

“Furniture Farm” Turns Live Trees Into Chairs

By **Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor**

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

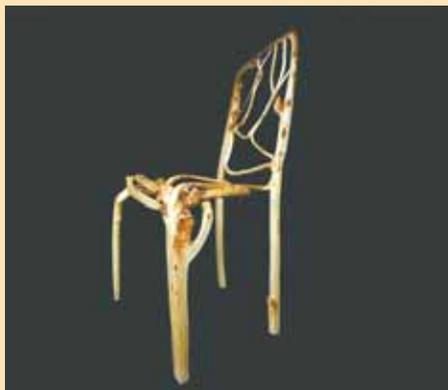
make a chair the conventional way. “First you’ve got to grow the trees, so allow about 50 years. Then you’ve got to chop them down. Next you have to transport the logs to a sawmill, so you’ll need to build roads and buy trucks. You’ll need to build a large facility to store the planks. The wood is then 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.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gavin Munro, Full Grown Ltd. (<http://fullgrown.co.uk>).



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.



Harlen Grovom’s 2-wheeled side-by-side “Norwegian Rickshaw” rides on a pair of 36-in. drive wheels and is fitted with 2 bucket seats out of a mini van.



A pair of levers are used to steer. “I pull way back on both levers to stop. By pulling back on just one lever it’ll spin around in its own tracks,” says Grovom.

“Norwegian Rickshaw” A Big Hit At Parades

Over the years Harlen Grovom has come up with numerous inventions, some of them built purely for fun and many featured in FARM SHOW. His latest creation is what he calls a “Norwegian rickshaw” – a 2-wheeled deluxe, side-by-side people hauler.

“Every year I try to drive something in a local parade, and the first thing people ask is, ‘What will you have new for this year?’” says Harlen. “I had a lot of help from friends and neighbors, who gave me ideas on how to build it.”

The “rickshaw” rides on a pair of 400 by 36 drive wheels and is fitted with 2 bucket seats out of a mini van, with big metal footrests in front of them. A geared down 1 1/2 hp Briggs & Stratton gas engine, located between the seats, is connected to the transmission off an old self-propelled swather. The engine belt-drives the wheels and is geared down by 3 chains. The frame was borrowed from part of an old cultivator.

A pair of levers are used to steer, and a belt clutch off the engine is used for starting and stopping. “I pull way back on both levers to stop. By pulling back on just one lever it’ll spin around in its own tracks,” says Grovom. “The only other control lever is the throttle. There’s only one gear, and top speed is slower

than a normal walking speed so I might have geared the engine down too much.”

The spoked wheels are off an old side delivery rake, which Grovom already had. But the tires cost him \$800. “I bought the tires from Miller Tire after looking all over

for something less expensive,” he says.

“The machine’s weight is supposed to be evenly balanced, but I had to add a pair of small wheels, one on front and one on back, to keep from tipping over when hitting bumps in the road.”

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