



Blue Fruit Farm grows various berries and plums organically.

Minnesota Farm Specializes In Blue Fruit

Blue Fruit Farm went blue accidentally. When an organic farmer quit renting 5 acres from Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford in 2008, he left behind an 8-ft. tall deer fence. They decided to look for a way to put it to use.

"I wanted to plant blueberries, but that was going to take a lot of soil amendments," recalls Riddle. "Joyce suggested starting out with elderberries and other fruit that didn't require as much up-front work."

They ended up going with a variety of fruits - aronia berries, currants, honeyberries, juneberries, plums, blueberries - and nearly all were blue.

"One day we were talking about a name for the farm as we ate some blue corn chips, and I suggested calling it the Blue Fruit Farm," says Riddle. "While we do have some red and yellow plums, pretty much everything else is blue."

Every acre is not only protected from deer, but also covered with netting to keep out the birds. The deer fence is surrounded with an 8-in. high electric barrier. It's designed to discourage raccoons.

In addition to maintaining their organic certification, Riddle and Ford emphasize pollinator habitat restoration. They also worked on soil organic matter and erosion prevention.

Drip irrigation uses rainwater from the roof of a machine shed. The water is strained and stored in a 1,500-gal., above ground, poly tank and a 4,500-gal., underground, concrete cistern.

"It's filtered twice before being pumped to the drip irrigation lines," says Riddle.

"We can inject fish emulsion when we want to boost fertility for certain crops, like blueberries."

The 12-volt irrigation pump and the electric fence charger are powered by 2 solar panels with battery storage. Rainwater can be supplemented with well water pumped to the cistern.

All the crops receive a top-dressing of compost made on-farm from wood and shrub chips, prunings, grass clippings and horse manure from a nearby farm.

Fruit is picked and sorted by hand and placed in walk-in freezers to preserve flavor. The chilling also stops development of spotted wing drosophila eggs.

"We went online in 2019 with a Barn2Door managed web presence," says Riddle. "That has really helped us find customers this year."

The Blue Fruit Farm shop has frozen fruit, and a wide range of jams, jellies, juices and sauces.

Many juices and jams are 2 and 3-way mixes of blue fruits, as well as a recent introduction called bluebarb. It combines blueberries and rhubarb and was marketed via the farm's Facebook page with a link to the Barn2Door app for ordering.

Prices range from the sold out, frozen elderberries at \$40 for 5 lbs. to juices at \$12 for a 12-oz. bottle and various jams at \$7 per half pint.

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Easy-To-Use Pto Shaft Adapter



PTO Connect makes connecting an implement to a tractor easier, by removing the radial splines and replacing them with axial splines.

"What's the one thing farmers hate to do when hooking up an implement to a tractor? It's the dreaded pto shaft. Our new PTO Connect adapter makes the job a lot easier," says Tim Marshall, Tractor Add-Ons, LLC,

Houston, Texas.

The patent pending PTO Connect adapter is designed to be used on all tractors with a 1 3/8-in., 6-spline pto shaft. It works by removing the radial splines and replacing them with axial splines, and it eliminates the need to rotate the pto shaft in order to line up the splines.

The system consists of two parts - a tractor receiver and an implement adapter. The tractor receiver attaches to the tractor's pto shaft and remains permanently on the tractor. The implement adapter hooks up to the implement's pto shaft, and is connected by pushing a locking sleeve forward and sliding the adapter over the tractor receiver.

The PTO Connect adapter sells for \$360 plus S&H. You can learn more by watching a video on the company's website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tractor Add-Ons, LLC, 6031 Hwy. 6 North, Suite 165, No. 271, Houston, Texas 77084 (ph 505 666-2315; sales@pto-connect.com; www.tractoraddons.com).

Jeremy Stilson couldn't justify the cost of a commercial portable chicken coop, so he modified an old 9 by 20-ft. steel carport.



Carport Made Into Chicken Tractor

"Last spring I decided to raise about 150 'free range' chickens to sell to local food markets. I wanted the chickens to get fresh grass every day, but I didn't like the cost involved in using commercial portable chicken coops so I built my own out of an old carport. It has an all-steel frame that's light and sturdy," says Jeremy Stilson, Morley, Mich.

He got the 9 by 20-ft. steel carport free from a neighbor. He used a portable bandsaw to cut 2 ft. off the bottom in order to reduce the coop's weight, dropping the height to 6 ft. Two 21-ft. sections of 1 1/2-in. black pipe serve as skids and are welded to both sides of the carport. Stilson used self-tapping screws and 1 1/2-in. fender washers to fasten chicken wire across both ends of the carport.

He installed an aluminum screen door on one end, using 1 1/2-in. sq. tubing to make a door frame. "The chicken wire at both ends of the coop provides plenty of ventilation," says Stilson.

The coop rides on four 16-in. tires, one on each corner. Each tire is connected to a 4-ft. long cam lever handle, and by lifting the handles the operator can lower the tires and raise the coop off the ground for transport.

"Total cost of the project was about \$300, with most of that for the tires and the aluminum siding," notes Stilson.

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Wheeled sling lift is equipped with a multi-position tongue that hooks up to any pickup bumper.

"Cow Crane" Lift For Down Cows

Getting a down cow back into a standing position is an easy chore with this new lift for down cows.

The Cow Crane is a self-contained, portable cow lifter designed to pick up down cows. It comes with a multi-position tongue that hooks up to any pickup bumper.

"It lets you control the cow after lifting so she can gradually regain the use of her legs. To my knowledge, there's nothing on the market like it," says Roger Swihart. "You can lift a down animal without causing any trauma or injury, and use it to walk the animal to help them get back on their feet."

The lift rides on 18-in. rear tires and smaller front caster wheels, and also has a hitch so you can tow it down the road from one farm to another. It's equipped with a nylon strap on front and a hip clamp on back, both raised or lowered by worm gear winches.

To lift an animal, you roll the Cow Crane into position over the cow and use the hip clamp to pick her up just enough to get the front strap under her behind the front legs. Then raise the cow to a standing position.

"The cow has the freedom not only to

stand, but to walk on her own while supported by the Cow Crane," says Swihart. "Often one time will get the cow back on her feet. If not, just lower her into a comfortable position until it's time to lift again."

The nylon strap and hip clamp are independently raised or lowered by using either a wrench or an electric drill. "A drill with socket is faster and more convenient, so we will include one," says Swihart.

The unit has a hinged tongue which, by pulling 2 pins, can be adjusted to 3 different positions - one for transport mode that lifts the caster wheels off the ground; one that frees up the tongue so it can be pulled behind a 4-wheeler, skid loader, or pickup; and one that raises the tongue up out of the way for storage.

The Cow Crane sells for \$4,295 delivered in the U.S. You can watch it in action on the company website or on YouTube.

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