

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.



With a strong export market to China and a growing market in the U.S., the demand for ginseng continues to be promising, says WildGrown.com.

## Ginseng: You Can Hunt It Or Grow It

It may be awhile before wild ginseng sells for nearly \$1,000/lb. as it did in 2007. But hunting for it in the wild or cultivating it still provides profitable sideline income for many.

The fleshy, rooted herb is highly prized by Asian cultures as an aphrodisiac and a cure for many health conditions, and it's growing in popularity in the U.S. Ginseng grows primarily in China, Korea and parts of North America east of the Mississippi. Canada has banned digging wild ginseng, and the herb has become more difficult to find in China. In the U.S., digging wild ginseng is regulated. The Appalachian Mountains region is a popular hunting spot, though the herb can be found from Maine to Georgia.

Ginseng can be grown from seed in wooded areas or in open fields if structures are set up to provide shade.

WildGrown.com is a good place to start for anyone interested in harvesting or cultivating ginseng. The website includes regulations for 19 states, dealers who buy the roots, companies that sell seeds and plants, and general information about ginseng and production. WildGrown also buys ginseng.

"We want to provide as much info as possible for people who dig and want to grow ginseng," says Michael Lee, manager. "It helps people so they get the right price.

They can find dealers and call around."

For those who want to dig ginseng, he emphasizes the importance of knowing state regulations which include the seasons it can be dug (late summer to fall); deadlines for it to be sold, which is often the end of March; and even good stewardship tips, like the seeds in the berries of the ginseng should be planted wherever ginseng is dug.

Value of wild ginseng is determined by the age and shape. Long fingerlike roots are less valuable than bowl-shaped ginseng. Prices fluctuate every year from \$300 to \$1,000 per lb. for dried ginseng (about 3 lbs. of fresh ginseng makes 1 lb. dried ginseng). There's also a market for green ginseng, which people from Korea prefer.

The plants thrive in 70 to 80 percent shade and go dormant when conditions aren't ideal. Hunters often find ginseng 5-25 years after timber has been cut in an area. But it's found in many other locations as well. It takes about 10 years for the roots to be ready to harvest.

Hunting or growing ginseng is a passion for many. Lee notes that one of his sellers is 72 and has been digging roots since he was 10. With a strong export market to China and a growing market in the U.S., the demand for ginseng continues to be promising.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, WildGrown.com/National Ginseng, LLC., P.O. Box 103, Montgomery, Penn. 18936 (ph 888 675-7264; www.wildgrown.com).



Ginseng plants thrive in 70 to 80 percent shade and go dormant when conditions aren't ideal.



Vertical "worm tree" production system consists of split 55-gal. drums that hang on wooden frames. Each drum holds 10 to 15 lbs. of worms.

## "Tree" Boosts Worm Production

Paul Coleman has gone vertical with his worm production. After starting out growing worms in plywood boxes, he gradually expanded to 2,000 sq. ft. of outside concrete beds (FARM SHOW Vol. 26, No. 5). He still uses the concrete beds for seasonal worm and casting production. However, a new worm tree system inside his greenhouse is showing promise.

"I hang 10 split 55-gal. drums on wood frames," says Coleman. "Each drum holds 10 to 15 lbs. of worms so one tree will produce up to 150 lbs. of worms in a 4 by 4-ft. area."

Each tree consists of a 4 by 4-in. upright with two 2 by 4-in. crosspieces at each level, supporting two barrel halves. Each level is at right angles to the previous level for easy access. The uprights are secured at their tops to the greenhouse frame.

With 20 trees in one end of his 28 by 100-ft., plastic covered greenhouse, Coleman keeps around 3,000 lbs. of worms busy making castings year round. Two wood stoves keep the worms warm in the winter. In the summer, an evaporative cooler keeps them cool.

Coleman also uses the greenhouse for starting seedlings for his intensive market garden. However, the worm castings are his primary product. That's a big switch from earlier years when worm sales were his main product and he couldn't give away the castings. In fact, he used more than 7 tons of castings as fill when he built his greenhouse. Now he can't produce enough castings to meet market demand.

"Everybody is back into gardening, and they want to do it with worm castings instead of chemical and petroleum based fertilizers," he says.

To feed his worms, Coleman has developed

a ration based on cotton gin trash, corn, wheat and oats run through a hammer mill.

Coleman harvests castings from his worm trees and beds at the rate of 1,000 to 2,000 lbs. per week, depending on the season. He bags them for sale through retail outlets, the local farmer's market and from his farm.

"In the spring, I have people waiting for the castings to fall from my harvester," he says.

Coleman does still sell worms, especially to gardeners who want to produce their own castings. He sells Can-O-Worms, a home vermicomposting unit that comes with two pounds of worms. The multi-layer, flow-through method is designed for home use.

"I keep two of them in my greenhouse and feed them plant clippings and kitchen scraps," says Coleman. "More and more people are keeping worm bins at home."

One reason may be the price. While he sells his castings for 50 cents per lb., Coleman says he has seen others charging from \$1 to \$2 per lb.

Coleman also sells worms to large-scale composting facilities.

"Some outfits have 1,000 to 5,000 lbs. of worms, though others are as small as 50 lbs. or less," reports Coleman. "I still have people asking for 1,000 lbs. of worms, but I advise them to start small and get good at castings production. As sales increase, try to stay one step ahead of demand."

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John Eilers turned an old wire ear corn crib into a low-cost laying house for about 40 breed hens.



## Corn Crib Laying House

John Eilers, Pana, Ill., removed the top 6 ft. of an old wire ear corn crib and turned it into a nifty laying house for some 40 breed hens.

Eilers keeps the hens enclosed until about 4 p.m. each day, and then lets them run until they come home to roost. During the summer, he keeps a wide metal band in place around the base of the crib. In winter, he closes the upper portion with plastic and uses a heat

bulb to keep the water thawed all the time.

He gets eggs all year long and sells some to neighbors when he has too many. During corn harvest, the chickens can be found out in a nearby corn field gleaning leftovers.

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