



Harry Coates cut off the back half of a 72-passenger bus, removed the floor and used windows from front half of bus to give his greenhouse two sets of windows down each side.

Low-Cost Schoolbus Greenhouse

By Janis Schole

Gardening is easier and more productive for Judy and Harry Coates, thanks to the recycled schoolbus greenhouse they built on their

Codroy Valley, Newfoundland farm. The best part is that, other than \$10 worth of plastic to cover it, the unit didn't cost them anything.

Harry dismantled a decommissioned 72-passenger bus, taking only the parts that he needed. It was all free because they saved the owner the expense of having to haul it away.

He cut off the back half of the bus's 30-ft. seating area and completely stripped it down. He also removed the floor and took the windows from the front half of the bus.

Before beginning setup of his greenhouse at home, he made sure the site was level so the frame would stand straight, and this allowed him to easily slide the windows into place. Because Coates brought home only half of the frame, but all of the bus's windows, he was able to give his greenhouse two sets of windows down each side, making any amount of ventilation easy.

He mounted some of the salvaged steel along the outside length of the wall's bottom edge, and also used some to make 15-in. high by 30-in. wide planting boxes, which run down both sides of the bus as well as across the back end.

"The planting boxes are almost knee high, so it saves a lot of heavy bending," Coates says. "On the back end, I used recycled storm



Steel salvaged from bus's frame was used to make planting boxes that run down both sides of bus and across the back end. Chicken wire covered with plastic forms the roof.



windows to close it up, and on the front end, there are more bus windows on either side of an old, used screen door from a house. I had to shorten the door to about 6 ft., 3 in., but it works great because it is wide enough that you can go through with a wheelbarrow."

For the roof, Coates first covered the inside with chicken wire and then put a layer of 6 mm polyethylene on the outside. He says the chicken wire won't rust because it's on the inside, and it's multipurpose since it stops the plastic from baffling up and down in the wind, and also provides reinforcement for winter snow load. The chicken wire extends the life of the plastic, such that Coates only has to replace it every 2 or 3 years.

"We live in a very rural area and routinely get 100 km winds, so that's a real factor here," he says. "That's the beauty of the chicken wire."

Coates and his wife, who are in their 70's, love the greenhouse because it allows them to get a 3 to 5 week head start in the early spring, growing cabbage, cucumbers, zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower and flower

plugs, all for planting in their outdoor garden once the last frost is over. Then, they continue growing tender things like lettuce, tomatoes and peppers inside the bus for the rest of the season.

The schoolbus greenhouse is oriented north-south, with the door on the north end. It's close enough to the house to "pop out" and get some greens for supper.

The couple grows 4,000 cabbage plants and produces their own homemade food products such as green tomato chow and mustard pickles, which they sell at a local agricultural fair.

Another way that they market their vegetables is through a school fundraising program where students from two local schools buy 20-lb. variety pack bags of fresh produce at wholesale prices and sell them at retail around Thanksgiving.

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Wanted: Elk And Deer Antlers

It takes a lot of antlers to fill 9 shipping containers. But that's what Herb Procknow did last year with the help of his buyers in Canada, Montana and Arizona. Demand for antlers from elk and deer continues to be strong.

"About 95 percent goes to Asia for the medicinal trade," says Procknow, owner of Alberta Antler.

He began buying antlers about 25 years ago when he was a door-to-door insurance agent. As a hunter he appreciated big antlers, and farmers were happy to get money for the shed antlers they found in their fields.

Realizing there was a strong market abroad, he went into buying antlers full time. He used to sell to the U.S. but after Mad Cow disease, import restrictions included antlers. Procknow turned to Canadian connections with China and began working with a buyer in Hong Kong.

Unweathered elk antlers (mostly from elk farms) are considered the most valuable for medicinal nutrients, followed by antlers stored indoors. Antlers that have turned white from being outdoors lose some quality and are worth less per pound.

Procknow pays more for trophy-size antlers. He recalls a farmer who had thrown



Herb Procknow buys elk and deer antlers from farmers and hunters. He sells most of them to Asia for the medicinal trade.

antlers on a rock pile. He was happy to sell them, but showed Procknow a big whitetail deer shed that he wanted to keep - until Procknow offered him \$500 for it.

Beside collectors, there is also a market for antlers among artists for chandeliers and furniture.

"The dog chew market is also growing. I sell to the largest supplier in Canada," Procknow says.

There are many antler buyers in Canada and the U.S., he adds. They often network to trade. In Canada there are no regulations regarding selling and trading sheds, but there are some states in the U.S. that have restrictions.

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