

Family Business Produces Custom Grain Handling Equipment

"We've got 3 generations of experience in our company, so there really isn't much we haven't seen in 17 years of building and installing legs, towers and conveyors," says Jason Anderson of Ace Millwright in Illinois. "My father Kevin started the business in 1999 and my grandfather Otis, who's 82, still works in sales and loves every day of it. As a small company we really take pride in helping our customers figure out exactly what they need and then building it for them."

Ace began when Kevin Anderson, who operated a feed bagging business, had a customer ask him to build a peanut cleaner and sizing system. That installation was successful, and soon his business evolved into dismantling and re-building older feed mills, grain legs and towers. Eventually they started building grain bins, too. Jason Anderson would clean up much of

the older equipment, rebuild what needed rebuilding and sell equipment to farmers who wanted something that looked new, but without the new cost. He says their business now builds all types of feed and grain legs in sizes ranging from micro-blending to 20,000 bu./hr., most of it built with CAD design.

"We work with a supplier who helps engineer and specify the legs, then we build them in-house. We also build custom conveyors, either completely new or rebuilding used equipment for specific applications. We powdercoat all the new equipment and will assemble it on-site. If a customer is ambitious and has the ability - they can install the equipment themselves using the plans we provide. We can also build galvanized equipment."

From its base in Illinois, Ace is central to all markets in the U.S. and Canada. Anderson says "We've built equipment for farmers,



For 17 years Jason Anderson and family have been custom-building and installing grain legs, towers and conveyors for farmers and grain companies.

grain companies and mills in several states as well as Canada." Ace's tower sections are shipped in a way so they're ready to stand as they're lifted off the truck, reducing bolt-together and assembly time and again holding costs down. "As a family business, there's really no job too small for us and we haven't

found one too large to handle yet."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ace Millwright, Inc., P.O. Box 66, Alpha, Ill. 61413 (ph 309 629-2123; www.acemillwright.com).

Scott Bruce starts his garden seedlings in small, compressed blocks of soil that can be planted directly into the ground. A home-built soil blocker tool makes it possible.



Homemade Soil Blocker Makes Seed-Starting Easy

By Klaire Howerton

When gardening season hits, the first thing on people's minds is getting their seedlings started.

Scott Bruce of Springfield, Mo., decided to start his seedlings in small, compressed blocks of soil that could be planted directly into the ground without having to pry them out of small containers. He built a soil blocker tool to help him do it. It compresses four 1-in. square blocks of wet potting soil that can then be used to start one to four seeds per block. The seeded blocks can be placed in a shallow pan with water to keep them moist for germination.

The soil blocker tool was built from

scrap cedar wood and has an aluminum metal frame. A "plunger" is used to tamp down the wet potting soil.

To use his soil blocker, Scott uses a tray full of wet potting soil and places the blocker in it. Raising and lowering the plunger will condense the soil into blocks. The blocks are then placed in a tray or seedling flat, and Scott uses a pencil or chopstick to make roughly 1/8-inch holes in the block to drop the seeds into.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Scott Bruce, 7965 N. Spring Hill Lane, Springfield, Mo. 65803.



Soil blocker was built from scrap cedar wood and has an aluminum metal frame.



Tool compresses four 1-in. square blocks of wet potting soil that can then be used to start one to four seeds per block (above). A "plunger" is used to tamp down soil.



Looking For A Goat? Check Out Goatzz.com

Old-fashioned, personal service for quality high-tech Internet marketing attracts goat breeders and sellers to www.Goatzz.com, says Joe Preston, director of marketing.

"We saw how livestock breeders and ranchers struggled with technology, websites and marketing in general and that the goat industry wasn't being served well. We saw an opportunity to put our skills to use to create a system that was easy to use and custom-built for livestock," Preston says. "Our goal is to help goat breeders more effectively showcase their farms online and connect with other breeders."

Members can start with a free membership that includes unlimited animal listings, a farm profile, blogging, photos and more. The Business Membership (\$149/year) syncs the members' Goatzz sales lists to their personal websites and includes hosting, email accounts, an online store, and other features.

"The main reason people join Goatzz is because most customers research farms online first before visiting in-person, and

Goatzz provides the best and easiest way to create an appealing web presence for your farm and manage your online sales lists," Preston says. "Another reason is because we really take care of our members, and people are surprised with how personal our service is and the time we take to help them."

Besides dairy goat breeders, members have breeds for meat, fiber, brush clearing, and packing. With Goatzz.com and their own website (using Goatzz info), customers benefit with double exposure but without double the work. Visitors can shop for goats nationwide and find helpful information on the breeder forum and also find goat event listings.

Preston adds that he also uses the software platform to serve the yak and miniature horse industries at www.yakzz.com and www.minihorsetreet.com.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe Preston (www.goatzz.com/support).

"Bird Pies" A New Business Opportunity

Joe Cogswell bakes his bird pies using waste pastry dough, various seeds and sometimes even fruit pieces. Demand for the Canadian bird food delicacy is so great that he is expanding his Eco-Crust bakery.

"We ship throughout Canada, selling mainly through various retailers including Sobeyes and Home Hardware," says Cogswell. "I came up with the idea in the 1980's, and it started taking off in the 1990's. Now my sons are taking over the business."

Eco-Crust Bird Pies are 4 in. in diameter and about 1 1/4 in. thick. Pies come inside a net bag and are wrapped in plastic. Once the plastic is removed, the netting can be hung from any surface where birds can perch.

Bird Pies are made from unbaked pastry dough, peanuts, corn, sunflower, wheat and millet seed. The pies are baked at 320°F for 3 hrs. In the process, this dehydrates them for extended shelf life.

"Birds, especially woodpeckers and blue jays, love them," says Cogswell.

Cogswell would love to export to the U.S.,



"Bird Pies" are made from unbaked pastry dough, peanuts, corn, sunflower, wheat and millet seed. They can be hung from any surface where birds can perch.

but the red tape is more than he wants to deal with. However, he encourages anyone with a supply of pastry waste to consider setting up a similar operation in the U.S.

"If someone has a supply of pastry waste nearby, I'm available to consult on setting up a Bird Pie operation," says Cogswell.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe Cogswell, 321 Rawding Rd., Chipman Brook, Nova Scotia Canada BOP 1V0 (ph 902 538-9864 or 902 679-8688; jasoncogswell@eastlink.ca or ecocrust.com).