

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.



"The majority of customers use the tools, and some are collectible pieces," McNulty says. Other buyers use the tools for cabin and home décor.

They Sell All Kinds Of Antique & Vintage Hand Tools

If you're looking for vintage and antique hand tools to use or collect, there's a good chance you'll find something at McNulty Tools. The owner, Steve McNulty, works as a site superintendent for commercial construction during the week. But on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., he's at his Hixton, Wis., shop selling vintage tools for carpentry, blacksmithing, machinist, farm-related items including veterinary, logging, carving, and unique oddities.

"I like old tools and ended up going to sales and joined a few groups," McNulty says. "There's a lot of interest in carpentry and pattern-making tools. But I also have wrenches, farm-related stuff like axes and saws, and treadle-operated machinery. Nothing with a cord."

In addition to common brand name tools, he has tools branded for hardware and retail stores that no longer exist. Old wood molding planes include names from

Revolutionary and Civil War era tradesmen.

"The majority of customers use the tools, and some are collectible pieces," McNulty says. Other buyers use the tools for cabin and home décor.

"I get great joy out of collecting tools, and ones I don't keep get out to others (through the store), so they don't sit idle. I don't want these traditions to go the wayside," he says.

He adds that being located in Hixton is an asset because the small town is an "antique mecca in the Midwest." There are four other antique stores in town, including three that are antique malls with more than 200 vendors.

In addition to being open on Saturdays and Sundays, McNulty Tools is on social media and ships worldwide.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, McNulty Tools, 124 E. Main St., Hixton, Wis. 54635 (mcnultytools@gmail.com); Facebook and Instagram: McNulty Tools).



McPherson notes that the slide is a new, exciting attraction that pays for itself quickly for operations with 4,000 or more guests annually.

Super Mega Slide Adds To Farm Fun

Agritourism and other business owners interested in adding an attraction to bring in customers may want to check out the Super Mega Ride-n-Slide. It's sold by Hugh McPherson, who developed the slide as a new, big attraction for his business, Maize Quest Fun Park in New Park, Penn. He started with one lane in 2020, and it was a big hit, so he added another lane in 2021 and began offering the slides to other business owners.

Slides aren't a new idea for agritourism, he points out. Culverts, truck beds, and other things to slide on are common.

"The big difference is the feeling that they're on a roller coaster because they get to ride in a tube and go up to 19 mph," McPherson explains. He adds that because there are no moving mechanical parts, it's easy to operate and maintain.

Safety is built into the engineered slide edging bumpers and platform to meet Pennsylvania's strict safety regulations. Besides materials for the slides and tubes, McPherson includes a safety training video, manuals, and engineered drawings for decks.

It's also adaptable to any terrain. For flat areas, the modular plastic slide clips together and is mounted on a wood frame to get the 16 to 20-ft. vertical height needed for a good ride on a 100 to 250-ft. long slide. Operators with hills can use compacted ground to mount

the slide.

"Our recommendation to safely slow down and for the return lane is to lay used artificial turf," McPherson says. The turf prevents tubes from being dragged through mud and dirt and damaging the slide.

To keep the slide up year-round, he recommends a treatment used in the water slide industry, a gloss product to protect the plastic from UV rays. Super Mega Ride-n-Slides have been installed all over the U.S. and Canada.

The most common length is 150 ft., with a single lane starting at \$8,000. And a double lane at \$17,000. To bring in income, operators typically add \$2 to \$4 to the admission price or add a \$5 combo ticket for unlimited rides on the slide. McPherson notes that the slide is a new, exciting attraction that pays for itself quickly for operations with 4,000 or more guests annually.

The slide does require an attendant to make sure guests are going down safely (feet first) and allowing enough time between riders.

Check out the video on the website to view slides set up in locations all over North America and overseas.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Super Mega Ride-n-Slide, 2885 New Park Rd., New Park, Penn. 17352 (ph 717-862-4691; info@SuperMegaSlide.com; www.SuperMegaSlide.com).

Californian Growing Agave For Spirits

By Dec Goerge, Contributing Editor

Will California earn a reputation for producing a U.S. version of tequila and mezcil, just as it has developed a following for its wines? A few farmers hope so as they experiment with a new crop—agave. The heart inside the leaves of the spiky succulent is used in Mexico to make mezcil and tequila. While those spirit brands are regional and name-protected, U.S. distilleries can come up with their own blends and names for similar spirits.

Past droughts and limited access to water are a couple of the driving forces behind California growers experimenting with agave.

"We've lost reliable water supplies, and the state has new restrictions on ground-water pumping, so we know we're likely to have fallow land, and we're trying to figure out what to do with farmland in a hot, dry area," says Stuart Woolf, who grows almonds, pistachios, tomatoes, and other crops in western Fresno County.

Tequila and mezcil are popular spirits in the U.S., likely to surpass vodka in dollar value as the most popular spirit.



After trying 12 different agave varieties in a test plot 3 years ago, Woolf planted 185 acres with 200,000 plants this past season and continues to buy offshoots (hijuelos or clones) from Mexican plants.

"It's a newly emerging crop, and there's a lot of buzz and excitement about it," Woolf says, adding that recent symposiums at UC Davis about agave attracted many producers.

After trying 12 different agave varieties in a test plot 3 years ago, he planted 185

acres with 200,000 plants this past season and he continues to buy offshoots (hijuelos or clones) from Mexican plants. Agave can also be started from seed.

While the low water requirement (3 or 4 in. per year) is a big advantage, and pruning and pollinators aren't needed, California growers face other challenges and are adapting their growing techniques.

In Mexico, where cheap labor is plentiful, agave rows are planted close together. Distilleries hire workers to hand-harvest them by cutting off the leaves to get to the agave heart.

Though it'll be 5 to 7 years before they harvest, Woolf and his team are focused on mechanizing the process. They planted on 12-ft. centers, allowing the use of vineyard equipment between the rows. Because it's a new crop, there are no registered chemicals, so organic methods are used. Another challenge is pest control; gophers love the sweet agave.

"Agave is super cool because instead of photosynthesis during daylight hours, it does its business at night and opens its stomata (pores) and absorbs dew. It goes dormant during the day and retains moisture in its leaves," Woolf says.

However, he's also adding drip irrigation

that adds a couple of extra inches of water per year to hopefully mature agave in 5 years instead of the 7 to 8 years required in Mexico. The system also allows for efficient fertilization, reducing the need for foliar treatments commonly done by hand in Mexico.

The goal is to also produce and sell clones from plants grown in California, avoiding the long, risky hauls from Mexico.

"We want to set the bar really high," Woolf says.

Growers are working with Craig Reynolds and the California Agave Council to set guidelines for distilled products as well as marketing, research, and legislation.

"This is a kind of fun experiment for California agriculture. We're not waiting for the government to solve our water issues, we're putting the power in our own hands," Woolf says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Stuart Woolf (swoolf@woolffarming.com) or Craig Reynolds, California Agave Council, 1415 L St., Suite 460, Sacramento, Calif. 95814 (ph 530-304-7520; info@californiaagave.org; www.californiaagave.org).