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These Petunias Light Up At Night

Light up your life with Firefly Petunias that emit a soft glow like moonlight. The revolutionary plants are USDA-approved and now available for sale in the U.S., brought to market by Light Bio, Inc.

“Currently, we’re only selling potted plants,” says Keith Wood, Light Bio, Inc. “In the future, we plan to also offer cut flowers. The trait is inherited, so plants from seed are also bioluminescent. However, more development is needed for plants that will breed true from seed.”

Light Bio holds the foundational patents for the technology. The company has collaborated with cell programming specialist Ginkgo Bioworks to introduce the Firefly patent. Wood suggests the two companies are working on additional plant varieties and in additional colors. He anticipates that future plants will be at least 10 times brighter than the Firefly Petunias.

“As part of the scientific team that discovered the bioluminescence genes from fireflies, I helped create the first glowing plant, which has inspired scientists worldwide,” says Wood. “In the years since, we’ve discovered a new bioluminescence technology that now allows us to bring these delightful plants to consumers. We can’t wait to see their reactions and to discover the bright future ahead for this incredible technology.”

Earlier work identified the biochemical reaction that creates bioluminescence in plants using genes from fungi that naturally

light up. The researchers optimized the effect by up to 100 times in a variety of plants.

Light Bio chose the petunia for the first commercial product due to its popularity as an ornamental. It’s also easy to grow and produces an abundance of flowers. While often grown as an annual, they can be grown indoors if placed in a sunny spot and provided at least 6 hrs. of direct sunlight.

Firefly Petunias are indistinguishable from conventional petunias aside from their nighttime glow. The plants can be grown in pots, baskets, or gardens and reach 8 to 10 in. They’ll continue to produce light from the seedling stage to maturity. Light is emitted primarily by the flowers, with the youngest glowing brightest.

Only plant stress, such as over or under-watering or pathogens, will interfere with light production. Promoting vigorous growth will produce a brighter glow, as the fastest-growing parts of the plant glow most brightly.

In early February, Light Bio announced the availability of 50,000 plants. They can be pre-ordered from the company website and are approved for shipment to all 48 contiguous states. Plants are priced at \$29 each, plus shipping. Orders for plants exceeding \$80 receive a 9.2 percent discount. Delivery will begin in April.

“This milestone and the magical experience we are bringing to people across the country has been decades in the making,” said Wood.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Light Bio, Inc. (hello@light.bio; www.light.bio)

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Pedal tractor has seats for up to eight to pedal, plus a driver.

His Pedal Tractor Turns Heads

Randy Nuetzman is proud to show off his late friend Gary Snyder’s invention to the world. It’s a 1943 H Farmall tractor that Snyder modified to be a one-of-a-kind pedal tractor. Four people can sit on each side and pedal, with one person in the back to steer. There are even cupholders on the side.

Nuetzman believes that Snyder built his pedal tractor over ten years ago, using a tractor that had initially been his father’s when he’d managed a 60 to 80-head dairy. Snyder took out the engine and hooked a drive train to the transmission. It’s made an appearance in the community multiple times

since, including at the RAGBRAI (Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa) several years back.

This past summer, Nuetzman took the Snyder’s pedal tractor to the Clay County Fair. Many visitors had the opportunity to try it out despite the limited space at the fairgrounds for biking.

“People just love looking at it,” says Nuetzman. “That’s unique” must’ve been the comment I heard most often at the fair.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Randy Nuetzman (ph 712-830-4849).

main floor of the Amery store. Below it is a 5,000 sq. ft. basement with an antique mall with rented spaces for all types of sellers/collectors. Olson runs everything through one cash register.

Since Amery is dubbed the “City of Lakes,” the junk store has plenty of cabin décor items such as snowshoes and wooden skis. Items are displayed in sections—cast iron cookware along one wall, tools on another, and an area for farm pieces such as cast-iron wheels and barn roof tin. In the past, Olson repurposed old pickup tailgates into benches, and he still sells tailgates when he can find them.

“I like oddities,” Olson says, and they’re scattered throughout the store. A 9 1/2-ft.

hammerhead shark hangs from the ceiling. A restored Little Miss from an old barn-style Dairy Queen spins and lights up. It’s the only one of seven known to exist that works.

“I’m not sure how many people walk out without buying anything, but I want to give them a reason to talk about something,” he says.

Olson posts new items on social media but doesn’t have online sales. Acme Junk is open Thursday-Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Acme Junk Co., 201 Keller Ave. N., Amery, Wis. 54001 (ph 715-268-5865; www.acmejunkco.com; sales@acmejunkco.com).

Wisconsin store specializes in unique décor and furniture.



A Junk Shop Full Of Treasures

When Craig Olson opened Acme Junk Co. 8 years ago, part of his motivation was to collect and creatively repurpose old items. Now, with 10,000 sq. ft. of vintage treasures in his Amery, Wis., store, he spends more time guiding shoppers on how to put their own pieces together. For example, with a collection of cast iron bases, cream separators, milk cans, tailgates, and black walnut boards, DIYers can create their own unique décor and furniture.

“I call it a junk store because the word

antique gives a preconceived notion of what it would have. My theory is that people who are buying and into antiques are 30 to 65. They want to buy back their childhood, not china and things in locked cases. Those are things I try to stay away from. I’m 52, so I buy things from the 70’s and 80’s, more vintage,” Olson explains.

A couple of big trailer loads of treasures from a New York business got him started, but now he and other family members shop for things for Acme, which is on the



Basement features an antique mall with space rented to other sellers.