

Oliver Doodlebug Built For Fun

Jim and Kay Plagemann have a blast with their twin seat tractor-like doodlebug. One of 7 similar rigs built in the area, Jim's is based on an old Chevy truck. With its 4-speed transmission, he could roll along at road speeds. However, he tries to keep it under 25 mph to comply with his slow moving vehicle status and Oliver tractor appearance.

"I found a 1954 Chevy truck lying in the weeds and salvaged the chassis, engine and drivetrain," says Plagemann. "Even the original radiator and wheels were useable."

Plagemann cut the frame by the back axle and shortened it up, raising it to allow for larger tires on the original rear wheels. He also did some brake work on the rear end. "It only had 26,000 miles on it and didn't require much work," says Plagemann. "I rewired the engine and put on all new hoses and cables, but that was it."

To prepare it for a new body, he sandblasted everything and repainted the components.

Plagemann turned to Stan Brookner,

a friend in the area, to do the body work. Brookner is the local expert, having done or helped with the 6 other tractor/truck combinations, all of which are unique.

"We went to a junkyard and found a 1655 Oliver tractor and took the front end, hood and grill," says Plagemann. "Stan made a platform to set the grill on and cut the hood a bit to fit it. He also made the cowl ahead of the dash where the steering comes through. We made the operator's platform and installed bucket seats from an old Blazer."

He also added flashers, lights and other safety gear. With running board steps and fenders for the rear wheels, the doodlebug was just about ready to go.

"We installed a stereo so we can play music for parades and a 1654 decal combining the Oliver model number with the 4 from the 1954 Chevy," notes Plagemann.

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Plagemann found an old Chevy truck lying in the weeds and converted it into this "doodlebug". The front end, hood and grill are off an Oliver tractor.

Street Legal "Green Machine" Always Draws A Crowd

"This little creation came about because one day I just happened to see a lot of parts laying around the weed row and decided to make something really different out of 'em," says retired Kentucky farmer Robert Thomas, about his "Little Green Machine."

Thomas says his custom vehicle is part truck, part tractor, and a "whole lot of fun." He had the old tractor cab, a tranny, an engine and knew where he could get an air conditioning unit, seats and many other necessary items.

"I used the front steering and suspension from a friend's old S10 Chevy, but the rest was junk," Thomas says. "That was fine with me, because I wanted a Ford drivetrain anyway. I had a 1975 Ford pickup so I put in the 300 6-cylinder engine from my shed and mated it to a C-6 automatic transmission. A nearby salvage yard had a 1985 Ford pickup with the front end tore off, so I picked up the rear axle there."

Thomas says his Little Green Machine has a wheelbase of 100 in., so it's plenty stable for road travel, even at speeds of 50 to 60 mph. "I put plenty of channel iron on the frame for reinforcement, so it's not about to fall apart anytime soon," he says. The front wheels are 15-in. tires that Thomas mounted on old spare tire donuts from an S-10. The larger rear tires are 10L00 15-in. Ford truck wheels.

Thomas built the little vehicle because he wanted something really unique for local parades, and the rig has turned heads everywhere he drives. "I've got that Hiniker Cab on it with air conditioning and the GPS globe on top, which really attracts attention," Thomas says with a laugh. "It's just up there for curiosity, and it's doing its job real well."

When Thomas mounted the cab on the frame, he cut the walls straight vertical rather than on an angle like the cab was originally built. The inside is 50 in. wide, which is just large enough to hold two 9600 Deere combine seats. The steering wheel has a universal joint so it adjusts out and in to fit the size of the driver.

Thomas says the trickiest part of the project involved steering and brakes. "For power steering I married a Ford hydraulic pump to the Chevy steering. It took some finagling, and eventually a friend and I got it done. The brakes were complicated

by the fact there were discs on the Chevy and drums on the Ford. A local parts guy lined me up with a 1-in. diameter by 3-in. long equalizer valve that mates them into a workable system."

A hood from an old 5010 Deere tractor covers the engine and fan compartment. The engine, which produces about 200 hp., has a radiator and electric fan from an old junk car. Sealed beam headlights from a Ford tractor, turn signals, and brake lights round out the equipment needed to make Little Green a legal street machine.

"This whole thing took me 18 months from start to finish, about 400 hrs. and 38 gal. of beer," Thomas says with a big laugh. "Any of my buddies who came to help had to bring a beverage, which covered their 'inspection charge' to see how this was all coming together."

"The front wheels are closer together than the rears, so the vehicle turns short in addition to turning people's heads," Thomas says. "It was a lot of fun to build, and it sure is fun driving in parades, going to car shows and the local ice parlor cream parlor to see people's eyes light up. It always draws a crowd."

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Robert Thomas wanted something unique for local parades so he built this stretched-out "Little Green Machine". It's fitted with a Hiniker cab and a Deere 5010 hood.



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