

## Bubbler Cleans Leafy Greens For Market

Jean-Martin Fortier has a lot of greens and other produce to wash, and says he couldn't do it without his Bubbler and spinners. The author of *The Market Gardener* (Vol. 38, No. 5) grosses around \$140,000 from an acre and a half of farmland. Fortier estimates that half the workload on his micro-farm is washing produce.

"The Bubbler is simply a big tub lined with perforated pvc pipes connected to a Jacuzzi pump," says Fortier. "When turned on, the water in the tank gets agitated, mixing the greens and removing dirt and debris."

Fortier credits fellow greens growers Sandy and Paul Arnold for the concept. He adapted it, using a 5,000-gal. milk tank for his Bubbler. It uses a 1 1/2 hp. Jacuzzi pump to create the bubbling action. He installed an automatic shut-off valve to prevent overflow.

The pressure washing is so effective that it eliminates the double or triple washing needed in the past to clean and crisp his greens.

"The Bubbler allows us to streamline our process, letting us wash, dry and bag up to 100 lbs. per hour," says Fortier. "That is twice as fast as before."

While washing the produce is vital, removing excess water is as well. Fortier adapted 2 ordinary washing machines to spin away the excess water. They are mounted on casters, making them easy to rearrange as needed. Here, too, he relied on the expertise of another grower.

"Michael Kilpatrick, a friend of the Arnolds and a former farmer helped me with our design and setup," says Fortier. "He has put a complete tutorial online on how to create your own washing station. It is available for a \$40 fee and well worth the cost ([www.inthefieldconsultants.com](http://www.inthefieldconsultants.com))."

Check out the videos of the Bubbler and the washing machine spinners at FARMSHOW.com. Visit Fortier's website for referrals to other great tools and market gardening ideas.

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The Bubble produce washer is an old milk tank lined with perforated pvc pipes connected to a Jacuzzi pump.

## Metzer's Is The Place To Shop For Ducks, Geese

Looking to add variety and color to that poultry pen in the backyard? You might want to consider ducks and geese, says John Metzer, an owner of the family-owned Metzger Farms.

"We are a unique hatchery in that we focus on waterfowl and specialize with over 15 breeds of geese and 15 breeds of ducks," Metzer says. Shipments range from two birds for hobbyists to thousands for meat producers to wholesale orders to other hatcheries that sell mostly chickens.

Raising ducks is similar to raising chickens, Metzer says.

"Incubation takes 21 days for chicken eggs and 28 days for duck eggs. Ducks aren't as good at keeping eggs clean so we wash all our eggs. Some are sold fresh, some as balut and some for hatching," he explains.

The Pekin duck is the most popular for meat production. Metzer offers newly hatched Pekin ducks throughout the year, while other breeds are seasonally offered.

"We have flocks coming into production every three months, and they lay for about 45 weeks before they are out of production," Metzer says. "Our peak is from March through June when we handle about 1,900 orders a week."

The Metzgers have about 9,000 breeding ducks in pens in open-sided buildings with natural ventilation. Wire floors over a concrete pit near the waterers along with wood shavings help keep the ducks dry and clean.

The 2,800 breeding geese live outside in 8-ft. tall netted pens.

"We create a nice environment and enjoy seeing a happy flock," Metzer says.

With the help of his son, Marc, who joined the business, the Metzgers utilize technology in incubators and software to manage the orders they ship out weekly. A USPS truck backs up to the loading dock to load the prepared rolling containers of as many as 25,000 day-old birds that will be delivered via FedEx within a couple of days anywhere in the continental U.S.



Metzger Farms hatchery specializes in waterfowl, with more than 15 different breeds of geese and 15 breeds of ducks.

The farm raises some breeds known for egg laying such as Golden 300 hybrid layers, as well as less common breeds such as Black Swedish, Saxony and Silvery Appleyard ducks, for example. Charts on the website list traits to help customers choose specific breeds. Or, they can order mixed duckling packages.

Prices vary according to breed and there are significant discounts for large orders. For example, a straight run (male and female) of 24 or less ducklings costs \$5.03/bird. They cost \$1.76/bird with orders of 1,200 or more.

Metzer adds that though the company is best known for ducks and geese, they also sell pheasants, pearl guineas and a few chicken breeds.

"We are customer centered and do everything we can to make sure the customer is satisfied. It's our policy that we'll replace any losses during shipment or within 48 hours of arrival," he says.

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## Outhouse Builder Finds Plenty Of Business

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Gerald Young was looking for a way to earn a little extra cash when his son-in-law noted that nobody built outhouses any more. Apparently, it was a good idea because in March Young built his 59<sup>th</sup> outhouse.

"It's my legacy," says the 74-year-old, who has been featured on television and in magazines and newspapers. Though affectionately referred to as "Hillbilly Outhouses," there is nothing haphazard about the quality of work and time he puts into each outhouse.

"I won't build junk," Young says, noting he wants his work to last for generations. He "signs" each outhouse with a plaque that includes his name, when it was built, and the number of the outhouse.

He starts with rough-sawn lumber purchased from an Amish sawmill. Most of his outhouses are made of pine or poplar, but customers willing to pay more opt for cedar. Young patterns them after outhouses he remembers from his childhood. They are 50 by 50-in. and 8 ft. tall with a 6 by 6 1/2-ft. steel roof with an overhang. A wooden hinged seat is centered over a 5-gal. bucket that can be easily removed (and follows guidelines Young received from Tennessee's Department of Health). Depending on where they live, some customers remove the bucket, cut a hole in the floor and set the outhouse over a hole or barrel.

The outhouse is built on treated 4 by 4 runners and has extra bracing so it can be transported. Young includes the traditional half-moon in the door and antique-looking black hinges with a wooden latch he makes himself.

Customers request a variety of options from a urinal, to shelves, to finishing the wood with linseed oil or urethane. Some are basic and ordered for practical reasons - for trail rides, hunting camps and cemeteries, for example.

But many are purchased for the nostalgia value by doctors, lawyers and even contractors.

"One guy had a barn with a bar and wanted an outhouse inside the barn," Young says. Other customers have used them for sheds for kids waiting for the bus, to hold garbage cans, and as a dog house with double Dutch



A pair of happy customers takes possession of their new outhouse.

doors for the dog below and storage on top.

Young enjoys having fun with décor - an old-style crank phone on the wall, a jar with corn cobs, an old catalog or plaques with funny little sayings such as "Ladies Please Remain Seated."

Located near a busy highway, Young sold his first outhouses to people passing by. After getting some media attention, he has now sold to customers across the state. Young makes picking up the finished outhouse a happy occasion for himself and his customers by taking photos with them and getting to know them over a burger at a local café.

By selling his outhouses for \$475 to \$750 on average, he admits he doesn't make much per hour. Leaving a legacy, doing speaking engagements, and making friends helps make up for it.

"I meet so many nice people, and I like to visit with customers," Young says.

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