

Nutty Way For Farmer To Earn Money

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KEYMAR, Md — In Keymar, Maryland dairy farmer Marlin Hege, his wife, Martha) and family are adding to the family income in what some might say is a very nutty way. Since October first of this year the forty-eight year-old father of nine has shelled more walnuts than he'll probably ever eat in his lifetime, showing just how resourceful a dairy farmer can be when it comes to supplementing the income.

Hammonds Products of Stockton, Missouri, provides Hege and his family with the machine that removes the outer hull from the walnut, and sacks to store them in. The company also pays to run ads in local publications to solicit walnuts. Hege pays ten cents a pound for the walnuts once they have been hulled, and the company, in turn pays him 12 and a half cents a pound. A truck from Hammonds picks up the sacks of hulled walnuts at the end of the season. Hege said that about half the weight of the walnut is hull.

"Someone from the company had gone through here and noticed that there were a lot of walnut trees in this area and they contacted the man in Shippensburg who had been doing it for them for a few years," said Hege. "He checked with someone from down here, and they mentioned my name. So then, they called me and asked me if I'd like to do it."

Hege and his family have hulled four-to-five-tons of walnuts so far, this season, which isn't over until the end of November. Hege said that he expects to get more nuts in coming years, as his name becomes associated with walnuts. "A lot of the people that have come have said they will be back next year, and I guess they will tell other people," he said, "so the word will get around that way."

"We've never really timed how fast the machine is," Hege said of the hulling machine, "but a man on Saturday brought us nine hundred and some pounds, (after the hull was removed), and it took about 15

minutes to hull them. As fast as we put them in they go on through!"

When someone comes with a load of walnuts Hege dumps or shovels the nuts into the machine's hopper. They are carried up the conveyer and into the machine in amounts that the machine can handle. Twirling chains inside a spiral shaped cage knock the hull off and the inside nuts are dropped into the sacks. Then, Hege weighs the sacks on a separate scale. The chopped hulls exit the machine on the opposite side from the inside nut, forming a huge pile of minced walnut hulls.

The Hege family spreads the minced walnut hulls on their fields with a manure spreader. "We were a little concerned about that when we were contacted by them," Hege confides, "because they are pretty acid, I think. But the company said that it would be no problem if the sun shines on the hulls and they dry out. They said the sun and weather neutralizes the acid."

Hege spoke to a forest ranger who told him that walnut hulls are toxic to tomatoes, soy beans, and other plants, but are good for grass.

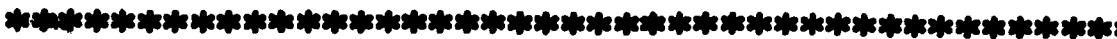
"It has worked out very good," Hege said. "As long as we can do it with our other work. We just have a small dairy here. We figured that rather than invest money to get bigger in dairy, we could do a few things like this to help out with income. It isn't something that will get you rich quick, but, if we could do about fifty ton, that would be about \$2,500. I'm sure we won't do that this year. But there was no investment as far as start-up cost, so there is no risk there for us, just the time we put into it."

The Hege's operate a 96-acre dairy farm, milking about 32 head of their 50 Holsteins. He says that, while it is not a profitable thing yet, "it makes good use of the resources that we have."

"A lot of older, retired people have come with walnuts and said that their grandchildren picked up the nuts for Christmas money," Hege says with a smile. "And quite a few have said they will be back next year!"



Marlin Hege stands before the pile of walnut hulls the machine has dumped out. The hulls will be spread on his fields with a manure spreader. The sacks contain hulled walnuts for Hammonds Products to pick up.



What You Should Know About Black Walnut Trees

RUTGERS, N.J. — Not only are black walnuts tough to crack, the trees can prove tough on plant growing within their root area. This is because of a phenomenon called allelopathy - the toxic effect of one plant on another.

Black walnut (and butternut) toxicity is a fairly well-known problem. An important reference on vegetable diseases lists and describes walnut wilt on tomatoes. Many other plants are well known to be sensitive to juglone, the toxin present in black walnut: potato, pea, cabbage, rhododendron, white pine, white birch, cotoneaster, blackberry, pear, apple. The symptoms of walnut toxicity range from stunting to partial or total wilting to death. Susceptible plants may begin growing well and then, suddenly, wilt and die. The symptoms on herbaceous plants may resemble those of diseases caused by bacteria and fungi.

The black walnut toxin is present in most parts of the plant. Problems arise when roots of susceptible plants contact or are close to black walnut roots, bark, leaves, hulls. The usual cause of a problem is the presence of walnut roots in soil where susceptible plants are being grown. Remembering that a tree's roots extend well beyond the tree's branch spread, susceptible plants may be affected although they are some distance from the black walnut. And, of course, as a tree grows, the roots extend, and a garden that had no problems in past years may begin showing signs of walnut toxicity. If bark, leaves or roots are incorporated into soil where susceptible plants are grown, problems may occur.

Less well documented than plants susceptible to walnut toxicity are the plants that do grow within the root area of black walnuts. A list of plants, developed

by Frank Robinson, director of the Lewis Ginter Botanic Garden and published in the Virginia Gardener from Virginia Cooperative Extension. The list includes herbaceous perennials, bulbs, trees, vines and shrubs, and annuals.

Among the herbaceous perennials listed are: astilbe, bellflower, sweet woodruff, cranesbill, daylily, coralbells, hosta, Siberian iris, bee balm, sensitive fern, cinnamon fern, summer phlox, polyanthus primrose, bloodroot, sedum, lamb's ear, trillium. Bulbs include: crocus, winter aconite, snowdrop, grape hyacinth, narcissus cultivars tulip cultivars. Trees, shrubs and vines include: Japanese maple, Canadian hemlock, weeping forsythia, tartarian honeysuckle, pinxterbloom azalea and Exbury azalea cultivars. Flowering annuals include: begonia species, morning glory and pansy.



Homestead Notes



Marlin Hege runs the machine provided to him by Hammonds Products to hull walnuts. The sacks contain hulled walnuts which the company will pick up.

Farm Bureau Kicks Off Adopt-A-Classroom Program

Albany, N.Y. — Kids, today, do not know much about life on the farm. New York Farm Bureau Women hope to change that with their new Adopt A Classroom Program.

According to Onalie Beckstead, State Chairman of New York Farm Bureau's Women's Program and a dairy farmer from St. Lawrence County, "The goal of the Adopt A Classroom Program is to increase agricultural awareness of youth in New York by an exchange of letters between a farm family and an elementary school classroom." She added, "With less than one-half of one

percent of the state's population living on the farm, today, it is imperative that we help our students learn about life on the farm and to discover where their food comes from."

Beckstead says it's easy for farmers and teachers to get involved in Farm Bureau's Adopt A Classroom Program. "Farmers and teachers who are interested in participating in this special program only need to fill out an application. Our State Women's Committee will then match a classroom to a farm family. Both parties will then be sent information about each other."