

OLIVE WILLY



By Bob Bates

About 1995 Swede (aka Allen Peterson) decided that Swede's Fly Shop in Woodenville, Washington needed a signature fly. So he told one of his tiers to invent one, and pretty soon the Olive Willy was born. When Swede moved his fly shop to Spokane, Washington in 2003 he naturally brought the fly, along with a few thousand others, with him. I heard a lot of great stories about the success of this pattern. It was easy to tie so I tied a few and went fishing. I caught several fish in our local lakes, and over 15 fish in a few hours in a fly-fishing-only, cutthroat/rainbow lake north of Spokane, WA. But none of my exploits topped the 37 rainbows in 2-1/2 hours that Swede caught in one of our quality lakes in central Washington using the Olive Willy and a fast sink line. Also my success didn't equal that of one customer who bought six flies and went fishing. The next day he came back for another half dozen because some mean rainbows stole all of the others.

Its popularity really struck home in February 2006 at The Fly Fishing Show in Bellevue, WA. I had tied a few Olive Willys, X-Caddis and Parachute Blue Wing Olives to display in the FFF Washington State Council booth. Many people who came by the booth looked over our display with the usual kind of interest that people look at things in a fishing show. But when they saw the Olive Willys, several exclaimed **Oh Olive Willys!** You should have been there to hear all the great stories about catching fish on the Olive Willy. The general opinion was: "It will catch fish anywhere."

Most people use a full sinking fly line and let it sink to near the bottom or top of the weeds. Try out different retrieves until one works to attract the fish. I have used everything from a slow hand twist to a fast 2-foot strip. Even pause the retrieve once in a while.

It is so easy to tie that I teach it and the Wooly Worm in the first session of my beginning fly tying class.

Materials List:

Hook: Mustad 9671, Tiemco TMC 5262 or 3769ST, #12

Bead: #10 Red Rochaille

Thread: Black, 8/0

Tail: Yellow pheasant rump afterfeather

Body: Peacock green chenille

Hackle: Yellow pheasant rump feather

Tying Steps:



1. Smash the barb with smooth jaw pliers.
2. Put the bead on the hook. An easy way is to run the hook through a cup of beads.
3. Put thread on hook by holding it behind the hook and bringing the thread toward you and over the hook. Wind thread over itself toward the bend. Cut or break off the tag, short end, stop when thread is at the bend, and let the bobbin hang free.



4. Hold one or two afterfeathers in both hands and push the thread away to move the feather on top of the hook. (The afterfeather is the thin feather that you see when pull off the pheasant rump feather.) Put a couple of loose thread winds over the afterfeather. Then carefully pull the afterfeather a little toward the eye of the hook. This moves it so the thread is on the thinner part of the stem. Don't worry about the length sticking out behind the hook.



5. Wind thread tightly over the feathers to secure them. Trim excess feather in front of tie down point. Trim the tail by holding it tightly between thumb nail and first finger on one hand. Then grab excess tail with thumb nail and first finger of other hand and break it off. The fuzzy fibers on bottom of a regular rump feather may be used in place of the afterfeather.



6. Strip the fuzzy stuff off the chenille leaving only the core. With the long part of the chenille over the vise, slide the chenille under the thread and position it on top of shank as with the afterfeather.



7. Wind the thread over the thread core, trim excess and continue winding forward to within about 1/2 hook-eye-width of the bead. Wrap the chenille forward to the hanging thread, secure and trim excess.



8. Strip off the fuzzy stuff from a pheasant rump feather. Hold the feather by its tip with the shiny side toward you, and stroke the feather away from the tip to make the barbs stand out. On the last stroke hold the barbs down to keep them out of the way. Position feather on top or side of hook with the shiny side out. Secure the feather by winding thread over the exposed stem. The long part of the feather will be out over the body. Make two or three tight winds of thread. Trim excess tip. Leave thread next to the bead.



9. Pick up the stem of the feather and stroke the barbs to the rear as the feather is wrapped around the hook. Continue stroking and wrapping forward between body and bead. Make only two or three wraps. Secure the feather and trim excess. Assuming the hook is facing to the right use thumb and first two fingers of the left hand to pull all the fibers back. Wind the thread rearward over the fibers a little to make them slope backward. Put a little head cement on the thread and wind thread two or three times. Finish with a couple of half hitches or a whip finish.

Closing comments: This is an easy fly to tie. Get the materials, which are easy to acquire, and tie up a dozen or so. Then go to your favorite lake or pond and catch a bunch of fish. Naturally, release them carefully so you can play with them again.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.
You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org