

## Big Time Herb Grower Also Offers Basil Baths

Holly and Barry Mawby, along with son Adam, are not only the biggest herb growers in North Dakota, they may be the only herb growers anywhere to offer basil baths. Their Gardendwellers Farm grows and markets more than 16 different herbs and herb blends. The basil baths were an accidental sideline that has grown along with farm-to-table dinners, farm tours, and educational classes.

"Growing herbs has been a passion of mine since I was 12," says Holly Mawby. "When we moved back to North Dakota in 1999, growing herbs was a way to keep my fingers in the soil. We decided to make it a sideline business to our full-time jobs."

The Mawbys started out growing rhubarb for North Dakota wineries. When that no longer paid, they switched to herbs. The herb business started in 2002 with sales in local farmers markets and soon expanded to restaurants and food service. While others grew a few herbs with their vegetables, the Mawbys grew only herbs.

"It was a niche that we had the equipment and vehicles for," says Mawby. "I would watch as other growers brought in totes and tubs of heavy vegetables. Our tubs weigh just 5 to 7 lbs. each."

In 2011 they moved their operation to their current location with more acres. This gave them room to rotate their herb crops, using cover crops for fallow years.

"The move lets us maintain healthy and

tillable soils," says Mawby.

It also has let them expand what they grow for themselves, adding fruit trees and shrubs, as well as grass-fed livestock. Their son Adam raises and sells grass-finished lamb and pastured chicken under the Gardendwellers Ranch label.

Initially, specializing in herbs allowed them to concentrate on growing very high quality herbs. As their reputation grew, so did demand. At one point, they were also supplying 15 grocery stores a week with fresh herbs. This affected what they grew and when.

"With grocery stores, you have to have your entire line of herbs ready all the time," says Mawby. "You don't start selling until everything is ready to pick and you have to stop when 1 or 2 herbs stop producing."

In 2018 they decided to make another change. They investigated and then purchased a Harvest Right commercial grade freeze-drier (Vol. 38, No. 6). Instead of season-long sales of all herbs to the grocery stores, they schedule production for the best time to harvest. In addition to fresh sales in quantities from an ounce to pounds, they also freeze-dry herbs at their highest quality.

"We are able to schedule harvest, starting with dill and cilantro that are cool weather crops, then harvesting and freeze-drying parsley, and then warmer weather crops like basil," says Mawby. "With freeze-drying we have expanded sales to 5 or 6 states and can



**Gardendwellers Farm promotes "basil baths", in which basil grown in high tunnels is harvested and tossed into a tub filled with warm water.**

offer herbs year round."

Large-scale basil production involves tearing out harvested plants, which led to the basil baths. "A friend of ours was helping harvest basil, and at the end of the day, splashed the basil rinse water on her face," recalls Mawby. "She said how wonderful it felt. A year later her mother was helping tear basil out of our high tunnel, and it was very hot, hard work. I suggested we give ourselves a treat."

Mawby filled a stock tank with water and let the sun heat it. She then tossed in a few bundles of basil. Late in the day, they climbed in.

"We loved it," says Mawby. "The warm water released the essential oils, and basil is known to be stress relieving and healthful."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup,



**Genovese and lemon basil is shown here ready to harvest.**

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## Kansas Family Trains Dogs To Detect Bed Bugs

John and Jina Kugler have bed bugs in their house - on purpose, and safely isolated in vials that John opens every couple of weeks to feed them. The bugs are necessary for continuously training the Kuglers' beagle and three German Shorthair dogs for bed bug detection work.

The Wamego, Kan., couple started Bug Hounds, LLC in 2018, as a sideline business, and demand has been strong. John first observed bedbug detection dogs at work while doing his fulltime job as a security manager. He watched the dogs work at a public library every month for a year and decided that with his experience training hunting dogs that he could do the same work. All the Kuglers took handler training and started working with Beddy, purchased from a training facility, to stop and sit wherever she smelled bed bugs, eggs or nymphs in vials hidden around the house.

Their first job, a 200,000 sq. ft. library,

took 6 hrs., and the Kuglers realized they needed more dogs. Now the handlers and their dogs can cover the library in 2 1/2 hrs. with 3 people and three dogs. The German Shorthair dogs are also taller, which makes them better for checking beds at assisted living and nursing home facilities - another big market for Bug Hounds.

"The majority of our work is civic facilities, anywhere the public goes in and out," John says.

"It's prevalent to think that bedbugs are result of someone's poor housekeeping," Jina adds. "But travel is the real culprit. Bugs come in with people."

Bedbugs are like ticks, John explains. They draw blood from a person or animal for up to 15 minutes, then fall off and find a hiding spot until they get hungry again in 14 to 20 days.

Besides commercial buildings, including apartment complexes and a hotel, the Kuglers

go into homes. The process is for a handler to take the dog into the building on a leash and use a dowel to tap areas where bugs might hide. That disturbs the bugs so they emit additional scent to make it easier for the dogs to find. The Kuglers' dogs sit or paw when bedbugs are present and are rewarded with a treat every time. In large facilities, the Kuglers record room numbers and/or take photos to document areas their dogs detect.

A dog can go through a 2,000 sq. ft. home twice in about 20 minutes for \$150 to \$200 plus mileage. The Kuglers charge by the square foot for larger facilities and usually are on contracts from weekly to monthly to quarterly.

Though much of their work is in larger cities, there's plenty demand for bedbug detection work, and the Kuglers are considering going more full time with the business or possibly franchising it. They also work with staffs at libraries, nursing homes and other facilities



**Kugler's dogs can go through a 2,000 sq. ft. home in about 20 min. for \$150 to \$200.**

to teach them how to detect bedbugs.

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## Make Money Selling Baked Goods Online

If you're a baker who would like to turn your talent into a sideline business, online marketplace Etsy.com might be the place to start. While mostly known for selling crafts, some bakers are finding Etsy is a great place to sell breads, cookies, cakes, pastries and other food items.

"Business really boomed with the stay-at-home order due to Covid-19 in March," says Sandra Green, listed under TheCountryBakers on the Etsy website.

"After Christmas I usually get 5 to 7 orders a week, but suddenly in March I was getting 5 to 7 orders a day," says the Clearwater, Kansas, baker. The pace slowed by mid-summer. She gained many new regular customers from New York, California and states in between who discovered her when they couldn't buy their favorite treats locally.

Green initially sold baked items through

a Farmers Market in Wichita, which she helped found in 1990. In 2012, she and her mom decided to try Etsy for their crafts and baked goods. When Green and her husband moved to Florida, she continued the business selling on Etsy. The Greens recently moved back to Kansas to take over her family's farm and are building a new home.

Being online, it doesn't matter where she lives, Green says. And she sells year round, which makes it more appealing than seasonal farmers markets. She says the Etsy process is easy, even for people who don't use the computer a lot. She filled out a profile to get started and takes photos and writes descriptions of the products she wants to sell. Etsy charges 20 cents per item every 4 months and takes 5 percent of her total income.

Thanks to her flock of chickens, Green never runs out of eggs, which are important for one of her best sellers.

"I sell a lot of angel food cakes," she says, even though it costs \$35 including shipping.

Besides the baked goods, she sells mixes for everything from bread to pasta and soup. She also sells Emergency Preparedness Meals, with dehydrated ingredients that just need to be cooked in water for an entrée such as chicken fried rice or Alfredo chicken.

"I created those while I was in Florida for hurricane season," Green says, adding there was big demand during this spring's lockdown. Instead of buying all her dehydrated food, she purchased a dehydrator so she can use vegetables from her own large garden.

"To be successful, you have to be determined and stick with it," she says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Sandra Green, www.etsy.com (TheCountryBakers); Facebook: The Country Bakers.



**The Etsy website is a great place to sell baked goods online, says Sandra Green, who is listed under TheCountryBakers on the website.**