"Everything—the uprights, roof beams, and rafters—are all rail. All the joints are welded. The whole structure is welded together," says Richards.

Potato Cellar Built From Railroad Rail

Alex Richards has a potato cellar unlike any other. Spanning about 16,000 sq. ft., it's large, but what makes it truly distinctive is the support structure—the entire building is supported by railroad rail.

"Some of the rails are 4 1/4 and some are 5 in.," says Richards. "Everything—the uprights, roof beams and rafters—is all rail. All the joints are welded. The whole structure is welded together."

Richards believes the building was constructed in the 1940s or 1950s, when it was used to store potatoes. The rafters were originally covered with 1 by 6s and a sod roof. Richards' father purchased the building in the late 1980s, and it has been used for storage rental ever since. With large wooden gates at each end, the 80 by 200-ft. roof, with its 30-ft. high center beam, was spacious.

"My dad peeled off the sod and decking and replaced them with metal channels and a metal roof," says Richards. "Unfortunately, it needs to be reroofed, and that's very expensive for a building of that size. I don't know that the income it generates can justify the cost of a new roof. I don't like the idea of taking it down, but that may be the only thing that makes sense financially."

Richards asked Damon Carson with Repurposed Materials about the value of the steel. Damon shared Richard's story in his newsletter, and it caught our attention.

"I'm open to suggestions," Richards told FARM SHOW. "If anyone is interested, tell them to contact me."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Alex Richards, Ashton, Idaho (alx670@gmail.com).

16,000-sq. ft. building was built in the 1940s or 1950s and has an 80 by 200-ft. roof with a 30-ft. high center beam. Its current metal roof was once a sod roof.

Trial compared strips of a broadcast application with deep banding at a 5-in. depth and a control with no phosphorus application.

Testing Deep-Banding Phosphorus

Bourgault Industries is seeing benefits from deep-banding phosphorus with its SPS360 40-ft. field cultivator. The company conducted field trials in 2023 on a field scheduled for canola planting. The trial compared strips of broadcast application with deep banding at a 5 in. depth, a control with no phosphorus application, and strips where the soil was worked but no phosphorus was applied.

"Phosphorus in our soils is normally found in the top 2 in., because that's where we've been placing it," says Curtis de Gooijer, Bourgault Industries. "If there's no soil moisture there, there's no root activity and no uptake. Our theory was to get the phosphorus down deeper in the soil profile, where the moisture will last longer throughout the season and give the plant better access to it."

In 2023, the theory showed promise with a 3 bushel per acre increase using deep banding compared to broadcasting in canola. The following year, wheat was planted in the same field with no yield increase.

De Gooijer suggests that weather may have played a factor in both years. The canola crop received only 3 1/2 in. of rain during the season, most of it in May. Phosphorus in the dry top layer would have been less available. More rain in 2024 may have increased availability in the topsoil layer.

"In 2025, we rotated the field to canola, and deep banding looked promising with two out of three replications outyielding broadcast," says de Gooijer. "The weigh wagons showed about a 4 bushel per acre increase."

Bourgault began a second set of trials in 2024 in wheat. It included strips with deep placement of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus, as well as combinations of phosphorus and potassium. No yield advantage was observed. However, in 2025, deep-banded phosphorus did show a yield advantage in canola, although potassium didn't.

The company plans to continue the trials to gauge longer-term benefits, especially with deep-banded nitrogen.

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"Many smoothie bowl shops use acai berries, which need to be shipped internationally. Honeyberries could offer a local, nutritious alternative," says Wimmer.

Honeyberries Gaining Popularity

Haskap, an early-season fruit better known as honeyberries, is gaining popularity among farmers in northern parts of the U.S. These tasty fruits can sell for $9 a pound, while avoiding thorns and disease.

"Honeyberries are a unique crop," says Madeline Wimmer, University of Wisconsin Extension fruit educator. "They're considered an emerging crop, and many newer varieties are seen as more appealing for fresh eating."

The honeyberry community is small but growing as customers discover this flavor-packed fruit, which some consider a cross between blueberries and strawberries.

"They're a blue fruit, similar in health benefits to many 'superfood' berries, but can grow in cold climates," Wimmer says. "They don't require acidic soil like blueberries, meaning that farms with higher pH soils, common in Minnesota, can grow honeyberries without major soil amendments."

Pollination is an essential growing consideration.

"Honeyberries are cross-pollinated and don't like pollen from varieties that are too closely related," Wimmer says. "Honeyberry pollination charts can help growers find out which varieties to plant together."

The plants need plenty of water, nutrients and early-season pollinators to produce fruit. Removing low-hanging branches helps with commercial harvest.

"Honeyberries are, in general, a crop with fewer concerns for pests and diseases, but some diseases exist, and occasionally the spotted wing drosophila is a pest issue," Wimmer says. "Similar to other woody shrub fruit crops, honeyberries do best with less competition, especially when young. They also need pruning to get light in the canopy and to renew older branches, most of which become less productive after five years."

Wimmer believes there's ample market potential for honeyberries, despite their short growing season and possible labor sourcing challenges.

"Many commercial growers shake or mechanically harvest the shrubs and freeze the berries," she says. "That's a great option for juicing and smoothies. Many smoothie bowl shops use acai berries, which need to be shipped internationally. Honeyberries could offer a local, nutritious alternative."

At last summer's Honeyberry Academy, sponsored by the University of Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota Extension offices, about 100 honeyberry enthusiasts visited a honeyberry farm, enjoyed honeyberry ice cream and candy, and sampled several varieties. Bob Bors, a plant breeder from the University of Saskatchewan, was a featured speaker. Attendees ranged from experienced honeyberry growers to home gardeners.

"The Honeyberry Academy was a big hit," Wimmer says. "Participants got to experience a live harvest. We had tastings, and growers networked together while learning about the farming and research related to honeyberries. We hope to create similar events to support growers in the near future."

Wimmer has plenty of advice for potential honeyberry growers.

"Plan ahead. Research varieties carefully for pollen compatibility and overall fruit quality, and keep birds in mind. Cedar wax wings love the berries, and a perimeter net might be necessary."

She suggests leaving more space between rows than seems necessary to ensure there's plenty of room for equipment to turn around.

"Make a plan for marketing and selling your berries before planting, and keep labor requirements in mind. Be realistic about how much you can harvest annually with your chosen harvesting method."

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