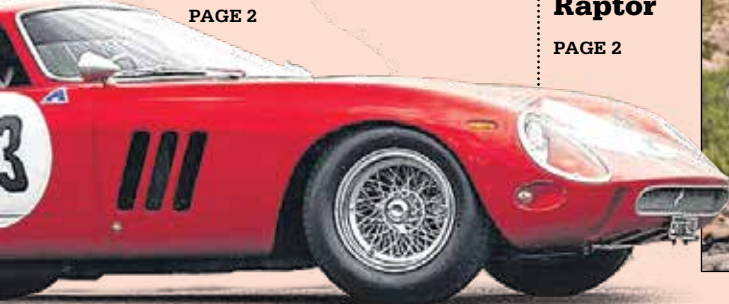


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TEST DRIVE

Expansion, Contraction

2018 Toyota Prius c Four

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

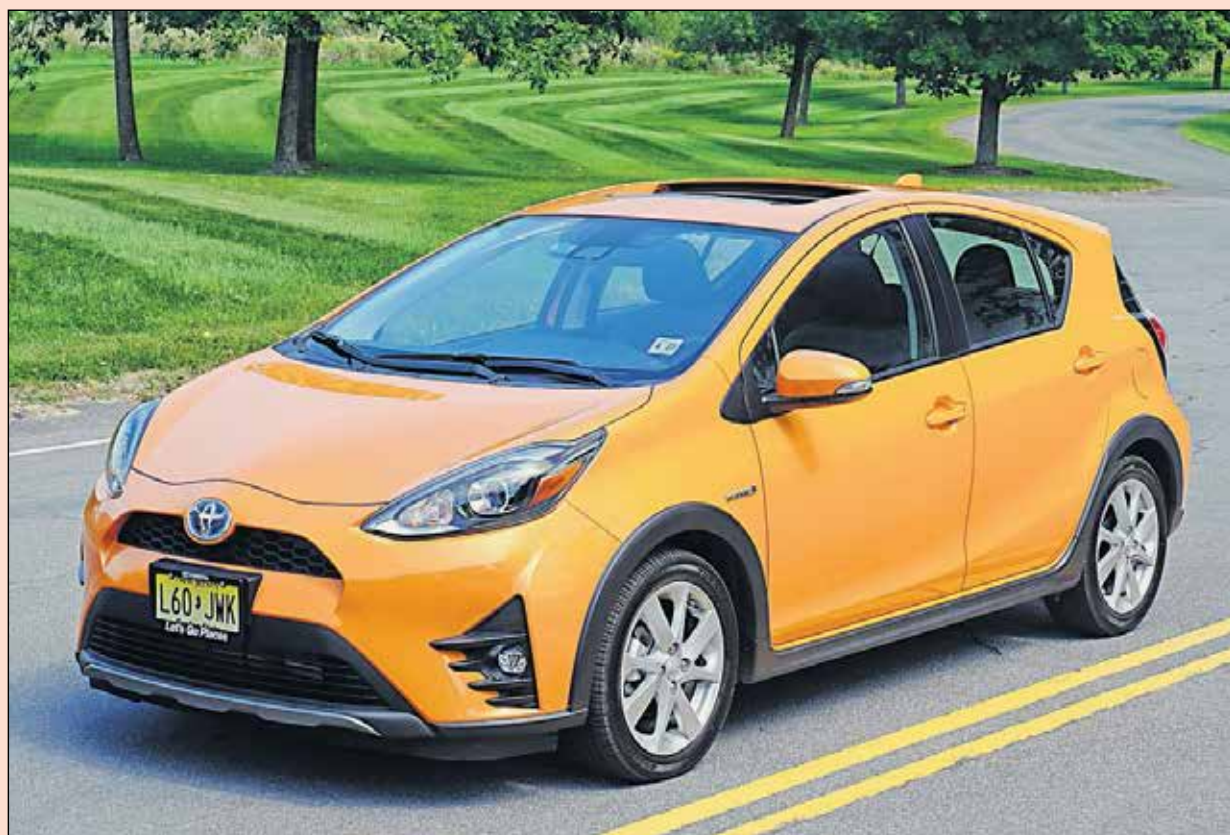
When the first Prius went on sale in the 2000 model year, it was one of only two hybrid vehicles sold stateside (the other was the Honda Insight). With burgeoning demand and limited competition, Toyota expanded the Prius brand to a family of hybrids in the years that followed.



Today, hybrids are no longer a rarity, and consumers have long since lost their fear of the once-new, now proven technology. In Toyota showrooms alone, one can find seven hybrid models and a fuel cell car.

The lowest priced hybrid in the current lineup is the Prius c. With a starting price of \$20,630, it posts EPA fuel economy estimates of 48 city, 43 highway and 46 combined.

Though the driveline in Prius c remains essentially unchanged since its 2012 debut, the styling has been



THE 2018 TOYOTA PRIUS c is the lowest priced hybrid in Prius' four-model line-up. While the 1.5-liter, Atkinson-cycle engine carries over, Toyota has tweaked the styling to compete in the popular crossover hatchback segment.

2018 Toyota Prius c Four
MSRP: \$24,965 · As Tested: \$26,555

tweaked to good effect. Toyota's designers have massaged the hatchback in a mini-crossover direction, with black trimmed front and rear fascia's, roof rails, window surrounds, rocker and wheel arch moldings. The styling changes position the Prius c squarely in the (visual) sweet spot of the U.S. car market.

Like other past Priuses (or is that Priui?), the Prius



c is notable for its center-oriented dash design. When you slide inside, the wheel is right in front of you, but the instrument panel is centered, and located beneath a hooded binnacle. I sit in a lot of cars, but I see this setup very rarely.

So the slight, right, side-eye required to take in the information requires some adjusting. Especially at night, where the real estate above the steering wheel is completely unlit. I'm sure it becomes second nature in daily driving, though its benefits for the driver are debatable.

Prius c comes in four trim levels, all of which have a 6.1-inch touchscreen. The screen and surrounding buttons allow adjustments to the Entune infotainment

The first Prius c rolled out with some flashy, fuel economy numbers.

system. Base level models (One and Two) start with said touchscreen, four speakers, AM/FM/CD/MP3/ WMA, USB and iPod connectivity in the head unit, with voice recognition, Siri Eyes Free and Bluetooth. Trim levels

Three and Four include navigation, additional apps and speakers (six total) HD radio/traffic, Sirius XM radio and Gracenote album cover art. A wedge shaped pad below accesses HVAC controls.

The space to the right of the digital speedometer houses a 3.5-inch screen that can be programmed to provide additional displays of vehicle information. I think that Toyota is missing the boat here by not providing some kind of (minimally distracting) dashboard graphics. Something like Ford's

Continued on page 2



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