the tractor climb over sidewalks and tree roots, etc. A twin-auger trailer, made out of a charcoal grille, follows behind.

the second Wheel Horse. The tractor has no steering axles. Instead, the lead front axle steers via chains connected to the steering wheel. “The rear axle is solid and swings around like dual tandems do,” says Melton. “I push the clutch pedal down to actuate a cable which releases a drive mechanism on the front axle. I get off the tractor to put the front Wheel Horse in gear, then go back to the seat and let the clutch out to put the second Wheel Horse in gear.”



Chain-Driven 4-WD. This tractor works much like a skid steer loader, says Melton. It’s equipped with four 14-in. high “donut” car spare tires that are connected by tire chains, allowing the rear axle to drive the front axle. Power is provided by an old Wisconsin gas engine. There’s no steering wheel. Instead, two levers are used to steer, much like a bull dozer. The tractor has a bucket on front made out of a 30-gal. oil drum.



Reversed Tractor With Forklift. This “turned around” 1971 Wheel Horse is equipped with a “forklift” that uses a sliding ladder and forks made from truck leaf springs. Melton reversed the drive train, seat, and steering so that he can drive the tractor backward (a figure 8 belt is used to reverse the rotation of the transmission). A foot pedal powered crank connected to a chain and sprocket is used to raise or lower the forklift.



Crawler Tractor. The tracks for this tractor were made from the 8 by 24 tires off a Montgomery Ward twin row tractor. Power is supplied by a 3 hp Briggs & Stratton engine. The tractor has a solid front axle with wheels that can be pulled forward to tighten the tracks. A series of small steel rods attached to spindles on the front axle are used to keep the front wheels angled just right in order to keep the track from walking off. The tractor has a blade on front.



6-WD Army Troop Carrier. This 1969 Wheel Horse is designed to look like a World War II 6-WD M34 military truck designed to haul ammunition or troops. A yard trailer serves as the bed and is covered by an olive drab canvas top attached to metal hoops. Inside are fold-down seats, with backrest boards on each side. The tractor rides on six 9 by 16 military tires. The center axle is off a 1947 Willys Jeep while the front and rear axles are off an International Scout.



4-WD “Willys Jeep”. This tractor was modified to look like a World War II Willys Jeep. It has 6-in. wide, 16-in. high Jeep military wheels. It also has two rear ends.. Melton locked up one side of the rear axle and welded a double cog on the other side of the axle, allowing spider gears to drive it. A chain connects the two rear ends and allows for different speeds. The bumper is off a cut-down Model A car and supports a single headlight that pivots with the front axle.



Tricycle Tractor. This 1970 model is equipped with 6 by 12 dual rear wheels and a pair of small “Roll-A-Matic” wheels hinged together on front. A suspension system made from flat metal and seat springs allows the front wheels to float up or down over obstacles. It’s powered by a 3 1/2 hp Briggs & Stratton gas engine and has a hydrostatic transmission and a big aluminum muffler.