

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.



A Vermont company harvests birch bark from standing trees in New England and sells it by the sheet. It's used by rustic furniture makers to add a birch look.

They Found A Strong Market For Birch Bark

You can panel a wall, make a lampshade or turn plain wood columns into birch logs with birch bark sheets from Long View Forest. The company harvests birch bark from standing trees in New England and sells it by the sheet. They harvest about 10,000 sq. ft. of bark each year. However, only one in 10 trees meets their quality standards.

"It's used by rustic furniture makers, interior designers, and others to add a birch look," says Logan Sears, Long View Forest.

The company peels bark from standing trees, mostly in Vermont and New Hampshire, but will travel to Maine, New York and beyond for the right site. Harvest takes place mainly in June and July with harvesters climbing trees using spikes. The bark is scored, and sheets are peeled free and pressed between sheets of cardboard for storage.

"Most trees die within a year or two of being peeled," says Sears. "Sellers are planning to harvest the tree for firewood, or a company is planning to log out the trees. The birch bark is a byproduct."

Sheets of bark average 30 by 34 in. or about 7 sq. ft. in size. They are sold by the square foot with appropriate price breaks for quantities, though Sears warns that prices can vary by season. Shipping is extra. Orders for less than 100 sq. ft. currently sell for \$10.70/sq. ft. Orders of 100 to 199 sq. ft. fall to \$5.35/sq. ft., while quantities of 3,000 sq. ft. or more are priced at \$4.80/sq. ft.

Forest owners in the Northeast can contact Sears if they have birch trees for sale.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Logan Sears, Long View Forest, Inc., 48 Picz Rd., Westminster, Vt. 05158 (ph 802 428-4050; ext. 104; lsears@longviewforest.com; www.birchbarkvt.com).

Grass Seed Business Pays More Than Corn, Beans

Bill Buman has 400 acres of corn and soybeans but gets more pleasure out of building and modifying machines that can improve his grass seed business, which covers only 20 acres.

"I've made or modified all the equipment used for the seed operation," Buman says. In recent years, he has turned out specialized planting equipment, seed strippers, a grass combine and a fanning mill to clean seeds smaller than the eye of a needle.

Buman describes with pride how he built his own brush-type machine for cleaning tiny grass and flower seed. He designed plastic brushes with three different sizes of bristles and brushes to gently sweep across a wire screen and dehull grass seeds. He built seed conveyors with belts powered by small electric motors. Some motors run on AC, some on DC and current modulators regulate speed. He also built a seed scalper that removes larger material from the seed.

During a recent winter, he worked

2 mos. to convert a Deere 800 windrower into a hydrostatic-powered windrower. He used hydraulic parts from two self-propelled sprayers, a hydro pump from a skid steer, and controls from an IH combine.

"Trying to find answers to questions was my toughest challenge," Buman says. "I talked to hydraulics specialists, but since I wasn't working on something they produced, it was very difficult to get usable answers. A couple guys didn't know if the machine would fly or crawl with certain parts." Eventually through trial and error he made the hydraulic system work. Now his 10-ft. custom-built swather runs like a zero-turn mower. "The right lever runs the right wheel and the electric switch raises and lowers the head. The left lever runs the left wheel and the electric switch lifts and lowers the reel. The swather has a slant six Chrysler motor that's more than a little temperamental. Still, Buman says the rig works like it's supposed to, and that's the main thing.

"This grass business is very specialized," Buman says. "We have intense hand labor



Gerald Simons redesigned his cider press and fruit cutter to bring the price down. Fruit cutter, mounted above press, can now be powered by electric drill.

Simplified Cider-Making Equipment

After his fruit cutter and cider press were featured in FARM SHOW (Vol. 35, No. 5), Gerald Simons listened to feedback from readers to simplify both machines.

"My major concern was getting the price down so families could better afford to make their own cider," says Simons. "Many of the more than 400 FARM SHOW readers who contacted us had only one or two fruit trees. So we redesigned the press and cutter to be much less expensive, but work just as well."

The new design uses nickel-plated steel instead of stainless steel. It costs less and lets Simons increase the pressure in the press by 25 percent for more juice from each batch. He also modified the fruit cutter that processes fruit for pressing. The lower cost version can now be powered by a 1/2-in. electric drill.

The cutter mechanism mounts on a frame that fits on top of the cider press. Fruit drops into the press from the cutter.

"Our press loads from the bottom," explains Simons. "You turn it upside down in its frame and remove the strainer grate. Put

the cutter in place and feed apples through it. When the press barrel is full, remove the cutter, replace the strainer, flip it over and press out the juice."

The new manually-powered press is available with the drill-driven cutter for \$975. The motorized stand-alone fruit cutter with a motorized press is priced at \$2,200 (\$600 less than the original model). The motorized cutter with a manual press is priced at \$1,500. The drill driven cutter is not available separately; however, the manual press by itself is priced at \$700 with the motorized press priced at \$1,375.

"The cutter and press also work well with white or pink wine grapes as well as other fruit," says Simons.

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Add-on, self-contained hydraulic system controls the reel height and speed on this old Deere swather, which Bill Buman uses in his seed harvesting operation.

for a couple months. In less than a week we plant 40,000 sets. We have weeding and pest control, and then we have harvest. Sometimes it's too hot and dry, other times it's too cool and wet." However, with seed that sells for \$7 to \$200 per lb., Buman says the money is worth it. Last year he had three 30-ft. by 100-ft. plots produce 16 lbs. "I made more than \$16,000 from a little under 1/3rd of an acre," he says. Other plots produced 400 lbs. that Buman sold for \$125 per lb.

Buman says that even though the business is labor-intensive, he really enjoys it. "I build equipment in mid-winter, but then I'm back in the greenhouse setting new plants or working in the shop."

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Home-built fanning mill cleans grass and flower seeds (above). Grass seed collector gathers tiny seeds that sell for \$7 to \$200 a pound.

