

Business Is Booming For Eye-Catching Statues

A bucking bull with lights in its eyes fits perfectly in the Angry Bull restaurant in Michigan. An elk and zebra welcome visitors at the entrance of a Texas game reserve.

The animals are fiberglass statues poured and painted by Ned Fleetwood of Smithville, Ind. The retired concrete worker says he never intended to get into the business; he was just looking for a fiberglass horse for someone. He found one at a concrete statuary business and discovered that the owners had about 10 fiberglass molds that they didn't want. Fleetwood bought them and started his own business in 2006.

Horses were the most popular at first but more recently his pigs and 8-ft. roosters have been hot.

"Car lots like roosters and gorillas to get attention," Fleetwood says. "You can see the rooster 2 miles away."

Besides businesses, he sells his fiberglass animals to exotic animal collectors and zoos, farmers and people who just want to make a big statement.

Fleetwood currently owns molds that

range from colts, pigs and baby elephants to 10-ft. elk and 11-ft. elephants. He also makes giraffe, hippo, camel, mule, pig, bull, bear, buffalo and bucking horse statues.

Fleetwood pours them with the help of an assistant, then sands them and paints them with acrylic high-gloss enamel paints. Fiberglass is more durable and heavier than plastic statues, he says. For example, his rooster is 125 pounds, compared to 40 lbs. if it were plastic. Fleetwood also anchors his statues securely on a fiberglass base.

"They survive high winds and are strong enough to sit on," Fleetwood says.

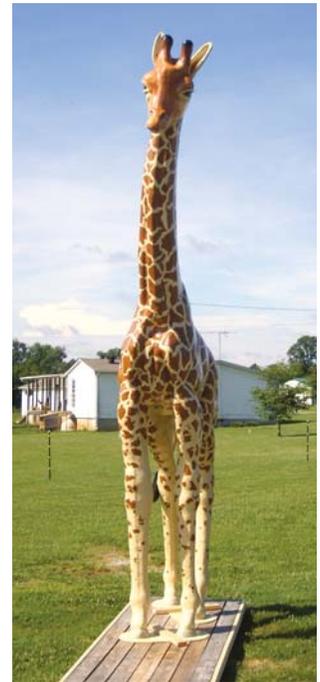
Cost for average size statues start at \$1,000, plus shipping. Shipping to distant locations can get expensive, Fleetwood notes, though he has shipped a rooster, horse and pig to Norway. He also combines orders and makes deliveries to reduce costs.

Fleetwood has 30 animal molds to choose from.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ned Fleetwood, Box 29, Smithville, Ind. 47458 (ph 615 495-8399 or 812 824-6661; www.nedsanimals.com).



Ned Fleetwood sells his fiberglass animals to businesses, exotic animal collectors, zoos, farmers and others who just want to make a statement. He owns molds for roosters (above), pigs and giraffes, as well as many other animals.



Florida Farmers Try "New" Oilseed Crop

Florida farmers could soon be harvesting biodiesel oil from jatropha nuts. Farmers in the state are planting test plots of jatropha shrubs with the help of University of Florida researchers. The shrub grows up to 20 ft. tall, begins producing nuts at 18 months, is mature at three years, and has a life expectancy of 40 years.

Martha Avila, soil sustainability coordinator, University of Florida, says the oilseed crop is being tried on marginal acres and fields that have been abandoned. Jatropha will continue producing for decades and, because it's not a food crop, it requires minimal irrigation. Avila works closely with Lee County extension and Florida University researcher Roy Beckford.

"We are working with different growers here, as well as across the state, in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean," she says. "Our plots are more than five years old, and there are now farms growing from five acres to 200 acres."

One thing being evaluated is how far

north jatropha can be grown. Avila reports one grower in Georgia who started trees from seeds. In only 6 months they had reached heights of 3 ft.

The big question is cold tolerance. This past winter Lee County temperatures hit and stayed below 22 degrees Fahrenheit for 8 hours. Plants three years old and younger lost foliage and had branch dieback. Of 176 plants, 40 percent are showing signs of recovery with new growth. Others are growing back from ground level. At the same time, older plants seemed able to survive with no setback. Avila cites an 80 year old tree near Fort Myers that was unaffected by similar temperatures.

Beckford has recorded yields as high as 40 lbs. of nuts per shrub. According to him, oil yields from a jatropha crop could reach 1,200 gal. per acre with a value of more than \$4,400, compared to soybeans, which yield approximately 48 gal. per acre. He considers it an ideal oil crop especially for southern Florida.

Avila and Beckford aren't the only ones



Florida farmers are planting test plots of jatropha shrubs, which grow up to 20 ft. tall. The nuts are considered an ideal oil crop.

looking at jatropha. Researchers from Europe and Israel are evaluating hundreds of jatropha varieties. Plans are in place for hundreds of thousands of acres of jatropha to be planted in Africa. Avila says huge acreages have already been planted in South America.

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Martha C. Avila, Sustainability Program Coordinator, University of Fla. IFAS, Lee County Extension, 3406 Palm Beach Boulevard, Ft. Myers, Fla. 33916 (ph 239 533-7506; avilamc@leegov.com; www.lee.ifas.ufl.edu).

Glass Block Nitelites Tell Stories

Glass blocks make great nitelites, says Margo Boyd, who sells her rural-themed crafts at local shows and through her website.

"My idea is to make each block tell a story or be a page out of a story book," says the rural Park Rapids, Minn., entrepreneur, who notes that many family members help with the business.

Creating the nitelites is a blend of machining skill and artistic flair. She drills a 1/2-in. hole with a vertical mill in the back of each block. The hole is just big enough to slip a string of 15-20 craft lights inside.

"The most challenging part is drilling the hole and not breaking the jar," Boyd says. Using a regular power drill takes a

long time and is harder to control.

Once the hole is drilled, Boyd washes the interior and lets it dry.

To decorate the block Boyd uses stickers, greeting cards, tube paints, glitter and decoupage, spraying the finished product with three coats of polyurethane to hold everything secure and make it washable. She wraps a ribbon, yarn or other accent around the edge and slips in the lights.

Boyd takes custom orders; Nitelites start at \$25, plus shipping. Boyd buys new glass blocks from big box stores. More expensive pre-drilled blocks are also available.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Margo Boyd, HeartMade Creations, 58199 St., Hwy. 34, Park Rapids, Minn. 56470 (ph 218 255-4816; www.heartmadecreations.com).



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