

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.**



About 15 years ago Roger Smith started planting Chinese chestnut trees. He now operates a thriving business that includes 60 other growers within a 150-mile radius.

Their Chestnut Business Is Growing Fast

Roger Smith has chestnuts for sale, but you better get your order in fast. Last year he sold more than 70,000 lbs. of Chinese chestnuts between late September and the first of November. Some are from his own trees planted about 15 years ago. Most are from the 60 other growers within a 150-mile radius of him who comprise Prairie Grove Chestnut Growers.

"Our major market consists of ethnic groups and stores in strong ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago, St. Louis, and Waterloo, Iowa," says Smith. "About 99 percent of our customers are from China, South Korea and southeast Europe. They have a love affair with chestnuts and will bring their kids to our place and just stare at the trees."

Smith started growing chestnuts when he learned how long it would take before he could harvest nuts off the black walnut trees he had planted. He went home and tore out about 100 walnut seedlings and started planting chestnuts. Chestnuts, he had learned, start producing nuts at about 5 years, increasing to peak production by 20 years and continuing at that or slightly higher for decades after.

"It takes about 10 years for a chestnut tree to be profitable," says Smith. "Most trees planted in the past 20 years are Chinese chestnuts, but some of our growers have European chestnuts that are 40 to 50 years old."

Smith notes that chestnut trees require more care than black walnuts and can be a challenge to keep alive and productive. Deer, squirrels and raccoons all love the trees and the nuts. This year he had to spray his trees to control Japanese beetles. Each fall the trees need to be pruned for optimum nut production.

Like other fruit and nut trees, production can vary considerably from year to year. The nuts fall over a period of 7 to 10 days. Harvest starts in mid to late September and runs through October.

"You have to wait until the chestnut falls from the tree," explains Smith. "It is white in the burr and doesn't turn color until 48 hours before it falls."

Smith says most growers mow close to



Prairie Grove customers roasting chestnuts at a chestnut festival.

the ground prior to harvest and use the Nut Wizard to collect nuts (in Vol. 38, No. 5 and available from Amazon.com). Once all the nuts have fallen, they mow close again to break up burrs that might allow the chestnut weevil to overwinter.

"Growers deliver nuts every second or third day, as we only deal in fresh nuts," says Smith. "As they come in, we sort by size and clean if necessary. Once they are in 25-lb. mesh bags, they are stored in our walk-in cooler. If they dry out, they get hard and inedible."

Once Smith notifies customers, the nuts go out in 10, 20 and 25-lb. bags as fast as they come in. In addition to deliveries and mail order sales, 60 percent of the nuts are carried out the door by customers at \$3 to \$4 per pound.

"Everything happens in about 6 weeks," he says. "Our customers are fun to work with, very generous and kind. When we are short of help, they will help out."

Smith admits that it would be hard to make a living at the business. He does it because he loves it. He is confident the business has a good future. "Our sales are growing about 20 percent a year, and the average age of our customer is between 40 and 50," says Smith.

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Hazelnuts Are Catching On As A Profitable Tree Crop

The world is getting a little nuttier every day, and for Linda Grimo that's a good thing. Her family runs Grimo Nut Nursery near Ontario's beautiful Niagara-On-the-Lake, producing a variety of nuts and nut trees, including hazelnuts.

The nursery has its roots with Linda's father, Ernie Grimo, and his passion for understanding and growing tree nuts. As a teen in the 1950's, Grimo foraged for nuts in the woods near his home. Later, as a teacher, he introduced his students to the wonderful world of growing nut trees. In 1974 he bought a small farm, planted a variety of nut producing trees and slowly transformed his knowledge and hobby into a distinguished nursery business. He's kept careful records about flavor, disease resistance, commercial viability and varieties that thrive in the colder Canadian climate. Grimo is widely recognized and appreciated for his expertise and collaboration with other growers. He is the founding president of the Society of Ontario Nut Growers and a member of the Ontario Hazelnut Association.

The time-proven adage that an apple doesn't fall far from the tree certainly applies to Ernie's daughter Linda, who's now working beside her father. She has that same love for the land, passion for the business and wealth of knowledge about hazelnut trees.

Linda says hazelnuts, also known as filberts, are becoming increasingly popular as people discover the true taste of fresh nuts and the health benefits of eating them. Growers in northern climates are helping to meet the demand. Several hazelnut growers from Ontario, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Oregon are keen collaborators, working together and sharing ideas.

Oregon is the largest nut growing area in the U.S. with about 67,000 acres on 800 farms. Responding to growing interest, Minnesota and Wisconsin growers have teamed up to start the Upper Midwest Hazelnut Development Initiative.

Ferrero Rocher, famous for its chocolate-covered hazelnuts and Nutella, is the world's largest user of hazelnuts. The company has built a North America manufacturing plant in Ontario, intensifying interest in growing nuts.



Ernie and Linda Grimo operate Grimo Nut Nursery, shipping hardy nut tree seedlings throughout Canada and the northern United States.

Hazelnuts are relatively easy to raise. Plants grow 4 to 6 years before producing a crop and in that time, farmers can use the land for other cash crops while the trees mature. They require minimal use of pesticides or other chemicals and will produce for about 100 years. After the trees start producing they need to be surrounded by grass, which must be mowed to cut down on mice and rabbit infestation. Pruning is usually done every 3 years and irrigation is done as needed and just before harvest. Harvesting is mechanical so the whole process isn't very labor intensive.

Wholesale hazelnut prices range from \$1.50 to \$3.50 per pound and sell for about \$8.00 retail. Farmers typically generate \$3,000 to \$5,000 in revenue per acre. The yearly Oregon crop generates about \$70 million to that state's economy.

Grimo Nut Nursery ships its tested hardy plants throughout most of Canada and the northern United States. Linda takes care of all the permits and documents needed to ship from Canada to the U.S.

The Grimo Nut Company website has a wealth of information including a growing guide.

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Udder Balm Recipe Also For Hands

Jill Winger of Cheyenne, Wyo. developed an udder balm recipe using natural ingredients that she prefers over commercial petroleum products to use on her Brown Swiss cow's udder - and for her own hands.

Melt 1/2-oz. beeswax in a double boiler. Add 1 oz. each of shea butter and coconut oil. Stir until melted, add 3 oz. olive oil and remove from heat. Cool slightly and add 2 drops each of lavender and melaleuca (tea tree) essential oils. Store in a container and apply to udder after milking.

Many of the ingredients can be found at health food stores or on Amazon, which is handy for Winger who lives 45 min. from a major shopping area.

City-born, but always rural at heart, Winger is a self-proclaimed modern homesteader since she and her husband purchased 67 acres 10 years ago. Besides growing their own food, the couple sells and uses essential oils. Winger has developed a variety of recipes for everything from natural garden pest repellents to homemade fly sprays to body



The ingredients in Jill Winger's udder balm recipe can be found at health food stores or on Amazon.

lotions. She shares her recipes through her Prairie Homestead blog, newsletter and e-books.

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