

Lavender Business Blossoms In Arizona

Scrub brush and juniper trees aren't the only things that grow on the rocky, limestone soil near Heber, Arizona, says Lois Hunt. She and her family have been growing lavender since 2009 and selling natural products made from the plant online and in a restaurant-turned-boutique.

"It's a wonderful way to experience farm life," says the active 74-year-old, who runs the business with her son, Bryan Schooley and his wife, Cindy.

Hunt's 120-acre farm is off the grid, powered by an array of solar panels she has built up over the years. She calls it Windy Hills Lavender Farm because the wind blows often along the edge of a canyon, and it has proven to be a good location to grow the calming and sweet-smelling herb.

"Our soil isn't very deep, but lavender loves it. And we have hot, dry summers, which it also loves," Hunt says. Each plant only requires about 1 gal. of water a week from drip irrigation lines. This spring she had 3 acres of lavender (1,000 plants/acre) with another 2,500 plants started in a greenhouse. Plants must be 2 or 3 years old before blooms can be harvested.

"Our bloom season runs from mid to late June through September," Hunt says. She grows five varieties that bloom at different times.

It's a labor-intensive crop: planting

in May, then weed pulling and continuous harvest, drying, cleaning and processing into products. Off-season, the plants must be pruned.

The lavender is harvested when the bottom fourth of the blooms open. Only the stalks of blooms are cut, tied together and hung to dry for a couple of weeks. The plant's value is in its buds.

Using the former restaurant's kitchen, the Schooleys use a copper distiller to extract the oil. They bottle and sell it as an essential oil, which is used for a variety of purposes.

Cindy blends the lavender oil with other natural products to make soaps, salve, scrubs, bath oils, and lotions.

"The most popular product is Cindy's lotion bar. You can take it when you travel and it's really handy to use," Hunt says. "Another big selling item is lip balm."

Many customers also like the water that is the byproduct of distilling. Windy Hills sells Lavender Mist in a spray bottle to repel mosquitoes and flies, freshen up a room, or spray on freshly washed laundry such as sheets. They also sell bundles of dried stems to throw on campfires for a sweet smell.

Lavender is known for its calming effect, but thankfully antelope, deer and bugs and other pests don't like it.

"Mice avoid it, too," Hunt adds. "I hang sachets in my closet to keep moths away



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and in my pantry to prevent weevils."

Besides oil and body care products, Windy Hills offers tea and culinary lavender buds that Bryan, a chef, likes to use in recipes.

Students in a May 18 class about propagating lavender – starting cuttings from plants – will be treated to lavender cookies and lavender lemonade. (Check out the Facebook page for class openings.)

"It's a lot of work and we're not getting rich at this," Hunt says. "But it's also fun."

Growing lavender has brought out the farmer in her, and she's proven that something beautiful can grow in a place that's only known cattle, juniper and tumbleweeds.

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Panning For Gold Is A Money-Making Hobby

There's nothing great about spending an afternoon knee deep in ice-cold water sifting through dirt and rocks, unless your hobby is searching for gold. That's what Nathaniel Burson does. What started as a childhood obsession in Arizona became a bona fide money-making business when Nathaniel realized he could turn his hobby into cash.

"You have to know your area," says Nathaniel. "The key to finding gold is knowing that it's 19 times heavier than water and 5 times heavier than anything else in the river." Still, don't be expecting to find large nuggets of gold on your first try. Nathaniel says it's a lot like fishing for trout, which is more about the experience than the meal. And just like fishing, you'll want to search in places where gold has been found before. Mountain rivers and streams are a great source, especially in crevices and along embankments.

Why does Nathaniel offer advice on something so potentially profitable? In a nutshell, it's his business. His website, wheregoldis.com, draws hundreds of hits monthly. He has 20 to 30 videos that show people how to search for gold and the type of equipment they need to do it. "This site is a good way to help people make money on a really unique hobby," Nathaniel says. "At the same time, I'm building a business and a database that started with two other unique websites, howtodrillawell.com and easiestgarden.com."

Nathaniel says prospecting nowadays isn't a get rich quick proposition, but it certainly can put extra cash in a bankroll. He has found about \$2,500 in gold in the past year. "People spend countless hours fishing beautiful mountain streams and return the fish to the water. If someone spent the same amount of time searching for gold, they might find hundreds of dollars worth of gold."



What started as a childhood obsession in Arizona became a money-making business for Nathaniel Burson, who shows people how to search for gold.

Nathaniel says novice gold seekers must start out with a couple of gold pans that are used for sifting. They cost \$10 to \$15 each. When you have panning methods down, you can use advanced equipment such as screens, buckets and a sluice. A sluice, usually made with a ripple layer of blue miners moss and ribbed carpet to trap gold at the bottom, catches gold and separates it from other

This Family-Run Company Has 9 Websites For Online Parts

If you're restoring a car or truck from the 1930's to current models, you'll do well to put in a call to Mill Supply or visit their website, Rustrepair.com. "We've got thousands of replacement panels and parts that fit Chevy, Ford, Dodge and some imported vehicles," says John Shega, Marketing VP. "Our inventory is huge and we're used to taking orders and sending them out the same day." The company warehouse located near Cleveland covers nearly 40,000 sq. ft.

Rustrepair.com carries body side panels, quarter panels, bumpers, hoods, radiators, fuel tanks, mirrors, lamps, oil pans, brake pads and just about any other part needed to repair a vehicle. It's one of several parts supply businesses owned by Mill Supply, an Ohio company started by Milbert Moritz in 1944. "For 70 years the company has lived by the philosophy of quality parts at a competitive price delivered on time," says Shega. The company now has 9 separate websites that index, categorize and list hard-to-locate parts for step vans, lift gates, walk in vans, trailer towing, landscaping, lawnmowers and snowplows.

Shega says that Mill Supply's business model revolves around personal service and efficient delivery. The company's websites are updated every day with new photos, design

upgrades and interface enhancements to improve customer service. Mill Supply also has a phone staff to answer questions and provide product information that helps customers with their orders.

Shega says the Rustrepair segment has parts for vehicles from the early 1930's up to current day models. "We thought back in the mid 80's we'd get away from rust repair, because manufacturers are making more rust resistant material, but there's a better market now than ever. Pickup trucks and super crews have good engines and frames, but rocker panels and cab corners rust out, and we have the parts to replace them." Shega says the company stocks all of the replacement parts and sources its inventory from three manufacturers in the Cleveland area.

Shega says if someone has the brand name part number, they're able to use their database and cross reference parts numbers in the company supply chain. "We stock 95 percent of what we sell and can ship the order the same day if we receive it by 4 p.m. Eastern time," Shega says.

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sediment.

Early sluices, dating back to 1848 when gold was discovered in California, were made of wood. These days, they're made of metal, which allows you to sift through more material at once. Nathaniel says, "The better the equipment you have, the more efficient your search becomes. And you also get to visit some of the most beautiful parts of the United States."

Nathaniel says most mountain streams in California, Colorado, Montana, Alaska,

Arizona and even northern Georgia are good places to search. "It's a great way to spend time outdoors and enjoy nature," Nathaniel says, "but don't quit your day job."

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