

“Corrals” Hold Potted Plants In Place

Nursery and greenhouse owners will appreciate a simple idea by one of the finalists in this year’s Farm Bureau invention contest. Kenneth Imel, of Greenup, Ky., uses cattle panels to keep plants in 1-gal. containers upright.

“Recently we had 60 mph winds. Some of the taller plants leaned, but they didn’t blow over,” Imel says.

He uses 2 by 4’s for frames and staples the 54-in. by 16-ft. cattle panels on top with four 2 by 4 supports in between.

“The pot corral will hold 192 1-gal. nursery pots when full,” Imel says.

The corrals save a lot of labor standing pots back up and reduce losses due to damaged plants. Pots regularly get knocked over due to wind, rain and even customers. Plants are also easier to water when the pots are secure in the panels.

Imel has nearly 20 panels and plans to

build more with a slight modification. He will cut off the 6-in. edge to make the panels 48 in. wide so there won’t be any waste on the 2 by 4 center supports. It costs about \$50 per corral using new materials.

Imel places the corrals over weed mats to prevent weeds from growing through, and he plans to use them inside his greenhouses as well. Smaller versions of the corrals could be made to fit in vans or truck beds to secure plants being transported. When not needed, the corral panels stack easily for storage.

“It’s so simple, but it saves so much,” Imel says. “The idea was a godsend. I’ve looked at plastic ones on the market, but they won’t hold as many as these do. And the price is right.”

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Kenneth Imel uses cattle panels to keep plants in 1-gal. containers upright.

Custom Weaver Adds Value To Wool

Peggy Hart can turn low value wool into high value blankets and throws. Hart’s business, Bedfellow Blankets, works with all types of wool, alpaca and mohair using standard weaves or custom designing a weave for clients.

“For more than 10 years I wove and sold blankets at craft shows with yarn I bought,” explains Hart. “Then a couple friends asked if I could weave wool from their flocks and I realized this could be a valuable service to others.”

Originally, Hart went to school for fabric design and later worked in a New England fabric mill. When most fabric mills went out of business or went to computerized looms in the early 1980’s, Hart bought several of the old mechanical looms and set them up in her barn. She describes them each as a ton and a half of greasy gears, wheels and pulleys.

Hart’s business took off when a state group, Communities Involved in Sustainable Ag, used a grant from the USDA to commission her to make blankets out of

Vermont wool. They bought the wool at a premium from state sheep producers and then sold the blankets.

“The first year I did 300 blankets; the second I did 900,” says Hart. “At that point they decided they didn’t want to sell blankets and discontinued the project. Now many of those sheep producers are doing it on their own, sending me their washed and spun wool to make into blankets. I have woven blankets for dozens of farmers all over the country.”

Hart refers wool producers to several small, independent mini-mills who will wash and spin wool and other natural fibers. Minimum batches of 50 to 100 lbs. at one such mill cost \$20 per finished pound of washed and spun wool.

Once Hart has the spun fiber, she gives the owner a choice of traditional weaving patterns, such as herringbone or windowpane. She can also produce a custom design. Roughly two months later, the customer has the blankets or throws.

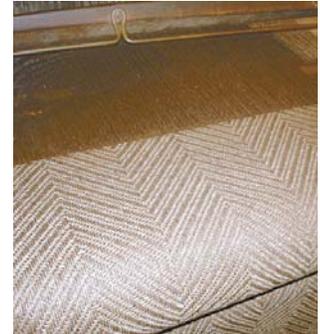
The minimum amount of spun wool Hart needs for her loom is 40 lbs. That is enough



Peggy Hart turns low value wool into high value blankets and throws with mechanical looms set up in her barn.

for 17, 48 by 72-in. throws or 8 full-sized blankets. Hart charges on a sliding scale with throws running \$65 to \$80 and blankets twice that.

“Throws will typically have 2 to 2½ lbs. of wool, so the sheep farmer will have invested \$40 in the yarn and \$80 in the weaving,” explains Hart. “I suggest people charge \$160 selling throws retail. A full-size blanket is about 5 lbs., so the farmer will have \$100



invested in the yarn and \$120 or more in the blanket. I sell Merino (a premium wool) blankets for \$400 each and lower quality wool blankets for \$300.”

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Stinging Nettle Heals Sore Muscles, Joints

If you have a painful muscle or joint, you should try treating it with stinging nettle. Don Scott swears by the home remedy. He says it works so well he started selling pads of nettle extract that you can use if you don’t have the real stuff. He says the pain relief doesn’t last as long with raw nettle, but it acts faster.

“If you have stinging nettle growing wild around your yard or farm, give it a try,” he says. “Use nettle that grows in the sun, not the kind found in the woods.”

Scott says he literally stumbled into the benefits of stinging nettle (*Urtica gracilis*) 10 years ago. While doing some tractor work on a river bottom on his farm, the tractor killed. At the time, the former airline pilot was unable to walk due to an extremely painful knee. However, not having a way to get help, he found a branch to use for a crutch and began to hobble home. Faced with going around or through a huge patch of nettle, he went through, even though he was wearing shorts.

By the time he got home, he realized the pain in his knee was gone. After that he started using nettle compound whenever

the knee flared up.

Scott was so excited about what nettles could do that he developed a process to use dried nettles. The stalks and leaves are crushed and processed. A water and nettle extract is strained off. Cotton pads are soaked with it, packaged and sold as the “Netical Patch.”

The pads work like an old-time poultice. Held in place against the skin for up to several days, the solution soaks into the tissue (turning the skin nettle green).

“The first year I had two ounces of solution,” recalls Scott. “The next I had 100 lbs. of pads, and I ran out. The next year I had several thousand pounds.”

Scott sells the patches from his website and through a number of distributors. A local tractor supply store carries them after the owner got pain relief with the pads. Scott says he is close to having a major national retailer stock his Netical Patch.

“We have 60,000 to 70,000 lbs. of dried nettles on hand,” says Scott. “We have plenty of growers lined up now, but if we get that new retailer, we may need more.”

Scott doesn’t have any medical research to

back up his claims, but he learned through research that the idea goes back hundreds of years to the Romans. Scott tells about a doctor who picked up some free patches. He put one on a patient’s back and charged him \$300.

“The pain went away, so the patient didn’t care,” says Scott. “The more recent the injury, the better they work. Usually with a twisted ankle, the pain is gone over night.”

The pads come in three different sizes, no. 15 (4 by 6-in.), no. 30 (5 1/2 by 8 1/2-in.) and no. 40 (3 by 11-in.) with 6 patches per package. Suggested retail price on no. 30 and 40 is \$19.95, with no. 15 slightly higher since it comes with an adhesive backing.

Scott says the pads can be used on heel spurs, sprained ankles, headaches and even sore throats. He says any kind of inflammation or soreness due to trauma and overused muscles will be helped.

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Don Scott has developed a process to use stinging nettles to heal sore muscles and joints.



Stalks and leaves are crushed and processed to produce the nettle extract is strained off.