

Weaving Can Be A Profitable Home Business

The art of weaving is alive and well says a Montana company that specializes in setting up customers with looms for profit or just plain fun.

Success starts with having the right equipment, says Glimakra-USA. Serious weavers who work at their looms 4 to 10 hours a day stress the importance of quality and ergonomic production looms that are built to last.

Sue Noble is a Glimakra customer who lives and works north of Seattle. She broke three looms before purchasing a Glimakra counterbalance loom from Joanne Hall, a Clancy, Mont., weaver who is the North American distributor of the Swedish-built looms.

"These looms are designed for serious weavers," Hall says. "U.S. looms tend to be small; more for play or hobby. Swedish equipment is the kind you can weave on all day long without back and leg problems." The beater -- which pushes the threads together -- hangs from the top of the loom and doesn't require as much muscle power to operate.

"I have chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia," Sue Noble says. "I'm proud that I set this loom up by myself. It's so well built I kept

it working 7 days a week."

Noble became well known for making woven placemats, table runners, and scarves and selling her creations at a Farmer's Market. Placemats sell well at \$25 and scarves run \$1/in.

Noble notes that some weavers in her community created a co-op to market their products. "And the farmer's market is extremely viable -- at least where I live," she says.

Sarah Pilgrim weaves in Wilsall, Mont., and has developed a reputation as a fine artist. She uses silk, bamboo and Tencel fibers to design scarves, shawls and garments. Instead of using industrial-died threads, she often hand paints the threads with her own dyes, to give each piece a completely different look.

Through gallery and museum shows, word-of-mouth and her website, Pilgrim developed a high-end market for her products.

"My customers are people who like fine art," Pilgrim says. Scarves start at \$140. Garments fetch up to \$875.

While Noble and Pilgrim focus on high-end, artistic products, both agree there's a market for practical items such as rag rugs.

Joanne Hall of Glimakra recently taught rag rug weaving classes in North Carolina.



Joanne Hall works closely with customers to make sure they get the right equipment for whatever kind of work they want to do.

Every summer she goes to Aitkin, Minn., and teaches new weaving techniques with different threads and fibers.

Noble and Pilgrim praised Hall for her knowledge about weaving and setting them up with the right equipment according to what they wanted to make.

A portable fold-up rigid heddle loom, starts at \$200 and is nice for weaving scarves. A larger floor loom sells for \$787.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joanne Hall; Glimakra-USA LLC, 50 Hall Lane, Clancy, Mont. 59634 (ph 866 890-7314; www.glimakrausa.com).

Sue Noble, P.O. Box 303, Lopez Island Wash. 98261 (ph 360-468-4803; copper@rockisland.com).

Sarah Pilgrim, 18 Morrison Road, Wilsall, Mont. 59086 (ph 406 578-2345; www.sarahpilgrim.com).

Deer Urine Business Pays Off

When Kevin Cox ships deer urine, it receives special treatment -- packed in a foam box with dry ice through UPS by two-day delivery. Deer urine is an important tool for whitetail hunters, and the Dongola, Ill., deer raiser has been pleased how well his sideline business has been doing.

Cox and his wife, Tricia, are licensed in Illinois to raise deer. They have 10 does and four bucks. They sell fawns.

To cover the cost of feed, Cox started to collect and sell the deer's urine. Beginning in late August, he pens deer up in a 20 by 20-ft. grain bin overnight. He poured a slightly sloped floor (1/4-in. over 10-ft) so that urine flows to a drain that empties into a 5-gal. bucket. In the morning, the urine is poured through a filter and refrigerated.

"We can collect up to 5 to 8 gal. a week, but I don't put them in there too much because it stresses them," Cox says. He also takes turns with does only and bucks only.

Hunters use urine as cover scent and to attract deer to their hunting stands. The most prized urine by many hunters is doe-in-heat.

"You can only get doe-in-heat urine when the does are in estrus between Oct. and mid-Nov.," Cox says. He is careful to keep it separate, and it has a distinct odor.



Kevin Cox operates a sideline business selling 1 and 2-oz. bottles of deer urine. Hunters use the urine as a cover scent and to attract deer to their hunting stands.

Word-of-mouth advertising has helped Cox's small business do quite well, and he set up a website for direct sales. He sells 1 and 2-oz. bottles ranging from \$6.99 to \$14.99, plus shipping. He also offers discounts for higher volume purchases.

Cox has a few dealers and is interested in adding more.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kevin Cox, Drop Tine Creek Whitetail Deer, 2025 Kimber Rd., Dongola, Ill. 62926 (ph 618 827-4119; www.droptinecreek.com).

Chicken Diaper Business "Cleaning Up"

"When I started talking about making diapers for my pet chickens, friends with their own birds began ordering them before the first one was even made," says Ruth Haldeman, who quickly realized she could "clean up" by getting into the diaper business.

As word got out, orders increased. "I've got all the business I can handle," she told FARM SHOW.

Haldeman's diaper design features a cloth band that fits over the tail knob and feathers. Chicken droppings are captured in a disposable plastic liner held in place by the band. The diaper's weight is carried on the back of the chicken, and it doesn't interfere with normal preening.

Haldeman includes several liners with each diaper order, as well as instructions for customers to make their own. She says even plastic cups can be used for liners.

While intended for chickens, Haldeman reports customers successfully using larger size diapers for turkeys and other pet poultry. All that is needed are stiff tail feathers. Rumpless birds, she says, are out of luck. The diapers are available in a wide variety of colors and patterns, including "camo style" woodland.

Haldeman directs customers to measure the back of the bird, down the spine from



Ruth Haldeman sells a very unusual product: diapers for chickens.

where the wing joins the body to the tail knob, continuing to the vent. Diapers are priced according to the total length of the measurement.

Haldeman only takes orders over the internet. Prices range from \$9 to \$14, depending on size, with shipping extra. For those who can't wait to diaper their birds, Haldeman offers a rush service. As she does all her own sewing and holds down a full-time day job, she says the rush fee is to cover lost sleep.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ruth Haldeman (ruth@chickendiapers.com; www.chickendiapers.com).

U-Cut Bamboo Business

John Branham of Chester, S.C. has a unique sideline business that works well for him. The 71-year-old sells U-pick bamboo from a 2-acre plot on his farm near Chester, S.C.

Branham first planted the bamboo in 1993 to stop water erosion from further deepening a large gully on his property. He originally got his bamboo from a friend, and says the plants had no problem getting established because the 6 to 8-ft. deep gully always has excellent moisture, which is what the plant thrives on.

"It's a you-cut, you-load operation. I charge \$5 per pole. If you cut it, you've bought it," he explains. "I have different diameters up to 4 in. and the poles are very tall. I'm always there when people are

cutting in case anyone hurts themselves, and I count the poles when they're loading them."

"The bamboo grows about 50 ft. a year once the roots catch hold. I fertilize once a year. As it gets older, it gets harder and is very strong."

Branham's customers use bamboo for various purposes such as curtain rods, duck blinds, fences, furniture, and even for hardwood flooring made from bamboo pulp. According to Branham, Home Depot sells this type of flooring, "and it's pretty, too."

"One man that bought some from me to make a play-fort for his kids," he adds.

The living plant can also be used as a windbreak or an ornamental in landscaping.

Branham says that sometimes people

who've come to buy the U-pick and U-load poles ask him if they can have some root stumps to grow themselves, and he freely shares those with them.

Bamboo is the fastest growing land plant in the world. It grows so quickly that you can hear it. Under optimum conditions it'll grow up to 46 in. per day - that's nearly 4 ft. The plant will reach its maximum height and girth after a single season of growth, which can be close to 100 ft. tall and 8 in. wide, depending on the variety.

If you're looking for more information, the "American Bamboo Society" publishes a magazine about the propagation of the plant in the U.S. You can check out their website at www.americanbamboo.org

There are even cold hardy varieties that will grow as far north as Canada.



John Branham sells U-pick bamboo from a 2-acre plot on his farm near Chester, S.C.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John H. Branham, 2080 Whipperwill Hill Rd., Chester, S.C. 29706 (ph 803 385-3827).