

Business Is Booming For ‘No Dirt’ Gardens

Len Pense figures an acre of his gardens could yield a quarter million dollar income a year, and that's without any dirt. Pense, a retired defense department contractor, has created a Garden of Eden on a rocky piece of ground in Missouri. Now people are coming from all over the country to learn from him and buy his secret mix.

"This thing is spreading like wildfire," says Pense. "I'm shipping material to fill garden beds in California, Florida, New York and everywhere in between. It has literally exploded on me, and I have people coming to my farm by the thousands."

Pense claims he started out with the goal of being self sufficient for himself and his extended family. The trouble was his place was all rocks. Instead of hauling in soil, he developed a mix of peat moss, vermiculite, perlite, cotton burr compost and rice hulls to which he added 42 trace elements.

"It gives plants the exact balance of everything they need to explode," says Pense. "With no dirt or manure, I have no weeds, no e-coli and no salmonella to worry about. Plants always do their best in loose, well drained soil, and that's what this mix is."

Pense spreads out landscape cloth to prevent weed growth. Then he lays out 64 cinder blocks two high to form a raised garden bed that he fills with his mixture. He prefers 4 by 16-ft. beds as it makes it easy to use 16-ft. cattle panels for climbing plant support.

"The material to fill and feed a 4 by 16-ft. bed costs \$417 the first year and \$50 in main-

tenance in following years," says Pense. "It will easily grow from \$1,000 to \$1,500 in produce each year."

What started out as a private effort became very public when the retailer where he bought his supplies got curious. Once he saw what Pense was doing, he asked him to talk about it on a local radio show. Listeners jammed the phone lines and Pense offered to teach a class on his method. He had 67 people signed up for his first class before the show ended. Interest grew from there.

Today Pense offers classes every Saturday from January until Thanksgiving. Classes for special groups are held during the week. Attendees pay \$50 each with a spouse or other family member paying half price. His website gets more than 1,000 hits a day, and he has people driving halfway across the country to see his gardens and take classes on planning with his methods. He has even built a cabin for holding classes and processing garden produce. Former students are welcome to return and participate in planting, maintenance and harvest and/or attend classes on canning produce.

Pense has also developed plant supports that serve double duty. PVC pipe provides supports for plants and for overhead sprinklers for watering. Pense hangs his cattle panel vine supports on pvc pipe on the north side of the beds, which mostly run east and west. That way when they are covered with pole beans or other climbing plants, they don't shade out other plants. Beds that are



"No dirt" garden mix consists of peat moss, vermiculite, perlite, cotton burr compost and rice hulls with 42 trace elements added in.

planted early or late have hoops that curve from one side of the bed to the other to provide supports for row covers.

Pense uses the holes in the cinder blocks to stabilize the pvc pipes and the hoops. Tomato plants are supported by cages up to 16 ft. tall made from concrete reinforcing panels.

He claims a single bed can produce 100 quarts of green beans. He says one of his 16-ft. tall tomato plants will produce 150 lbs. of fruit in a bad year.

The loose material in the beds has other benefits too. "When potatoes start blooming, I can reach into the beds and pull off new potatoes without disturbing the plant," says Pense. "Carrots are perfectly formed as well."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pensaroda Farm, 8389 Owls Nest



Pense lays out 64 cinder blocks two high to form raised garden beds that he fills with his "no dirt" mix.

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Southcoast's Workhorse ag module plugs into the factory wiring harness to improve fuel delivery based on rpm load.



Power Boost Module For Ag Equipment

"We've been selling diesel power boosters for Ford Powerstroke, Dodge Cummins and GMC Duramax engines for the past few years. Many of our customers have asked if we have anything for their other ag equipment," say Marcus Hochstetler of South Coast Performance Solutions, who recently introduced the Workhorse ag module for tractors, combines, and other diesel engines.

The module plugs into the factory wiring harness to improve fuel delivery based on rpm load. Hochstetler says the modules can increase fuel economy by 10 to 15 percent while boosting power up to 30 percent.

He notes that it isn't as simple as more power from less fuel. By lowering the power curve and getting the power to the vehicle sooner, it isn't as necessary to gun the engine.

"It's the throttle lag that really eats up fuel economy," he says.

Hochstetler adds that unlike performance chips, the SPS modules do not produce the high temperatures and excessive torque, but actually lower engine exhaust temperatures.

"They're safe for the engines with no danger of overheating," he says.

According to Southcoast, most performance chips, modules or programmers produce more horsepower by altering the dura-

tion of the injection pulse and/or reprogramming the fuel tables in the factory installed computer. The longer the injector is held open, the more fuel that goes to the engine. Over-fueling will significantly shorten the life of the engine or cause it to fail altogether, warns Hochstetler. Unburned fuel increases friction and wear on the cylinder walls and rings and can raise exhaust gas temperatures to dangerous levels.

Southcoast modules add no additional fuel, says Hochstetler. Instead, they increase the combustion efficiency of the diesel engine through improved atomization of the injected fuel. Breaking down the fuel particles allows them to mix better with available oxygen, causing the fuel to burn faster in the combustion chamber. This releases more thermal energy, producing more power and torque at lower rpms.

The Southcoast Workhorse modules are priced at \$695 and are backed by lifetime repair/replacement warranties. "These modules also do not affect the manufacturers' warranty," says Hochstetler.

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"It's small and gets into small places," says Kenny Anderson about the blade he made for his Cub Cadet garden tractor.

Cub Cadet Hydraulic Blade

The hydraulic-operated blade Kenny Anderson created for his Cub Cadet never comes off. He's used it year round for about 20 years, scraping the driveway, cleaning up messes and moving snow.

It works especially well moving the snow close to a building, says the Glenville, Minnesota, man. He drags the snow backwards with the blade, then digs in 4 to 6 in. and pushes the snow away.

"It's small and gets into small places," he says.

The retired farmer used scraps he had on

hand and purchased a valve body and a used power steering pump from a Chrysler car. The pump powers the cylinder that lowers and raises the blade.

"You can control it right off the seat," Anderson says.

He ran the steel through a roller to shape it into a half moon, making the blade 42 in. wide by 12 in. high.

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A power steering pump off a Chrysler car powers the cylinder that controls the blade.

