

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: [editor@farmshow.com](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

## “Birdscaping” Business Finding Lots Of Clients

“Feed birds, not squirrels.” That’s the motto of Judd Brink’s MN Backyard Birds business. He calls his service “birdscaping.” He not only helps clients set up successful feeding and bird attracting stations, he also services them, filling them with bird feed, and keeping the area around them clean.

The Brainerd, Minn., entrepreneur defines birdscaping as attracting birds with native plantings combined with feeding stations, birdbaths and other attractions. Located in a tourist and lakes region, his clients run the gamut from seasonal and year-round lake homeowners to nursing homes to resorts and hotels to businesses.

“I have a lot of seasonal clients. The service allows us to fill the feeders during the week so when they come up for the weekend they can just relax,” he says.

Brink offers a free consultation to new clients and shares more than 30 years of experience from a natural resource management career and working at a retail bird store to help them set up durable feeders.

“Most people use shepherd hooks, but I’m not a huge fan. They are easy for squirrels to get at. When we replace them with more squirrel proof and heavy duty feeders, clients see a difference right away,” Brink says.

Besides the question of how to keep squirrels and raccoons away from feeders, he notes he is most often asked how to attract cardinals.

“They like a mix of safflower and sunflower seed offered in a tray feeder that isn’t very high. Cardinals also like cover, so place the feeder near brush piles or lilac bushes, for example,” he suggests.

A birder since he was a child, Brink finds satisfaction in helping other birders attract a variety of birds to their backyard



Judd Brink started a “birdscaping” business in which he helps clients set up bird feeding stations and also service them.

and garden, and enjoying “happy birding” experiences.

Rates for his unique “Care & Clean” weekly maintenance service vary from \$150 to \$200 a month, which includes cleaning and a wide and varying assortment of fresh seed according to the season. He sticks to about a 50-mile radius for his birdscaping services.

He ventures farther for his speaking and bird guiding services.

“In the past year I guided people from as far away as Alaska, Belgium and China,” he says. “It’s usually in the spring and fall during migration and also during the winter.” For example, the Sax-Zim Bog in Minnesota is a popular winter destination for visitors looking for owls and other winter birds. He is also a guide/speaker at several state birding festivals.

His website includes helpful birding information and a line of feeders made with recycled milk containers. Brink welcomes questions from fellow birders.

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## Rustic Furniture Upholstered With Cowhide

Janeen Reid says it’s fun and therapeutic to make rustic-themed furniture using barn wood, old metal, and cowhide. “One day I just started working on a rocking chair for my sister. I used a piece of hide with variegated color and it turned out real nice, so I’ve just expanded into other things.”

Reid has since re-covered the seats of several benches, bar stools, and chairs using various cowhide patterns for the upholstery. She buys her hides from various sources she finds on the internet and finds the old chair and bench frames at garage sales, antique stores and estate sales. She’s also made covers for new stools and benches. “Most of the old things I find are in tough shape. The frames are fairly unsteady, need new paint or stain and a new seat. I try to pick out pieces that will look good re-finished

in a rustic or western theme. The metal frame pieces are often rusty and sometimes bent.”

Reid brings the old furniture to her home shop and, with the help of her husband Tom, repairs the frames and cuts a new seat base. Then she chooses the hide patterns and cuts the material to size over the base before enlisting his help again. Together they shape and stretch the hide over the stuffing and secure it tight with brads or small nails in the hardwood bases. Since Reid didn’t have any experience in upholstery or furniture building before starting this work, she’s quick to point out that a lot of her projects are learn-as-you-go. “I guess we’re a work in progress, but we’re progressing real well,” she says.

Reid says “there seems to be a lot of interest in authentic ‘rustic and western look’ furnishings made from barn wood or wrought



Three years ago Nancy Bruns and her brother dug a well and “struck brine”. They produce the only salt in the northern hemisphere made from a brine aquifer.

## “Salt Farmers” Find Strong Market For Specialty Products

If it’s important to know where the meat and produce you eat comes from, you might also be interested in knowing the source of the salt you season with.

Like grapes flavored by the region they grow in, salts taste different too, says Nancy Bruns of Charleston, W. Va. She and her brother Lewis Payne “struck brine” three years ago, and became the family’s seventh generation to harvest salt.

“It has 6 percent trace minerals, which give it a different flavor,” explains Bruns, who is a trained chef. “And our salt is naturally processed by solar evaporation. Others boil it down.”

J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works, located in Kanawha Valley in West Virginia’s Appalachian Mountains, produced salt from 1817 to 1945. The siblings used old family documents to choose a site for a new well and struck salt water at 350 ft. They began harvesting and selling salt in 2013.

The water is pumped into tanks to allow the iron to settle out. The iron is sold as a natural dye, and the remaining water is piped to shallow beds in sunhouses. The liquid evaporates, leaving salt crystals.

“It takes about five weeks from the time we pump it out of the ground until we can put it in a jar,” Bruns says. “It takes more time and labor, but it was important to us to use solar evaporation and be environmentally sensitive.”

Well known chefs, food writers and others in the food community appreciate that, the unique flavor and the nutritional value of the artisanal salt. It is the only salt in the northern hemisphere made from a brine aquifer.



Salt comes in different crystal sizes, from fine popcorn salt to medium salt for regular cooking, to grinding salt used on bakery items.

The regular customer list of famous chefs and restaurants continues to grow, and consumers can order directly from the business’s website, starting at \$5 for a 1-oz. jar. The salt comes in different crystal sizes from the finest (popcorn salt) to medium (heirloom) salt for regular cooking to grinding salt often used on bakery items.

“We recommend that salt is added just before you eat it,” Bruns says, to appreciate the full flavor and the texture.

Bruns, her brother and his wife, Paige, are pleased to revive a family tradition and find a marketplace interested in local, artisanal foods. They host farm-to-table dinners, bring in chefs, and cross promote other local foods with their salt.

Recently they added two new flavored salts, Ramp Salt and Smoked Salt.

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iron. I’ve made items for my sons and their families, sold pieces at craft fairs, and also have them on consignment in a few stores.” She’s also finished end tables, a coffee table and a complete kitchen dining set made from barn wood.

“Our prices are about half what retail stores are charging for these types of furnishings,” says Reid. “I figure my cost of materials, add in for our time and some overhead, and arrive at a price. If someone wants a custom order, we can do those, too. We try to be affordable and creative even though it’s just crazy what people will pay for unique things like this.”

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Janeen Reid makes rustic-themed furniture using various cowhide patterns and colors for the upholstery.