

My gardening bike

For relief of osteoarthritis of the hip, writes Alan Parker



Alan uses his 'bike' in the garden.

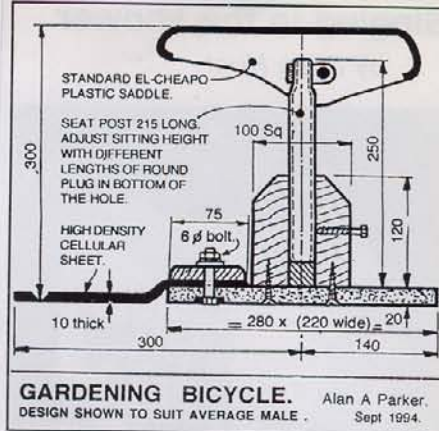
The sense of well being that comes from walking normally is only really appreciated when you can't do it any more. I have two artificial hips. Using a bicycle makes you feel you are not crippled and that is most welcome.

Before I made my gardening bike I used to do jobs around the house and garden where I had to kneel for a long time. It was so painful that I had difficulty in sleeping afterwards. Even worse, I stopped fixing a lot of things that blokes usually fix and that made me feel pretty useless.

The great merit of using a bicycle is that the body weight is carried by the saddle and the stress on the hips under the rider's control. My gardening bike also relieves the hips of body weight.

The results of my experimentation in finding far less painful means of gardening and doing odd jobs are shown in the two photographs and the cross section drawing.

'Do it yourself' enthusiasts could make their own. The dimensions shown suit males with an average length of upper leg, but it



can be adjusted up and down. The seat post, which fits in a hole, can be easily adjusted in height to suit all builds of people.

The seat post can be fixed in position by gradually packing up the hole with wooden discs cut from the end of an old broom. Once the height is fixed apply an adhesive or put in a locking screw as shown. A piece of carpet or a soft rubber mat can be used as a kneeling pad (250 x 550 mm) and cut to shape. The base can be made of 100 mm plywood or 20 mm chipboard and long screws secure the base to the wooden holder for the seat post.

At 58, I want my artificial hips to see me out without the need for other operations to replace them at a very old age. I use my bike to avoid long walking trips and my gardening bike to avoid stress concentrations on the ball and socket. If I need exercise I cycle and swim. Sir John Charnley, who created the modern artificial hip, warned everybody that artificial hips are nowhere as good as healthy, natural ones.

If any readers would like more details about my gardening bike, or care to see it, they can ring me on 689 3693.



The finished product.