

Urban Farmers Profiting With Microgreens

Kyle and Kelsey Foor of Fresh AF Farms LLC do not have any acreage, but they're growing unusual crops that have created a new market in their rural Pennsylvania area. They grow many varieties of microgreens vertically in a 200 sq. ft. insulated shed near their home in Claysburg, Penn. Planting to harvest takes an average of 10 to 14 days.

The urban farm started in early 2020, when Kyle, who liked the idea of indoor farming, was between jobs after being laid off as a trucker in the oil field. Dissatisfied with produce at the grocery store, he set up a shop light and planting tray to grow lettuce for Kelsey, a trauma nurse, who takes salads to work. After Kyle researched microgreens he started growing them for Kelsey and discovered he liked them, too.

After her co-workers tried the microgreens they started ordering regularly. The couple recognized an opportunity, and over the summer they moved the operation from the

basement into a new shed where it is easier to control temperature, humidity and water pH (by adding lemon juice to the water filtration system).

Seeds are started in new soil in trays, watered and given 17 hrs. of LED and fluorescent light. The Foor's both work full-time jobs, besides spending 3 to 4 hrs. a day planting, watering and caring for the plants.

Watering is done carefully, to prevent mold. When the plants are 2 to 3 in. tall they are cut. The microgreens only weigh 2 oz, when packed into containers, which is enough for about 5 days of salad. Microgreens keep up to 2 weeks when refrigerated.

Through free samples and providing information at farmers markets and events, the Foor's are educating people in their rural area and creating a steady market for themselves.

Microgreens may be small, but they pack as much flavor as full grown radishes, peas,

broccoli and other veggies. Plus they are 5 to 10 times more nutritious than mature vegetables and grow in a lot less space.

"We can grow microgreens in 1 to 2 in. of soil and water is very minimal," Kyle adds.

Currently they plant nearly 30 kinds of microgreens including peas, broccoli, cauliflower, herbs, popcorn, and sunflowers.

"We were nervous people wouldn't want to buy them because they are more expensive at \$6 per container," Kelsey says. But they have many repeat customers including restaurant chefs and health center clients as well as regular consumers at work and at farmers markets.

To attract more consumers to their farmers market stand, the Foor's added decorated succulents that are used for weddings. Plus, they plan to add edible flowers to their product line.

With their growing shed and a few hours of work a day, the Foor's have figured out how



Microgreens at Fresh AF Farms are grown vertically in a 200 sq. ft. insulated shed. Planting to harvest takes an average of 10 to 14 days.

they can grow nutritious foods year round and create a successful sideline business.

Check out their offerings on Facebook.

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Zero-Turn "Blowdozer" 2.0

Bob O'Neil was happy with the "Blowdozer" he made by converting a Husqvarna zero-turn mower with a pair of Stihl backpack leaf blowers (Vol. 43, No. 6). He recently bought a new Simplicity Cobalt commercial zero-turn mower, and had to redesign the leaf blowing system - which gave him the opportunity to improve and simplify it at the same time.

"I call it my Blowdozer 2.0. The entire system can be put on or taken off in less than 5 min.," says O'Neil. "I kept the same pair of Stihl backpack leaf blowers, but the new mower is designed different so I was able to add adjustable mounts, rotating nozzles, and a simpler leaf blower mounting system. It works great. In fact, I recently mowed/blowed my entire yard, and my neighbor's yard in just 23 min."

With the original Husqvarna mower, O'Neil set the rollbar back 90 degrees and built a platform on it for the 2 backpack leaf blowers. "The blowers sat kind of loose," he says. "So on the new mower, I turned both

halves of the rollbar upside down and then welded a metal platform onto each one. The blowers rest solidly in a 6-in. deep channel in each platform and are secured by bungee cords. To detach the blowers, all I do is twist the blower tube and slide it back from the old nozzle."

To move the air from back to front, he mounted 4-in. dia. pvc pipe, sized to match the blower tubes, to either side of the seat and around the mower armrests just like on the original system. But instead of directing the air through a pine board attached to the mower's swivel wheel support arms, he installed a length of 2-in. square tubing with a series of pre-drilled holes in it on front of the mower deck. The pipes are fitted with brackets and 1 1/2-in. square tubing that slides inside 2-in. tubing, allowing the pipes to be moved closer together or farther apart.

The nozzles are also more adjustable. "A set of 45-degree fittings directs the air ahead of the deck through slightly smaller pvc pipes



Redesigned leaf blowing system features adjustable pvc pipe mounts, rotating nozzles, and a simpler leaf blower mounting system.

to boost velocity. Sewer pipe clamps connect the fittings and allow me to rotate the pipes in order to adjust the direction of the tips," says O'Neil. "The nozzles can blow in a V-prow

pattern or shoot off to either side."

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When diagnosed with cancer a year ago, Ron Tschetter donated his stalk-chopping, coulters cart business to a nearby youth Bible camp.

Inventive Farmer Donates Company To Bible Camp

Ron Tschetter had a great idea for converting a chisel plow into a stalk chopping coulters cart. After manufacturing and selling thousands of coulters kits, which were featured in our "Best of FARM SHOW" issues for many years, he had an even better idea. When cancer hit him hard a year or so ago, he donated the business to a neighboring youth Bible camp.

"Jon Duba was my minister when I was in high school, and now he is the camp director at Byron Bible Camp," says Tschetter. "They will keep producing the kits with the profits going to the camp."

Aside from the new owner, nothing else will change for customers old or new, notes Duba. "FARM SHOW readers can contact us through his website," says Duba. "We will have complete chisel plows with coulters for sale, as well as kits for conversion."

A 31-ft. wide chisel plow equipped with

Tschetter's coulters system is priced at \$16,500. A kit with two, 18-in. wavy coulters spaced 6 in. apart and the mounting shaft with bearing assembly is \$350. The bearing support can be greased, and the shaft is made of cold-rolled steel and drilled for a roll pin to the hub plate. The outer shield is cup-shaped and goes over the bearing center to protect it from weeds and other materials.

"Ron kept refining the kit and improving it, making it better and better," says Duba. "We don't see any changes that will be needed."

Duba relates that Tschetter continues his fight with cancer.

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Do-It-All Machine Loads, Spreads, Scoops And Sweeps

"The Bedding Spreader was built to spread loose material like wood shavings and straw," says Reinald Treur, Dalefield Ag. The company is the North American distributor for the Dutch-made machine. It can be fitted with an optional rotating broom and a scraper bar for cleaning slatted floors.

Powered by a 3-cyl., 20 hp. Kubota engine, the hydrostatic drive provides infinite speeds in forward and reverse up to 8 mph. A dedicated hydraulic pump powers forward and reverse movement.

A second hydraulic pump powers other components, including an agitator in the self-loading, 46-cu. ft. hopper. Simply tilt the hopper forward, drive into the pile, tilt the hopper back, and begin spreading. The spreading disk produces much less dust than competitive units with blowers and can deliver even damp materials to the bedded area.

With a total length of only 84 in., the 3-wheel design allows a turning radius within a standard 8-ft. aisle.

The rotating brush with its 3-way valve can operate at the same time as the spreading system, or separately. It's fully adjustable to match the height of the stalls and moves up, out of the way if driving over a manure pile.

The hydraulic manure scraper mounted under the hopper moves material through



Designed to spread wood shavings and straw, Bedding Spreader also can be fitted with a rotating broom and a scraper bar for cleaning slatted floors.

slatted floors as brushing and spreading are underway. The scraper blade is 68 in. wide.

"The Bedding Spreader has the weight of an average dairy cow," says Treur. "It's very safe on slatted floors."

The Boreco Bedding Spreader with the commonly included rotating brush is priced at \$34,000 (Canadian).

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