

## Business Booming For Non-GMO Seed Company

Lou Ehrhardt founded Albert Lea Seed Company in 1923 to provide farm and garden seed along with a range of farm supplies. In 2016 Lou's grandsons, Tom and Mac Ehrhardt, changed their entire line of Viking Corn and Soybean seed products to 100 percent conventional seeds (non-GMO, non-traited). They will still offer traited products, through a distributorship with NorthStar Genetics.

Mac Ehrhardt says he and his brother decided to change their focus because the company has been selling more and more non-GMO seeds in the past decade. They say many of their customers are moving to non-GMO because they often yield as well or better and cost considerably less. In 2017 they offered 23 conventional corn hybrids and 8 conventional soybean varieties. Conventional corn seed may be \$100 to \$150 less for an 80,000-kernel seed bag unit than traited corn, says Ehrhardt. The difference in soybeans conventional vs. traited is usually less than \$20 per bag. Another economic boost for

farmers raising conventional products is that they can often get premium prices from companies and individuals who buy the grain, so it's a win-win situation.

Ehrhardt says the Viking Pure seed from their company is guaranteed 99 percent GMO-free and its Ultra Pure is 99.9 percent GMO-free. They grow and produce those seeds themselves and warehouse the products at their Albert Lea location. The company has grain storage capacity of 350,000 bu. and maintains 100,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space.

To further delve into conventional products, they're planning on researching non-GMO varieties for food use and may offer those products in the future. The company currently offers organic seeds including barley, oats and wheat that are certified non-GMO. They also sell many different varieties of grasses, small grains, native seed, cover crops and conservation seed.

"We're certainly not against farmers planting traited seeds," the Ehrhardts say. "However we feel there's also a great



"We feel there's a great deal of potential in conventional, non-GMO seed," says Mac Ehrhardt of Albert Lea Seed House.

deal of potential in conventional products. We've got the knowledge, the production capabilities, and the sales expertise to sell them so that's the route we're going."

Albert Lea Seed House will continue to provide traited products from NorthStar

Genetics, a business they've known and been associated with for 20 years.

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## Seed Company Thrives With Conventional Varieties

Canadian Vince Trudell worked nearly 30 years for seed companies until the late 90's when GMO seeds were introduced. He didn't like the way customers were being pressured to buy the new seed so he started his own company.

Trudell focused strictly on conventional seed products when he launched De Dell Seeds in 1999. He started small with a few devoted customers and ran the business himself until 2010, gaining higher volume and new customers each year. He says farmers who used the conventional corn hybrids he started with had consistent yields and they were able to save \$20 to \$30 an acre by not having to pay the technology fees

associated with traited GMO seed. His son Will, who'd helped his father in the business as a young man, joined the company in 2010 as the first full time employee. Since then the father-son operation has seen continuous year-after-year growth.

"Over the years we've expanded the product line. Now it includes 34 conventional corn hybrids, 6 of which are specific for silage, and 28 for grain," says Will Trudell. "We've also added organic seed corn, which was a natural fit into our company philosophy. We employ leading-edge genetics with an in-house breeding and development team that works to provide well-tested and high-performing hybrids. Our products use a

diverse genetic base and our hybrid mix has a diverse background to meet a variety of farming practices."

De Dell now has 5 additional full-time employees that have really helped the company grow market share in Ontario and Quebec. "We have a few customers in other provinces and just recently began selling in the U.S. after getting inquiries from farmers down there," says Trudell. De Dell has test plots in 6 different locations that cover all maturity groups the company offers. Prices range from \$141 to \$209 per bag for the conventional corn seed and \$249 for organic seed. The company doesn't sell soybeans.

Trudell says he and his father really feel the

conventional or non-GMO market is growing because it's consumer-driven. De Dell's silage products in particular are gaining wider acceptance because livestock producers are realizing that cattle respond well to conventional grain. Al Nixon, a customer from L'Orignal, Ontario, says "Once I switched back to a conventional feeding program, my herd has never been healthier. I've significantly reduced my veterinary bill and at the same time increased production."

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Jeff Hoard never knows when it's going to freeze on his Nevada ranch so having a quick way to drain garden hoses saves him a lot of grief.

## Tire Method Drains Hoses Completely

Tired of thawing out frozen hoses, Jeff Hoard found a better way to drain them using an old tire. Living and farming at a high elevation near Austin, Nevada, frigid winter temperatures periodically freeze hoses from September through May.

"I tried lots of ways to drain them, but I only ended up with wet gloves and iffy results," says Hoard. "Then I found a simple fix."

Hoard attached an old ATV tire to a pole about 6 to 7 ft. in the air. He suggests that the higher the tire, the better the draining that will take place.

"I screwed through a metal plate and then through the tire to the post as high up as I could comfortably reach," says Hoard. "I just slip the hose through the tire and then walk away until the other end lifts into the air."

Hoard says using the tire has kept his hoses well drained. He stores the drained hoses flat instead of vertical, reducing the chance that the small amount of moisture left can plug the hose.

"The only modification I plan to make is to put a slit in the tire tread, and screw a metal tang on to the post," says Hoard. "Then I can easily slip the tire on or off depending on the season. I don't want to have to look at the tire all summer."

Hoard shares his creative scrounging ideas and projects on his DVD titled Hillbilly Heaven, available on his website.

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A patent-pending blade mounts to the mower deck's original spindle to level uneven ground.

## Riding Mower Converted To "Lawn Leveler"

Dallas Appelgren of Hillman, Mich., recently contacted FARM SHOW about a "grader" he built to level uneven lawns, as well as the "crown" on dirt trails and gravel driveways.

"It sure beats shoveling, I'll tell you that," says Appelgren. "A level lawn becomes more important as more people switch to zero-turn riding mowers, which move so fast that unless your lawn is level you get a bumpy ride."

Appelgren says he researched commercially available products designed to level a lawn, but didn't find much. "When you search the internet on how to level your lawn, they show you a hoe and a shovel," he says.

His "Holey Moley" grader, as he calls it, is still in the prototype stage. He already has a patent on the blade, but is waiting for approval on 2 other patents.

The design uses a grader blade that screws onto the deck's original spindle. A pair of small wheels mount on each side of the deck. "The blade is raised up or down by using the same handle that's normally used to raise or lower the deck," says Appelgren. "As the blade levels the lawn it sometimes removes a little soil which turns the grass brown, but the grass usually grows right back."

The 83-year-old Appelgren says he can't provide any more details until everything is patented. He's now looking for a buyer. "I've got a working model on an old Wheelhorse riding mower and can prove that it works," he notes.

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