

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](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

Following the tenants of "faith, family and friends," the composting business has helped keep his seventh-generation farm a viable operation despite the increasing metro population around the farm.



## On-Farm Composting Business

As housing developments and population growth encroached on his Ohio farm, Tom Price shifted from raising livestock to offering a service and new products—compost, topsoil blends and mulches. Price Farms Organics, Ltd. provides a great option for local businesses that want to avoid sending byproducts to the landfill. And it's a unique opportunity to turn manure and bedding from the Columbus Zoo into Zoo Brew compost.

Price first got into composting in the late 90s when he started intensive grazing with his cattle. To fertilize the pastures that were on a 20 to 30-day rotation, he composted the manure from hogs bedded with newspaper and cardboard.

That led to winning a bid when Delaware County Commissioners sought a property to compost yard trimmings after Ohio's 1994 yard waste ban.

"When a large food company found out what we were doing, they invited us to talk to them about composting," Price says. This turned into a trip to the UK to observe how composting was done there. "It took us about 3 years to go through a great deal of learning and permits."

After a very simple beginning, with customers bringing 5-gal. buckets to pick up compost, Price Farms got a couple of grants to help purchase a scale and loader. They went through the regulations to become an Ohio EPA-certified Class II commercial composting facility for their local solid waste district.

In addition to byproducts from businesses and the zoo, yard trimmings are part of the compost mix. Because they have enough volume, they can even take black walnuts, Price says, which are common in the area.

"We have to weigh everything coming in for the EPA, including shipments every day from the zoo," Price says.

The 26-acre composting yard in the center of the 330-acre farm (hay and sod) allows the operation to handle about 200 tons of material a day and let the compost mature for 1 to 2 years. The location is also helpful in reducing noise and smell.

"We manage odors aggressively and use lots of carbon as a bulking agent to calm the nitrogen in the manure. We have dropped odorous product lines," Price says.

Since the beginning, he has been mindful of his neighbors. To accommodate gatherings at million-dollar homes often upwind of his farm, he slows down the operation a couple of days ahead of time.

When he first started, Price says he did his homework to learn about regulations, talk to township trustees and visit his neighbors—often with gifts of meat.

"You have to build goodwill," Price emphasizes to anyone considering starting a similar business. "Let the neighbors know what you are doing, hire their kids, build relationships."

Following the tenants of "faith, family and friends," the composting business has helped keep his seventh-generation farm a viable operation despite the increasing metro population around the farm.

Many of his Zoo Brew compost customers are members of a garden club in a wealthy neighborhood nearby, and zoo landscapers incorporate the compost back into the zoo grounds.

Price Farms provides an important service and completes the circle, Price says, by keeping byproducts out of the landfill and creating nutrient-filled compost, topsoil and mulch.

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## They're Growing Vanilla In Florida

The Tropical Research and Education Center of Homestead, Fla., is working to bring a new cash crop to the state—vanilla.

"Vanilla is a valuable tropical crop with global appeal and near insatiable demand, but it's mainly produced overseas," says Assistant Professor Xingbo Wu. "Severe weather events and geopolitical challenges negatively impact the global production and supply of vanilla. Florida has a suitable environment for vanilla production, so we're researching whether vanilla can

be the next crop for Florida's agriculture industry."

Commercial vanilla is a species of orchid that grows in humid rainforests throughout Central and South America, Mexico, Tahiti, and Madagascar. A few species are native to Florida, each of which is endangered. The crop has never been grown commercially in the state. "Challenges with vanilla production include lack of knowledge in horticulture management practices, labor-intensive production process and disease resistant varieties



Ohi:yo also infuses pepper powder in salt and sells raw and hot honey from the couple owns.

## They're Selling 'Hot' On Ohio

### Farm

If you appreciate hot peppers and want new culinary options, an Ohio couple is happy to help you. "Welcome to Pepperdise" is the greeting on their Ohi:yo Pepper Co. online store with powders, blends, infused salts and raw and hot honey.

"We like everything spicy. We're always doing research and development in our kitchen," says Thera Snyder, who owns the business she and her husband, Nick, started on her family's farm.

Both love to "spice it up" by adding hot peppers to everything from main dishes to fruit, cookies, bread and popcorn.

They begin the process by planting 5,000 to 6,000 seeds in grow tents in February. Some plants are sold, and about 3,000 are planted on half an acre. There are over 100 varieties, and some peppers are sold fresh at area farmers markets.

Most are freeze-dried and sold year-round, which sets Ohi:yo products apart from other dried peppers that are dehydrated or air-dried.

"The difference is that freeze drying keeps the fresh flavor. They keep their vibrant colors," Snyder says, including orange, red, green, peach and chocolate.

"Chile Heads" who seek the heat can find about three dozen powders made from mostly very hot peppers. Snyder also includes the Scoville Heat Units in each powder's description so customers know what they are getting into. White Ghost, Death Spiral and Carolina Reaper are among the hottest peppers. But there are options for other customers' taste buds as well.

with unique flavor profiles," says Wu.

Still, there's a lot of motivation to make vanilla a success in the U.S. It's one of the world's most popular flavors, and vanilla extract can bring in up to \$1,200 per pound, making it one of the most profitable crops per acre. The U.S. is also the world's largest importer of vanilla beans, so a local supply would find a ready market.

Wu is working with a \$383,000 Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) grant to explore the potential of establishing vanilla in southern Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. "We have preliminary data to support Florida growers to trial vanilla production with horticulture management recommendations and genetic materials," he says. "Meanwhile, the vanilla breeding program is working on solutions to address other challenges with the hope to expand the industry in the future."

One focus is fertilizer. Researchers are applying various conventional and organic fertilizer rates to container plants and measuring resulting growth rates. Research is also underway to determine how best to pollinate vanilla flowers, as it's not fully understood yet what natural pollinators are fertilizing Florida's wild vanilla crops. This

"Aji dulce red is only 500 on the scale. It's mild, just above the red bell pepper, but it has a hot flavor," Snyder says.

The cost is \$12 per 12-gram jar for pepper powders, except for Aji Charapita Powder, which costs \$65/jar. Snyder explains that it takes 200 of the pinky-nail-size peppers to fill a jar. Native to Peru, the citrusy, fruity, slightly floral pepper is gaining popularity and rates up to 100,000 Scoville Heat Units.

Beyond the powders, Snyder has developed several blends through her kitchen R&D. "A Kick in the Peach" came about after she added Datil pepper powder to a peach cobbler. Her blend includes peaches, sugar and other spices, along with the pepper, which can be sprinkled on everything from popcorn to fruit to salmon.

Ohi:yo also infuses pepper powder in salt and sells raw and hot honey from the couple's hives.

After purchasing seeds from other pepper growers for a couple of years, the Snyders started saving seeds to start all their plants in 2024. They also introduced new products such as spicy pecans and hot pepper jelly.

"I plan on expanding by getting in more local stores and attending hot sauce festivals around the country," she says, to get the word out about products from Ohi:yo Pepperdise.

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Vanilla grows up an avocado tree in a Florida growing trial.

research involved setting cameras in trees with native vanilla to take time-series photos to capture the pollination events with computer algorithms. Processing these photos is an ongoing project.

So far, approximately five farm trials around Homestead, Fla., are experimenting with vanilla, with more likely to join the program in the future. "Our overall goal of this project is to establish a domesticated vanilla industry in Florida," says Wu. "There's a lot more research necessary to get to that point."

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