

Schoolbus Storage Sheds Look Like Buildings

It's not unusual to use an old schoolbus for storage but most people consider them an eyesore. Bill Swets in Ft. Collins, Colo., came up with a simple way to dress them up.

He recently sent FARM SHOW photos of two schoolbus storage sheds he set up at the back entrance to his ranch. One side of each bus – the side that faces the backlot road – is “dressed up” with hardboard siding, roofs, and some home-crafted decorations.

A pair of big white metal gates guard the ranch entrance between the buses, and a big wooden ranch sign supported by a pair of poles rises above the gate.

“It provides clean, dry storage for a lot of the junk I keep around my place, yet the old bus bodies are hidden,” says Swets. “The decorations break up the plainness of the siding and give it some class.”

He started with a pair of 66-passenger buses. He removed all the seats as well as the running gear from each bus and cut 10 ft. off each body. He used a nail gun to attach studs to one side of each bus, and then covered the studs with hardboard siding. He put the same

siding on the roof.

A pair of chandeliers can be seen through rectangular holes that he cut into the side of the bus. Each chandelier sets inside half of a 55-gal. barrel, which he cut lengthwise and sealed with expanding foam. The family name is displayed on a large wrought iron unit that's fastened onto the side of the bus between the chandeliers.

Thanks to a talent for turning old junk machinery parts into visual treats, Swets has attracted a lot of attention to the ranch. The biggest attention-getter is his collection of 38 dinosaurs made from salvaged farm machinery, cars, trucks and whatever else he can find in his junk pile. The dinosaurs are full-size, ranging from 2 to 40 ft. in length, 7 to 14 ft. high and weigh from 500 to 1,200 lbs. Joints were built into the animals so they can be taken apart and moved. The “Swetsville Zoo” is open to visitors.

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Bill Swets set up 2 schoolbus storage sheds behind his ranch. The side of each bus that faces the road is “dressed up” with hardboard siding and homecrafted decorations.



A pair of big white metal gates guards the ranch entrance between buses, with a big wooden ranch sign rising above the gates.

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Jacked Up, 4-WD “Monster Mower”

Folks can't believe their eyes when they see this 4-WD “Monster Mower” garden tractor built by Tony Gernstl of Farmersville Station, N.Y. It rides on 44-in. high lugged wheels off a 4-WD “monster” pickup, with the driver sitting about 6 ft. off the ground.

The 1980's tractor still has its original Briggs & Stratton 18 hp twin cylinder engine and 3-speed transmission. The axles came off a Suzuki Samurai SUV.

“I built it using parts from 3 different Yard Machines that were headed for the junkyard,” says Gernstl. “I drive it in parades and at farm shows and car cruise nights. It's fun to see the look on the faces of little kids when they see me drive by.”

He cut the axles down and made a suspension system similar to a Ford twin I-beam system, complete with radius arm-style linkage with coil overshocks. He rotated the tractor's transaxle 90 degrees and installed a sprocket on one of the wheel hubs, which is used to chain-drive both the SUV's driveshafts. He also replaced the tractor's original steering assembly with a heavier duty rack and pinion steering assembly off a Chevy Chevette.

The rig is equipped with a unique hydraulic brake assembly that uses the rotor off a Yamaha dirt bike, the calipers off a Bombardier snowmobile, the hydraulic master cylinder off a Toyota Rav 4 SUV, and the remote cylinder off a Yamaha dirt bike. A small tank assembly feeds brake fluid through a hose down to the master cylinder. Pushing down on an aluminum pedal activates the cylinder.

“I have to climb up one of the rear wheels or use a small ladder to reach the seat, but once I'm up there it's a lot of fun to drive,” says Gernstl. “I bought some of the stuff I used to build it off Craigslist, but the rest is all pretty much second hand items.”

“When they first see it a lot of people want to know where the mower deck is. Others ask me how fast it'll go. When I originally built it I could go up to 25 mph, but that wasn't too safe so I geared it down and now the top speed is only about 15 mph.”

Both sides of the rig are equipped with 3-ft. lengths of curved stainless steel exhaust tubing, which Gernstl made out of handicap rails designed for toilets. “It sounds a lot like a Harley Davidson motorcycle. I think that's because the tractor is quite old, and its governor assembly has an erratic idle which makes it sound like the tractor is souped up,” says Gernstl.



Tony Gernstl's home-built “Monster Mower” rides on 44-in. high lugged wheels off a 4-WD “monster” pickup. The driver sits about 6 ft. off the ground.



“I built it using parts from 3 different Yard Machine garden tractors that were headed for the junkyard,” says Gernstl.

He made the body by bolting together sheet metal off the 3 different Yard Machine garden tractors. “The sheet metal was in good condition. It saved me the hassle of having to repaint the tractor,” notes Gernstl.

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