

MICHIGAN FARMER OFFERS HIS CUSTOMERS "A PIECE OF THE BLOCK"

Renting A Tree Can Be "TREE-MENDUS"

First there was rent-a-home; then rent-a-car became popular. Now Herbert Teichman, of Tree-Mendus Fruit, Eau Claire, Mich., has the perfect answer for those who want to have their own apple tree but don't want the responsibility of caring for it.

Rent-a-tree.

For about \$25 to \$50, depending upon the size of the tree, a family can rent a tree for a year. They can visit the tree whenever they want, and when it's harvesttime they can come out and spend the entire day in the country, picking apples from their tree, picnicking, or enjoying the miles of nature trails on Tree-Mendus Fruit's 800-acre farm.

Herb thinks his rent-a-tree service is the first of its type in the U.S. and maybe in the world. Since rent-a-tree began in 1971, several hundred families have traveled from western Michigan and northern Illinois and Indiana to Tree-Mendus Fruit's nearly frost-free location in southwest Michigan for the privilege of picking apples from "their" tree.

"Instead of trying and possibly failing to transplant the country into their backyard, a family can 'own' a plot of land in the country where they can spend the day," Herb explains. "And when we get people in the country, this is the best public relations we can get.

Herb says families usually rent Red or Golden Delicious or Jonathans. Other favorites include Red Rome, McIntosh, and Holiday. For families willing to take long-term leases, Tree-Mendus Fruit will graft special varieties onto the tree. Some family trees now carry such classic additions as Maiden Blush, Northern Spy, Hubbardston, Northwest Greening, Grimes Golden, Stark, or Transparent apples.

Herb says he gets calls from California to Maine about rent-a-tree. "Several years ago two doctors in California called me about this after they had bought some orchard land," he recalls. "I gave them all the help I could, but I figured they were in this just for a quick profit. Sure enough, it wasn't long afterward that I heard they had gotten out of the business."

Herb doesn't run Tree-Mendus Fruit that way. He lets potential renters know from the beginning they are taking the same chances by renting a tree that he is with the rest of the orchard. He's also very concerned about keeping Tree-Mendus Fruit a place for the family to enjoy. He's quite adamant about that.

"We don't rent trees to individuals," Herb says. "We rent trees to families. That's why we call them 'family trees.' We want the family to



Sign directs customers to Herb Teichman's orchards.

come out and pick the tree together."

Potential tree renters are told of the various apple varieties, and they are invited to visit the tree rental section of the orchard and pick out the variety and tree they prefer. Then the tree is tagged and numbered, and the fruit it grows is theirs. Herb always has a tree reserved for the governor and state director of agriculture, in order to keep Michigan fruit on the minds of both men.

Herb even has tips on harvesting the "family trees."

"The ideal way to harvest is to come early in the season and pick the riper apples on the outside of the tree," he recommends. "Then come back each week or two and gradually harvest the crop."

By renting trees and offering recreational facilities for the family to get away for the day, Herb is not only creating goodwill with customers, but also he's keeping them from competing for surrounding land.

"People come through here, see how good the fruit looks, and say, 'Hey, where can I find a few acres like this?' But once people get property they don't know what to do with it, and they bid my land up," he complains. "My rent-a-tree program solves people's desire to 'own' some land in the country."

Judging by the Tree-Mendus Fruit operation, there are two basic prerequisites for setting up your own successful rent-a-tree program. First, be sure you have a good orchard site; Tree-Mendus Fruit's is nearly free of frost. Secondly, and importantly, you have to be a good promoter and like to deal with people.

Like Herb Teichman.

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CONVERTS OLD TIRES INTO STURDY, INDESTRUCTIBLE FEEDERS

Tire Tub Feeder

A plastic liner that slips inside a used 14 in. tire makes one of the slickest, sturdiest feeders you ever saw for horses, hogs, cattle or sheep.

A simple hook built into one side of the plastic tub fastens under the lip of the tire and locks the feeder in place so hogs, horses, or other animals can't uproot or lift it out of the tire. The plastic tub won't come loose unless you want it to, says the manufacturer.

"The tub feeder is especially good for horses since it forces them to stretch their necks," a spokesman points out.

Suggested retail of the plastic tub feeder (you furnish your own worn out 14 in. tire) is \$8.50.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Farnam Equipment Company, Box 12068, Omaha, Neb. 68112 (ph. 402 453-9100).



Plastic tub liner has built-in notch which slips under lip of tire to hold it in place.

YOU SIMPLY DIAL THE DESIRED PLANTING RATE

Adjust Planting Rate 'On The Go'

You can adjust planting rate "on the go" to adjust for changes in soil type and other variables, thanks to the new "affordable" Var-A-plant monitor from Custom Products, Litchfield, Minn.

Initially available only for Deere 7000 series planters, it will be available for most other popular makes and models, including the IH Cyclo planter, later this spring, the manufacturer points out.

The Var-A-Plant is easily connected to the central transmission box. You simply dial the desired population and the device automatically takes over to maintain the particular rate which you have specified. It will instantly increase or decrease seed population from zero to 25% in increments of 5%. It continuously monitors and automatically corrects any deviation from your dial setting.

Here, according to Gary Mattila, of Custom Products, are some obvious advantages of the new monitor, which provides "on the go" planting

rate adjustments without having to stop to change gears or sprockets:

For thinner soils on hills, you can dial a light planting rate, then switch back to a heavier population for heavier soils on lower ground. You can automatically adjust for changes in cropping history throughout the field, thus compensating for varying fertility levels. For farmers who irrigate using center pivots, the device makes it possible to instantly change the population rate when planting those areas of the field which won't be within reach of the center pivot.

Mattila emphasizes that the Var-A-Plant provides "on the go" changes in plant population, but does not perform the function of a regular monitor which tells you if each row unit is dropping seed.

Suggested retail is \$995.

For more details, contact, FARM SHOW Followup, Var-A-Plant, Custom Products of Litchfield, Box 718, Litchfield, Minn. 55355 (ph. 612-693-3221 or 2897).