

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: [editor@farmshow.com](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

Mexican sour gherkins look like miniature melons but taste like cucumbers. They can be pickled, used in stirfry, salsas and salads, or eaten fresh.



## Love Cucumbers? Try Rare Cucamelons

If you are looking for something unique to grow in your garden, you may want to try a couple of exotic varieties. Both are called "cucamelons" and are small, prolific and look like mini-melons but taste like cucumbers.

Mexican sour gherkins are native to Mexico and Central America, but are cold and drought tolerant. Start seeds indoors or plant in the ground after danger of frost has past, and use a trellis or wire to get the vines off the ground. The 1-in. dia. fruits start to produce in July and are prolific until frost. Pick when firm and the fruit pulls easily off the vine. They can be pickled, used in stirfry, salsas and salads, or eaten fresh. Not many seed companies carry them but we found them at Park Seed, Johnny Seed and Burpee for about \$3 for 30 seeds.

West Indian burr gherkins are ornamental in addition to tasting good. Thought to have originated in Africa, then taken to Jamaica, they were introduced to the U.S. in the 1700's and appreciated by Thomas Jefferson.



West Indian burr gherkins grow spine-like bumps and develop a lemony taste. They do well in hot humid weather.

When picked young and tender they taste like a mild cucumber. As the spine-like bumps get tough, they develop a lemony taste. The burr gherkins can be eaten raw, used in salads, cooked like zucchini, and pickled. We found seeds for them at Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (25-35 seeds for \$3) and at Caribbean Garden Seed (50 seeds for \$3.46).

## "Dimple Board" Quickly Plants Seedlings In Trays

Rick Plunkett came up with a fast way to start seedlings in plant trays filled with soil by making what he calls a "dimple board". It consists of 36 wooden pegs set in rows and screwed to a sheet of Lexan.

The user simply grabs a pair of handles on top and presses the dimple board onto the tray, with the pegs forming a hole in the soil in each cell.

"I came up with the idea when I stopped by a local greenhouse and saw them using a stick to make holes in a plant tray, one at a time, as they planted seedlings. I thought there had to be a better way," says Plunkett.

To make the pegs he cut wooden dowels down to 1 1/2 in. and sharpened them at one end. Then he cut a sheet of 1/4-in. thick Lexan the same size as a standard plant tray and marked the center of each cell on it. He drilled holes into the Lexan and then screwed the pegs into them. He also screwed 2-in. deep guides onto 3 sides of the Lexan to keep the dimple board perfectly centered on the tray.

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Alexa Lehr, 17, raises all-black Svart Hona chickens native to Sweden. She hopes to crossbreed them with other breeds to create a new breed.

## Teen Starts Business With Black Chickens

After graduating from high school this spring, Alexa Lehr, 17, plans to get a degree in graphic design. She figures it will dovetail nicely with her career plan which is to breed designer chickens.

The seed for that idea began when she and her twin sister, Anna, were 10 and raised their first batch of chickens. The passion was sealed in 2016 when Lehr bought her first Svart Hona eggs and successfully hatched three of them.

"They are special because they are all black - on the outside, and the meat, organs and bones," Lehr says. "They are even more rare than Ayam Cemani. Quality birds sell for \$300 to \$600 a bird. Lower quality chickens are \$60."

While the Ayam Cemani is native to Indonesia (see FARM SHOW's Vol. 39, No. 2), the Svart Hona come from Sweden. They look less gamey than the Ayam Cemani, weigh 5 to 7 1/2 lbs., and lay nice size off-white eggs that tend to be extremely fertile.

Raising the breed along with other chickens has been a learning experience for the twins. Though cold hardy, last winter's extreme temperatures in Michigan meant extra work. Lehr coated rooster combs and wattles with coconut oil salve and occasionally housed the Svart Honas and a few other chickens in a warm garage to protect them from frostbite and cold. By spring, winter had taken its toll and the hens were too thin to lay eggs. Lehr adjusted her feeding program.

"I started adding high protein supplements. They tend to need a higher protein diet to

handle stress," she says, noting she uses all organic feed and natural remedies.

She ordered more eggs from better breeders and plans to continue to grow her flock to do line breeding by selecting the best birds. Qualities she wants include: all black birds including the tongue and bottom of the feet; no purple hues in the combs and wattles; no floppy combs; and a good temperament.

"My goal is to raise these birds so they are affordable for backyard producers who want to add variety. I want to develop a strain known for longevity and health. If bred properly, they can live up to 15 years or more," Lehr says. She hopes to make a sustainable living with the Svart Hona strain, crossbreeding them with other breeds to create designer chickens - while doing graphic design work for extra income.

"I don't know why I'm so intrigued with chickens," she admits. "Though Mom and Dad help and remind us about things, the chickens really are our responsibility. They are something I can call my own."

For income, the twins do a variety of things including selling how-to eBooks. *Winter Chicken Keeping and Dairy-Free Cookbook* can be purchased from their Pioneer Chicks website.

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