

Start Your Own Business Making Concrete Trees

You've never seen anything like these "concrete trees" that take hanging flowerpot stands to a whole new level. Earl Senchuk teaches artists and nursery growers how to make a profitable sideline business.

From a distance they look like live trees — except the foliage is wrong. Instead of green leaves, the "giant plant stands" sprout all kinds of flowers and blossoms, growing in pots hanging from the branches. They require minimum maintenance because watering systems are built into the trunks of trees which are up to 13 ft. tall.

It's a perfect blend for Senchuk, an artist and a biology graduate, who also makes heated planting beds and greenhouses to lengthen growing seasons (featured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 37, No. 3).

The Marquette, Mich., artist/inventor makes the trees out of steel rod and concrete. He starts with a large pipe base adds 1/2-in. cold steel rod branches and limbs to create the skeletal shape of the tree. He welds on 1/8-in. steel struts for dimension to support plumbing and metal mesh, which is then covered in mortar. After a base coat, Senchuk uses his artistic talents to create knots, crevices and bark

texture with a second coat of mortar. Birch, with its peeling bark, is the most challenging and time consuming, he says.

Because of their size (8 ft. and up), they are impractical for shipping, Senchuk says, so he doesn't market his trees nationwide. However, he teamed up with Vertical Artisans.com to develop a webinar program for \$495, to teach others so they can make and sell trees in their areas.

"The Living Tree Art training program includes a 120-page instruction manual with many drawings and photographs showing every step of the way and 35 videos in parallel to each step. Periodic webinars allow you to ask questions directly while learning new tricks from other Vertical Artisans," Senchuk says.

Anyone with basic MIG welding skills and an artistic eye who is willing to work can make the trees, he says.

He also has a marketing suggestion. "I offer the use of one of my Living Tree Art sculptures for free to a well landscaped business location where I know that the tree will do well and look well for the entire season," he explains. "The business agrees to supply and maintain the flowers, and the



Flowers and blossoms grow in pots that hang from branches. Watering systems are built into the tree trunks.



tree is for sale. There is virtually no work for the business to have to do because the tree, for the most part, takes care of itself. The business almost always ends up buying the tree art before someone else can."

The trees are labor intensive and take about two weeks to complete. Prices start at about \$3,000 (8 ft.).

Senchuk says he usually only makes a couple of trees a year, in addition to his other work.

"If the idea appeals to anyone who has the welding wherewithal and interest to learn how to make Living Tree Art, click on the link on my home page or go directly to the www.verticalartisans.com website," Senchuk says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Earl Senchuk, 207 W. Arch St., Marquette, Mich. 49855 (ph 906 361-1391; info@earlsenchuk.com); www.earlsenchuk.com).



Richard Reames produces chairs, tables, tree houses and other natural art from living trees.

Furniture, Art Made Out Of Living Trees

Richard Reames is a unique furniture builder who produces chairs, tables, treehouses and assorted other natural art from living trees. He's so devoted to the trade and topic that he's a frequent speaker and author of two books. He teaches how to shape, graft and train a living tree or woody shrub to grow into a usable form.

For more than a decade, Reames has applied bending and grafting techniques to thousands of young trees while creating "arborsculptures" at his Oregon nursery and studio and in the yards of his clients. "My growing works of art continue to live and grow thicker and taller with every season," Reames says. "By using live trees for the things that we traditionally killed trees for, we can preserve the large living trees and plant even more to reap all the benefits of live trees."

He started his unique business after being inspired by the tree sculptures of Axel Erlanson, who operated a roadside attraction called "The Tree Circus" near Santa Cruz, Calif. from 1947 to 1963, which featured 55 unique, shaped and grafted trees. He explains that arborsculpture, a term that he coined about 20 years ago, is actually centuries old. Historical illustrations show the practice being done in several countries as early as the 1500's. "It takes several years to get results from our work," Reames says, "but just look at



He trains trees to form a living chair by attaching growing stems to a wood frame.

your own life. How fast does 5 years go by? If you start an arborsculpture now, in 5 years it will be thick, tall and fantastic."

Reames has produced several growing arborsculptures at his Oregon home and for several clients.

He now has almost 20 years of experience in arborsculpture, and his seminars and books are designed to teach others the art of clever growing designs. "My goal is to help people manipulate living trees or woody shrubs into something beautiful, functional, or both," says Reames.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Richard Reames, 1607 Caves Camp Rd., Williams, Ore. 97544 (ph 541 846-7188; www.arborsmith.com).



John Taylor tears down old steel buildings, then bundles and sells the used steel to farmers.

He Markets Used Steel To Repair Farm Buildings

John Taylor knows that everyone can't afford new steel roofing and siding to repair old farm buildings. At the same time, he sees a lot of steel buildings that aren't being used on Wisconsin farmsteads. Two years later, after blending those thoughts into a business plan, he operates a thriving enterprise acquiring and re-selling used steel. In 2012 alone, he supplied roofing and siding to more than 100 satisfied customers across Wisconsin.

"A lot of farmers want to get rid of older steel buildings and put up larger ones, or they buy property that has a building they don't need, so there's no shortage of material available in the countryside," Taylor says. "I started this business after a few neighbors asked me to take down their buildings, and I couldn't use the material myself, so I decided to sell it. It wasn't long before I had people calling me to take buildings down, and calling me to buy used steel for their own farms."

Taylor says that all of the steel he acquires is structurally sound and in good usable condition. "Some of it has rust spots, some of it's discolored, but it all has a workable life remaining," John says. "I sell a lot of product to people who are re-roofing old barns, or they're building a lean-to onto a building and need a small amount of product. Or maybe they're building a small shed for livestock." Taylor's used steel is priced considerably

less than new material and he takes pride in the fact that his customers are saving a good amount of money by purchasing his steel. "Most of the guys using used steel for re-roofing are getting the job done for half the price of new material, or less," Taylor says. He says that one of his customers in Baraboo, Wis., roofed a 50 by 75-ft. barn with 28 ga. used steel for less than \$2,000. The price included delivery of the product to his farm. The farmer installed the used steel right over the old shingles and, with careful placement of the purlins under the steel, was able to use the same fastening holes. New steel would've cost him more than \$4,500. Taylor says with enthusiasm, "He saved the barn, and he saved a lot of money in the process."

In addition to roofing, Taylor's customers are buying used steel for machinery storage, privacy fences, interior liner panels in existing buildings, and for woodsheds. Taylor stresses that all his inventory is sold on an as-is and first-come, first-served basis. He keeps a current listing of available products on his website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Taylor, Wisconsin Steel Corp., N5042 County Road V, Fond du Lac, Wis. 54937 (ph 920 923-1716; www.wisconsinsteelcorp.com).