

New Ways To Make Money On The Farm

Basket-Makers Bring Back A Lost Art

Floyd Hrupsa's hobby is considered a lost art. He produces hand-made wooden baskets made from red cedar. Since the 70-year-old retired farmer started making them in 1997, the round bushel baskets have become very popular.

The baskets taper out from the bottom to the top. For example, a 1 bu. basket is 14 in. in diameter at the bottom and 17 1/2 in. at the top.

Hrupsa's baskets are extremely strong and can be used for transporting freshly picked fruit or produce, or simply as home décor, which is the most common reason people buy them.

The Felton, Delaware man learned his basket making skills as a boy and one of the tools he still uses today - a form from his grandfather's basket factory - is older than he is.

Hrupsa harvests red cedar trees himself and uses a bandsaw mill to slice off 1/8-in. thick "staves," which are used to make the sides of the baskets. The bottoms of the baskets are also made of red cedar, but are 5/8 in. thick.

Sticking to old time tradition, he nails the pieces together using steel wire nails,

and then puts hickory bands and cross-braces around the sides. These hickory bands and cross braces are white because they are made of sapwood from the outside of young hickory trees that are no more than 12 in. in diameter at the butt. He also adds a wire around the middle for extra strength.

He says Delaware state red cedar is a deeper red than most other state cedars, so the contrasting color of the bands on the baskets is very attractive.

"Everything is feather-edged and sanded," he says. "I saw all the wood myself. I'm the only basket maker I know of in the U.S. who makes slatted baskets, instead of weaving them, which makes them strong."

Hrupsa says one bushel basket has two brass-plated handles. The 5/8th bu. size has no handles, and the 2-quart size has a foldable handle.

His sister, Clara Melvin, makes padded, upholstered lids and "garters" for the baskets, using a variety of fabrics, usually with a farm or animal theme. The lids have a wood base and a wooden knob in the middle. Matching garters are placed around the sides of the baskets. Hrupsa sells baskets with and without the lids/garters.



Delaware Red Cedar gives these hand-made baskets their bright color. They can be used for moving freshly picked fruit or as a house decoration.

Hrupsa sells his baskets "topless" for \$30 (1 bu.), \$20 (5/8 bu.) and \$12 (2 quart). The padded lids sell for \$20, \$17 and \$10, respectively. He adds a shipping charge for mail orders.

Annual sales, according to Hrupsa, have been about 300 of the smallest size, 75 of the middle size, and 120 of the bushel baskets.

The red cedar baskets will give off a smell for at least two years. Once that smell starts to dissipate, he says it can be refreshed by applying sandpaper to the inside of the basket.

Contact: Floyd Hrupsa, 4453 Sandtown Rd., Felton, Delaware 19943 (ph 302 284-4783).

Bagged mini bales are perfect for small time gardeners who don't want to dirty their cars.



Bagged Mini Bales Add Value To Wheat Crop

George Hubka wanted to get more income from his wheat crop, so he came up with the idea of putting straw into 2-ft. dia. mini bales that he sells to home gardeners and other consumers, who use the straw for mulch and pet bedding.

"The round bales are easy for consumers to handle, and they're wrapped in plastic so people don't mind putting them into a car or van," says Hubka, who markets the bales under the name "E-Z Roll Straw."

He uses a large round baler to make the bales, adjusting it down to make the 24-in. in dia. bales. Once made, he cuts each bale in half by placing them on a wood frame one at a time. He ends up with two 2-ft. wide bales that each go into a clear plastic bag with a big 8 1/2 by 11 label. The bags are sealed by a wire twist tie.

"It's a nice source of profit - I figure I net about \$30 per acre after packaging costs," says Hubka. "Most consumers find

it awkward to handle small square bales because of their shape and weight. The bales have to be shaken apart for use as mulch, and they make a mess in your vehicle. My mini round bales are much easier to move because you can simply roll them along without having to do any lifting. You just unroll the bale to the depth of mulch desired, without having to shake the straw loose. Even small children can help roll it to wherever it's needed."

The bales can also be shipped on pallets by stacking them flat end down, with four per layer, two layers high. "The ease of shipping these bales can possibly open some markets in areas where straw isn't a local commodity," he notes.

He sells the bales for \$4.99 apiece. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George Hubka, 3691 Bristol Oaks, Dowling, Mich. 49050 (ph 269 721-3830).

Cages can be custom built for nearly any purpose by the USDA certified company.



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Whether it's bird aviaries, rabbit cages or monkey enclosures, the USDA certified operation specializes in efficient, space saving, and time saving breeding facilities.

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Kennels and cages can be erected inside buildings when the custom orders include a drawing and dimensions of the building.

Cages are constructed from a wide variety of wires appropriate to the specific animals, and the frames of the panel structures are made from triple-galvanized, powder-coated steel tubing. The panels are joined together with special clamping kits that they manufacture for easy assembly, using wing nuts and carriage bolts. Nylon locking nuts are another option.

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Custom Cage Works caters to everyone from private breeders to professional zoos.

kinkajous, wallabies, mini Nigerian dwarf goats, border cheviot sheep, ring tailed lemurs, mini zebu, as well as other animals from time to time.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Custom Cage Works Inc., 19892 North State Hwy. 34, Terrell, Texas 75161 (ph 866 563-5099 or 972 563-5099; fax 214 828-4360; email: custom@cageworks.com; website: www.cageworks.com).

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