

### Thriving Family Business “Rescues” Tired Old Flags

Pamela Swift's business is all about national pride. Since 1972, the Peoria, Arizona lady has made her living restoring frayed and dirty American flags to like-new condition.

She got the idea after noticing some shabby flags in her community and figured she could put her seamstress skills to work restoring them.

Swift Flag Repair Service has grown to the point where she now works on between 500 and 600 flags each week. She employs five full-time and four part-time seamstresses, plus the operation has provided jobs for three generations of Swifts.

“We bring used flags back to the bright and flowing symbol of American pride that they once were,” she explains. “We specialize in cleaning, repair, and corner re-enforcement of large U.S. state, and corporate flags.”

Swift charges according to flag size. The largest flags she repairs measure 30 by 65 ft. She uses a secret blend of commercial laundry products with ice cubes to bring color back to faded flags.

Flags can be repaired up to three times with care. Flags can even be rewoven to fix tears or holes.

The Swift women fix and clean all types of flags for a variety of sources such as car dealerships, hospitals, hotels, casinos, and oil companies.

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**Pamela Swift makes her living restoring frayed and dirty American flags to like-new condition.**



### Fish Compost Developed On Quebec Farm

Brothers Garry, Joey, Lloyd, and Roderick Hayes of Shigawake, Quebec diversified their beef and dairy farm by starting a company that sells a compost mix made from cattle manure, sphagnum peat moss and fish scraps from local fish processing plants. Their “Seagro” compost has turned out to be a profitable and quickly expanding business.

“Originally, we were plowing down the fish scraps on the farm, but we weren’t getting their full value, so we started experimenting with compost,” Garry explains. “We now sell Seagro Progro Mix and Seagro Premium Potting Mix. We made all our own baggers, screeners and conveyers

and have had many international inquiries about the equipment and our composting expertise.”

Seagro compost also serves as a fertilizer—one that doesn’t evaporate, blow away or run off when it rains, like traditional fertilizers can. It’s much more stable and stays in the soil for up to three years, releasing nutrients slowly, according to the family. Seagro provides improved drainage, aeration and nutrient retention.

Due to local climate conditions, the Hayes brothers compost their raw ingredients for a full year before packaging. The process is carried out without the aid of chemicals or fillers. The resulting indoor and outdoor gar-

dening product is 100 percent natural and odorless.

According to Seagro’s marketing manager, Jennifer Hayes, the company’s biggest avenue for growth, especially in American markets, has been in providing a private label packaging service.

Marketing directly to retail garden stores has been challenging because of transportation costs, but they’ve overcome the problem by making their trucking extremely efficient.

“We’ve become local distributors of various supplies such as forage seeds, fertilizers, twine and plastic wrap, and this allows us to bring back supplies from other areas after

delivering our Seagro products,” Jennifer explains. “We try as much as possible to move our products as far as possible with our own trucks, but the majority of our sales are closer to home.”

Seagro Progro Mix and Seagro Premium Potting Mix both have target retail prices of \$7 to \$8 (Can.) per 32.8 quart bag. The Hayes family is actively seeking distributors across North America.

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### Growing Dandelions For Dollars

When most people see dandelions, they see weeds. When Wanda Wolf sees dandelions, she sees profit.

Wolf has been in the native plant and herb business for 10 years, and understands what herbalists and nutraceutical manufacturers want. She works with farmers and people who harvest plants from the wild to market their products.

In recent years, she has discovered that good money can be made from harvesting dandelions so she has started paying farmers \$100 per acre to dig out dandelions using a special implement called a sprigger, which is pulled behind a tractor.

People use dandelion roots in dried form as a body cleanser. Leaves and flowers (fresh frozen) are also marketable products, according to Wolf.

She says that during World War II, when latex was in short supply, dandelions were grown and harvested for their milky latex sap, which was used to make rubber products.

The plant actually contains more iron and calcium than spinach. The plant is also said to be useful in dealing with diabetes and cancer. And the root can be taken as a diuretic.

Wolf says that although the market for dandelions was soft over the last two years due to a glut from overseas countries, she’s optimistic about next year’s prices and hopes to scale up production here again.

“The overseas product was generally



**Good money can be made from harvesting dandelions, says Wanda Wolf, who harvests about 1,000 lbs. of roots per acre.**

poorer quality because dandelion roots absorb both good and bad soil components plus it took a bit of time to clear out our own supply backlogs. I think next year will be a good year for us,” she says.

To make harvesting worthwhile, she says a field needs to be saturated with dandelions. In such a case, Wolf says a grower could expect to yield about 1,000 lbs. of dried dandelion root per acre. She has sold this product for \$6 to \$8/lb., which translates to a return of \$6,000 to \$8,000 per acre.

According to Wolf, one person can pick 5 to 7 lbs./hour of flowers at the first flush of growth in May, selling them for around \$4 per pound. Leaves are also harvested in spring.

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### College Idea Evolves Into Family Business

When 17-year-old Gary Clegg asked his mother to make him a custom fleece blanket, he had no idea it would be the beginning of a whole new business.

It started with a simple problem that might plague any young student trying to save money by keeping the heat down. In the winter Clegg couldn’t operate a television remote. After deciding against simply cutting a hole in the blanket because it would let cold air in, he asked his mother to sew a blanket with two roomy sleeves. She did and he and his roommates used it throughout their college years. When he moved to Colorado, people started asking for a blanket for themselves and for gifts. Clegg found a Maine factory willing to make small orders for him.

With continued encouragement and interest, Clegg and his brother started marketing what they call the “Slanket” in 2006 - mostly on the internet.

“The whole philosophy is excessive, indulgent comfort,” Clegg says of his 60 by 95-in. fleece blankets with 13-in. wide sleeves. It’s designed to be thrown off easily and not feel like a piece of clothing.

“Right off the bat we sold to video gamers and tech people who write on laptops,” Clegg says. “Overall the main demographic has been women who are internet savvy and men buying it for women.”

High fuel prices, causing people to lower their thermostats, have fueled demand for the Slanket, Clegg says, and more older people have been ordering his product.

But he’s also found interest from people he didn’t anticipate.



**If you keep your house cool in winter, you’ll like the oversized sleeves on Gary Clegg’s “Slanket”.**

“People on chemotherapy, or dialysis, get cold after treatments,” Clegg says, and they like warming up in the Slanket and being able to read a book or work on a laptop.

He knows customers’ stories because he communicates with them.

“One great thing about our website is that it’s really friendly to customers and promotes interaction,” Clegg explains. “When they buy my product, I send them messages and they feel comfortable giving feedback.”

The adult version sells for \$44.95. A children’s version, 44 by 66 in. with 10 1/2-in. wide sleeves, is \$29.99. The thick 310 gsm (grams per square meter) fleece comes in several colors and can be washed in cold water and tumble dried in low heat.

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