

Specialty Crops For Small Growers

15 Best Profitable Plants For
Backyards & Small Acreage





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introduction

Do you love gardening and want to make money from your passion? If so, you should consider growing plants for profit. You might be surprised to learn that the most profitable plants are not the ones you usually see in a home vegetable garden but specialty crops that are in high demand and fetch high prices. Some specialty crops can earn you up to \$90,000 an acre and are easy to grow. And the best part is, you don't need to quit your day job to become a specialty crop grower. You can do it in your spare time, just a few hours a week.

But before planting, you must find the right specialty crop for your space and situation. For example, if you have a small space, you can grow compact plants, like succulents or ground covers, perfect for containers or hanging baskets. If you have a larger space, you can grow a wider variety of plants, including landscaping trees and shrubs that beautify your property and increase its value. And even if you have no yard, you can still grow a specialty crop indoors. Oyster mushrooms, for instance, can be grown in a dark and cool place, like a basement, garage, or shed, without any soil. Many African violet enthusiasts grow and sell hundreds of plants in their basements or spare rooms.

To help you choose the best specialty crop, we have prepared this book with detailed information in each chapter. You will learn about each crop's benefits, requirements, potential profits, best varieties, and tips and tricks to grow them successfully. You can also visit our website, profitableplants.com, to find over 100 articles about growing for profit. Once you have narrowed your options, you can learn more by buying our comprehensive guidebooks on each specialty crop at Amazon.com. Type the book title in the search bar and order your copy today. All our books are available in both E-book and paperback formats, and they are very affordable, starting from only \$4.95. Don't miss this opportunity to turn your gardening skills into cash. Read on and learn how to start growing plants for profit.

Chapter One

Growing Bamboo for Profit

Landscapers and homeowners pay as much as \$150 each for potted bamboo plants, and many growers find it hard to keep up with the demand. Why is bamboo so popular? It's a versatile plant in the landscape, as it can be used for hedges, screens, or as stand-alone "specimen" plants. Bamboo is more than a tropical plant, as many cold-hardy varieties can handle sub-zero winters. Using pots in a bamboo business, growing thousands of dollars worth of profitable plants in a backyard nursery is possible.

It's important to know that growing bamboo is not a get-rich-quick scheme. You certainly won't make \$60,000 overnight. So let's do the math. Container-grown bamboo, on average, sells for \$25 each. In a quarter acre, you can fit 2400 plants. Selling 2400 plants priced at \$25 each will get you \$60,000.

When you're ready to begin, consider your climate and environment first. If winter temperatures frequently drop below zero F., you should consider growing something other than bamboo. If winter temperatures consistently stay above zero F., you should be able to grow healthy bamboo plants.

Now, you need to think about your soil. Is it healthy enough to grow bamboo plants? Most bamboo plants will prefer soil with a neutral pH of around 7. Also, be sure you have plenty of room for your plants. Remember, a quarter acre can make you about \$60,000 a year.

Your start-up costs will mainly be the cost of the plant starts. Try buying 20 different popular varieties to start. How can you find out what's popular? Visit your local garden center and find out what their top sellers are and what they keep a high number of in stock. Talk to landscapers and commercial growers and see what they typically buy and use. Our growing guide, *Golden Harvest*, lists thirty of the most popular bamboo varieties and wholesale sources.

You can purchase your starting stock once you've found the varieties you'd like to grow. Many nurseries don't carry a vast selection, so you should buy from wholesale growers. After you've planted your starting stock, be patient. Add organic slow-release fertilizer as necessary. During the spring of the second year, you should now be able to divide your plants to triple or quadruple your stock of bamboo plants.

Dividing your plants is how you get your money's worth from your plants. When you notice new clumps emerging from the ground, divide and re-plant them; remember to keep the rhizomes moist before and after planting.

For the bamboo plants you plan to sell, consider propagating them in containers. Container-grown plants can be sold almost any time of the year. Remember to use containers (such as pots and planters) that can “breathe,” as this will help provide for sufficient water drainage. In just a quarter acre, it's possible to fit 2,400 containers. The current average price of a bamboo plant is \$25 a container. That means making \$60,000 with just a quarter acre of growing space is possible.

One creative grower could start his bamboo business for hardly a cent. He offered free bamboo pruning and then saved and repotted the rhizomes to resell the following year. He now is growing over 50 varieties and makes \$80,000 a year.

Here are five proven ways to market bamboo:

1. Direct Retail Sales.

If your town allows it, you should consider selling bamboo for landscaping directly to the public. This lets you get to know customers in your area and build customer loyalty. Plus, unlike wholesale, you get paid right away. Be sure to put out a sign-up sheet so your customers can know about upcoming sales, new plant varieties, and whatever else is happening with your bamboo nursery.

2. Bamboo Products.

Here's your chance to get creative. Instead of simply selling bamboo, sell bamboo products. During the winter, the plants will become dormant. Then, bamboo poles can be harvested and turned into a variety of products, such as privacy screens,

garden art, water pipes, fencing, vases, and parrot stands. You could also consider putting on a workshop to share your knowledge of bamboo plants with other people. Teach people how to landscape with bamboo and other decorative uses.

3. Landscapers.

You can make significant profits selling directly to landscapers. Landscapers and commercial gardeners often buy their plants in large quantities, and when they find a business they like, they'll continue to buy more plants. Find out what they're looking for, and if you can grow healthy plants at a reasonable price, you could see a lot of business. Put together a flyer listing what you offer and start passing it out.

4. Garden Centers.

Like landscapers and commercial gardeners, garden centers must get their plants from somewhere, so why not you? Visit your local garden center and see what bamboo plants they're stocking and selling. What are their prices? Talk to them and find out what they're looking for. Again, if you can offer just what they need at reasonable prices, you could see a lot of repeat business. Here's a tip - try to sell to them in the off-season when the buyers have more time to listen to you.

5. Growing U-Cut bamboo.

Borrowing a successful sales method from U-cut Christmas tree growers, an enterprising bamboo grower has developed a unique part-time business that brings yearly profits of over \$40,000 working just one day a week. He sells U-cut bamboo by the foot on his one-acre bamboo patch.

He planted several varieties to give customers a choice of colors and sizes, ranging from pencil-thin stalks to huge 6-inch diameter timber bamboo poles.

Because he's a self-described "geezer," he aims to reduce his work to collecting money and chatting with customers about bamboo. His only sales aid is a large photo album full of pictures of bamboo projects completed by customers, and a tiny classified ad in the local paper for three summer months brings all the customers he can handle. Customers cut and load their bamboo, and the poles are priced reasonably to encourage do-it-yourselfers.

The bamboo grows 20 to 50 feet in just one year, so the bamboo patch is almost totally self-renewing, with just one fertilizer application per year. Customers use the poles for fencing, furniture, duck blinds, crafts, flutes, wind chimes, water pipes, concrete reinforcing, and garden art projects.

This could be a perfect business for anyone with a spare acre or two near a population center of at least 25,000 people. To keep your hours to a minimum, open to the public on Saturdays only.

Bamboo is not just a tropical plant; many types are cold-hardy to winter temperatures between -10 and +15 degrees. The panda bamboo originated in the Himalayas and is cold-hardy to -25 degrees.

Local bamboo growers have a significant advantage over low-cost producers in Asia, as shipping costs can inflate prices dramatically. Selling directly to the consumer with a U-cut operation allows retail customers to enjoy low prices by harvesting their poles.

One Oregon bamboo grower has focused on an even smaller niche for this profitable plant, specializing in producing six varieties of bamboo that are just the right size for fencing, with poles from 2 inches to 3 inches in diameter. He produces "value-added" fencing panels 6 feet high (the maximum height allowed by most building codes) and 8 feet wide., drilling and threading the poles together with copper wire. His two-acre bamboo farm is sold out yearly, with about half the customers buying just poles to make their fences and the other half buying ready-to-go fence panels.

To learn more about growing bamboo for profit, visit www.profitableplants.com. There, you'll find dozens of articles about this remarkable plant and information about our growing guide, *Growing Bamboo for Profit*. You can also order the book

in E-book or paperback format at Amazon.com. Just enter the book title in the search bar to find the book sales page.

Chapter Two

Growing Flowers for Profit

Flower production is one of the fastest-growing crop trends in agriculture today, with strong demand for all types of flowers, incredibly unique or hard-to-grow varieties. Flowers are a perfect backyard cash crop, as they produce quickly, are easy to grow, and provide an income all summer. Startup costs are low - just seeds and labor - so as little as \$100 can put you in business.

Some growers use a "cut your own" sales approach so customers can choose their mix, while others prefer to sell at the Saturday market to take advantage of higher prices. One Virginia grower gets up to \$5 per stem for her sunflowers and grows mainly the proven money makers, like snapdragons, larkspur, peonies, sunflowers, and zinnias.

Another growing approach is to focus on providing starter plants to retailers or directly to consumers. The most robust demand is for "instant color" flowers grown in four-inch pots ready to transplant to the garden as finished blooming plants. This includes annuals, such as marigolds, Petunias, Salvia, and zinnias. Though more costly to raise, Begonias and impatiens almost always sell out first. Popular perennials include Columbine, bleeding heart, delphiniums, and bearded iris.

If you live in a rural area, focus on growing flowers for resale to garden centers and other retailers in nearby larger towns. Concentrate on plants the big growers have overlooked because they take more care but for which there is always a market. The three floral "niches" that fit this description nicely are African violets, heritage roses, and wildflowers native to your area.

African violets are always in demand. They are easy to propagate from cuttings and grow, and they sell best in the winter when the blooms can bring a spot of color indoors. They come in almost endless colors and range from thimble-sized plants to giants. There are trailing violets that spread and the "cousins" - plants in the Gesneriad family such as Streptocarpus and Chirita.

Many small growers use a basement or spare room to grow African violets, as they don't require a lot of space. A square foot of growing space can produce nine 4-inch potted plants four times a year. That's over 1400 plants in a modest 4' x 10' area, which, at a retail price of \$6, is \$8400 worth of African violets!

Another “niche” flower that has been popular for many years is “heritage” or “heirloom” roses. Why the renewed interest in these old beauties? There are several reasons. One is the exquisite fragrance of the old roses. Another is their hardiness. The old heritage roses tend to be much more disease-resistant than the modern hybrids. The appeal of heritage roses is timeless, and the care they require is much less than that of hybrids.

The wildflower business is booming as homeowners turn to “natural landscaping,” and interest grows in reviving the landscaping trends of the last century, which emphasized native plants. In addition, federal legislation and the laws of many states now require that a certain percentage of highway landscaping funds be used to plant wildflowers. Projects like these have opened up new markets for producers of wildflower seeds and stimulated demand for wildflower plants around homes.

“Wildflower” is the name for flowering plants native to a specific area. What’s common in Alberta will not be the same as in Alabama. Although wildflowers come in many shapes, sizes, and colors and grow in all states or provinces, most are very sensitive to the “microclimate” they can be grown.

Small growers can grow these profitable plants for seed harvest, cut flowers and bouquets, and for value-added products such as wildflower seed gift cards or wildflower seed paper. To get an idea of the many possibilities, visit Bloomin.com.

Yet another profitable niche market for growers is specializing in dried flowers. Dried flowers (also known as everlasting) are a great complement to cut flowers. Plus, they’re reasonably easy to grow. Once they’re dry, you don’t need to rush to sell them like fresh-cut flowers. They can be kept in good condition with care until you can sell them. That’s one of their biggest appeals to growers.

So, how can you get ahead when it comes to dried flowers? First, be sure to pick the right kinds. Here are some that are especially popular:

Artemisia – this is heavily used as a filler material that can provide an excellent backdrop for other flowers.

Baby’s Breath – this is also widely used as a filler material in arrangements of flowers.

Delphinium Larkspur – these have a wide range of colors from blue to purple to pure white.

Lavender – Thanks to its vivid smell, lavender can make an ideal addition to any bouquet or wreath. Plus, it needs very little attention.

One great thing about these four everlastings is that they can be air-dried, making it easy for the grower. Many other everlastings, including Strawflower, Statice, Money Plant, and Love-In-A-Mist, can also be air-dried.

What are the best perennials to grow?

Achillea, Allium, Chrysanthemum Leucanthemum, Lavandula, and Veronica Longifolia are some of the most highly recommended perennials.

What are the best annuals to grow?

Some of the best annuals to grow include Antirrhinum, Celosia, Consolida Ambigua, Helianthus Annuus, Godetia, and Salvia.

You'll find detailed information about growing and marketing flowers in our guidebook, **Start Your Own Backyard Plant Nursery**, available at Amazon.com

Just enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to locate the book sales page.

Chapter Three

Growing Ginseng for Profit

Nicknamed "green gold," the value of this plant is in its slow-growing roots. Asians have valued ginseng for thousands of years as a healing herb and tonic. Even though growing ginseng requires a six-year wait to harvest the mature roots, most growers also sell young "rootlets" and seeds for income while waiting for the roots to mature. Over six years, growers can make as much as \$100,000 on a half-acre plot from seeds, rootlets, and mature roots. That's why ginseng has been prized as a specialty crop since George Washington's day when ginseng profits helped finance the Revolutionary War against the British. Ginseng production is only possible in areas with cold winters.

3 Ways to Profit From Ginseng

Ginseng is one of the most popular herbs in the world. It has dozens of medicinal uses and is taken daily by millions worldwide. So, what are some ways you can profit with a ginseng-growing business? Here are three to get you started:

1. Mature roots

Patient growers will love the profits you can make from mature roots. After the sixth year, you should have some roots ready to sell. In a half-acre of land, you should be able to produce about five hundred pounds of roots. So how much are those selling for? Currently, those routinely sell for \$150 to \$300 a pound. What makes the price vary so much? The answer is the quality of the roots. That's why it's best to plant quality seeds or rootlets and take great care of your ginseng as it grows. So let's do the math. Let's say you can sell your roots for \$200 a pound. If you have five hundred pounds of roots to sell, you could make \$100,000 from your mature roots.

2. Seeds

After the third year, your ginseng garden should produce seeds you can start selling. By that third year, you'll only have about twenty pounds of seed in a half-acre garden. After the fourth year, that number will jump to around fifty pounds of seed. After the fifth and sixth years, you can expect around one hundred

pounds of seed. So how much can you make from that? Currently, seed is selling for about \$90 a pound. If you have one hundred pounds of seed to sell, that could mean about \$9,000 coming your way.

3. Rootlets

Ginseng growers start their ginseng gardens with either seeds or rootlets. Rootlets allow growers to speed up the process by two years. Rootlets can help ginseng grow a little quicker. If you want to make extra income, consider growing rootlets for resale. This is an excellent way to make money while waiting for your roots to mature.

Questions About Growing Ginseng for Profit

Do I have a suitable climate to grow ginseng?

Ginseng can thrive in most climates. However, it must be grown in an area exposed to sub-freezing weather. The cold will help break the ginseng's dormancy and encourage sprouting in the spring.

Which growing method should I use?

The artificial shade method can be suitable but costs several thousand dollars an acre. If you have a few acres of hardwood trees, the wild-simulated method can work great. Chances are the woods-cultivated method will be the one you'll use. You use the natural shade of a forest canopy of hardwood trees, such as maple, oak, and sycamore.

How can I tell when my dried roots are dry?

Properly dried roots should make a crisp "snap!" sound when broken. You can naturally dry your roots by placing them in a covered area on a screened rack. If there isn't good air circulation, keep a fan running for two to four weeks. At that time, your roots should be dried.

How can I sell ginseng roots?

There are three main ways to sell ginseng roots. The first is to sell directly to wholesale buyers. This gets you paid immediately, and you can sell right out of your backyard nursery. The second is to sell to out-of-state buyers. Take good care in shipping your ginseng. Treat it like a fragile item. Finally, you can sell to ginseng brokers, who buy ginseng in bulk and then resell it to others.

How much does it cost to start a ginseng business?

You can start your own ginseng business for a reasonably low amount. You can start a quarter-acre ginseng garden for less than \$1,000 using woods-cultivated or wild-simulated methods. Over a six-year growing cycle, that quarter-acre could produce as much as \$50,000 worth of roots, seeds, and rootlets.

Using the woods-cultivated method, how do I start my growing beds?

First, clear away any underbrush in the area. Next, use a walk-behind tiller to work the soil over several times until it is loose to at least a depth of six inches. If you're planting seeds, plant them one-half to one inch deep and three inches apart. Be sure to keep the rows about eight inches apart.

When will my mature roots be ready to sell?

Your mature roots will usually be ready to sell after five or six years.

Can I sell anything from my ginseng garden in the meantime?

Seeds and rootlets can be ready for sale as soon as two years after you start your ginseng garden.

To learn more about growing ginseng for profit, read **Growing Ginseng for Profit**, available at Amazon.com. Just enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to go to the sales page.

Chapter Four

Growing Ground Covers for Profit

Due to high labor costs and water shortages, ground covers are becoming the sensible, low-maintenance way to landscape. Growers like ground cover, too, as they are easy to propagate, grow, and sell. Bringing profits of up to \$20 per square foot, ground covers are an ideal cash crop for the smaller backyard plant nursery.

Due to high labor costs and water shortages, ground covers are becoming the sensible, low-maintenance way to landscape. Growers like ground cover, too, as they are easy to propagate, grow, and sell. Bringing profits of up to \$20 per square foot, ground covers are an ideal cash crop for the smaller backyard plant nursery.

Ground covers are any plant that covers the ground. The start-up costs are reasonable, and you stand to make one of the highest per-square-foot incomes for a backyard nursery. So what do ground covers do? They help control the threat of erosion and weeds and reduce the water needed to keep the land healthy.

There are currently hundreds of plants that can be used as ground covers. Don't worry; you don't have to grow all of them to succeed as a plant grower. Instead, focus on a few. The "Big Four" include English Ivy, Pachysandra, Vinca, and Winter Creeper. If you're starting and unsure what to grow, consider visiting your local retail nursery and see what they're stocking. Ask around. What are people looking for? What grows well in your area? Are there any specialty ground covers that seem perfect for you? It might take some experimentation, but you'll find what works best soon.

Here are some highly recommended and profitable ground covers that you might want to try:

Astilbe is a perennial that provides delicate flowers in the spring.

Erica (Heath) is a low-growing ground cover requiring little maintenance.

Hedera (Ivy) is a hardy Evergreen ground cover that spreads rapidly. "Thorndale" and "Baltic" are two of the most popular English Ivy varieties.

Iberis (Candytuft) is a trendy ground cover for rock gardeners.

Chamaemelum Nobile (Chamomile) is an evergreen ground cover widely used in Europe. The flowers make for a soothing tea.

Thymus Serpyllum - This can make a fragrant carpet that smells great when you walk on it. There are dozens of low-growing varieties, such as lemon thyme and woolly thyme.

After your plants are ready to be sold, now what? Let's get selling! After all, having a backyard nursery is all about growing for profit. The most profitable way is to sell directly to the public. Retail sales get you paid now instead of waiting months, which can be the case with wholesaling. You can also have a "wholesale day," selling your ground covers at a discounted price. Having a big sale could bring some big crowds. Ensure you have plant labels and all your plants are labeled with the correct type and price. You must be ready for those big crowds, so make things easier on yourself by labeling and grouping all your plants.

Are you looking for another profitable way to sell your specialty crops? Try mail-order sales. Since ground covers are a niche market, many people are looking for a more comprehensive selection than what is available at their local garden center. That's why they turn to mail-order to find what they want. Put together a website, flyer, or free catalog, and try to get it in as many potential customers' hands as possible. Soon, you could send your ground covers through the mail and get big profits in return.

You can be making money with ground covers in no time. Grow what people want, then tell everyone what you have for sale. So get growing! To learn more, read *How to Start a Profitable Backyard Plant Nursery*, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Just enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to order.

Chapter Five

Growing Herbs for Profit

Growing the most popular culinary and medicinal herbs is a great way to start a profitable herb business. The most popular culinary herbs include basil, chives, cilantro, and oregano. Medicinal herbs have been widely used for thousands of years, and their popularity continues to grow as people seek natural remedies for their health concerns.

Starting an herb-growing business is relatively easy, fun, and, best of all, profitable. Follow these six steps to success in the herbal business, and you'll attract more customers.

1. Gather materials

First, you'll need raised beds to grow your plants. They are recommended to be 3-4 feet wide, but the length is up to you. Herbs need lots of sunlight, so don't put them in a shady place near a tree. A wheelbarrow and hand tools are necessary for mixing your soil blend.

A 40-inch by 30-foot bed with six-inch pots (generally using large pots, such as a six-inch pot, over smaller ones) makes it possible for about 400 plants.

2. Decide which herbs to grow

Now that you have all your essential supplies, it's time to decide which herbs to grow. In general, it's a good idea to focus on a select few rather than offer a vast selection. Are you more interested in growing culinary herbs or medicinal herbs? Or what about herbs for herbal tea? You can buy herb seeds once you decide which herbs to grow. Several online companies, such as Johnny's Seeds and Richter's, specialize in seeds for commercial herb growers.

3. Plant your herb plants

Your seeds came in the mail. Now, the fun begins! Plant your seeds. Consider using plug trays to start growing plants indoors, and then you can rotate them out into the outdoor growing area.

4. Take care of your plants

Only use organic fertilizers to help plants grow healthier and less stressed. It's also a good idea to apply liquid seaweed or liquid fish emulsion as a foliar spray every week during the growing season. This can

provide the right amount of nutrients needed to keep your plants healthy. Also, water your plants only when they need it. Try once a day, preferably in the morning.

5. Start selling them

When your herbs are grown, you're ready to start selling them. You may sell them right out of your garden based on your local laws. Or perhaps you can set up a roadside stand. A charity fundraiser can be a great place to sell potted herbs, and people are often willing to pay more for them if they know some of the profits are going to a good cause. One grower in our area sells her herbs at six charity fundraisers every summer and grossed over \$32,000 at those six. She donates 25% to the charity. Win-win!

The farmer's market is another excellent place to attract customers. The larger 6" potted herbs do better at farmer's markets than the smaller 3- and 4-inch sizes, as folks are in a spending mood and like buying a plant almost ready to harvest.

6. Advertise and get creative

You want to attract customers and keep them coming back. Make flyers and post them on bulletin boards around town. Print business cards and put something fun, like a pesto recipe, on the back! Get creative. Putting something on a business card that makes your customer want to keep the card will keep the business coming back to you.

Culinary Herbs To Grow

Growing herbs can be highly profitable and fun. It's also relatively easy. You'd be surprised how many culinary herbs are available and how many are huge sellers. Some practically sell themselves. Here are five of the most popular and profitable.

Basil tops the list as the most popular culinary herb. Basil is a very tender plant and should be kept indoors until there is no danger of frost. Growing basil starts in plug trays can work great for basil. Expect to sell lots of these, so keep the fresh plants coming.

Chives. Standard chives are a steady seller. They will start to germinate after a week or so. Unlike basil, chives can do quite well in cooler weather.

Cilantro is another popular culinary herb. In addition to its cooking values, it also has many other ones. It is perfect for digestion and other medicinal values. Expect to sell lots of this at the Saturday farmer's market.

Oregano is one of the most popular herbs in Italian cooking. Its unforgettable taste and aroma give it its main appeal. Oregano is a commonly used garnish for stews, soups, and gravies.

Parsley is so popular it even has historical significance. The ancient Greeks used it at the athletic games, weaving it into victory crowns. They also fed it to their horses to make them run faster.

Medicinal Herbs to Grow

Medicinal herbs are steadily gaining popularity. As people adopt a more natural and healthy lifestyle, medicinal herbs are used increasingly, and the demand for them is growing. Here are seven more popular medicinal herbs that could be a profitable addition to a growing herb business.

Calendula's popularity dates back to King Henry VII of England, who loved colored food. Calendula was used to season his meals. It also has many other benefits. In particular, it is suitable for digestive health and skin preparations. It can be made into a foot soak or bath herb. To get the most medicinal potency, grow a variety with a high resin content, such as “Resina,” found at Johnny's Seeds, a popular online source for medicinal herbs. Calendula is one of the easiest medicinal herbs to grow.

Lavender has so many uses that it's been called the “Swiss army knife” of herbs. In addition to its powerful fragrance (the essential oil in lavender is one of the top ten most used in the fragrance industry), it also has many medicinal values. These include women's and children's health, skin care, nervous system conditions, and pain relief.

Marsh mallow. This versatile herb is helpful for coughs or bronchitis. It can also help the digestive tract and various skin conditions. Turn it into a marsh mallow tea and have something tasty and healthy for cold and flu season.

Catnip. You've probably heard of this one. It's primarily used as a stimulant on cats but can also be a soothing sedative for humans. It can also relieve pain and stress and help with cold and flu symptoms. Something you might want to consider is making “cat-er-pillows.” It's just like it sounds: a pillow filled with catnip. These popular items are straightforward to put together. It's simply a mini-pillow made from fabric scraps. You throw in dried catnip, sew it shut, and you're done. These can be sold at street fairs, stores, church fundraisers, and more, and are proven sellers.

Lemon verbena makes a delicious tea. It is also used for digestive benefits and as a calming and sleep aid. Harvest the leaves right before you use them to get the most benefit.

St John's wort. You've probably heard of this one and might even know someone who swears by it. In addition to its widespread usage as a mood-altering herb, it can serve as a skin treatment, provide immune support, and provide prevention during cold and flu season. Be sure to wait until it's fully matured before harvest to get the maximum benefits of this popular herb.

Chamomile. Mmm, chamomile can make for a soothing tea. Like many other medicinal herbs, it has significant digestive benefits. It can also be a calming and sleep aid. You'll want to grow the German variety, as this will produce harvestable flowers in just over two months. The best time to grow them is early in the season, as they tend to bolt in the hot summer.

Grow and sell these favorites, and you'll be on your way to growing profits in the herbs business. To learn more about the business of herb growing, read *Start Your Own Backyard Plant Nursery*, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Just enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to go to the book page.

Chapter Six

Growing Landscaping Trees and Shrubs for Profit

With individual plants bringing over \$100 in a 5-gallon pot, many small backyard plant nurseries are enjoying success on a small scale. Those specializing in unique or hard-to-find tree and shrub varieties can charge premium prices and still sell out yearly. The secret to success is finding a "niche" that you enjoy and growing the varieties that cannot be found at your average plant nursery.

One good example of a profitable niche is growing native plants. For several decades, landscapers and homeowners have been switching from more exotic plants and acres of lawn to native grasses, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs native to their region. This is a part of the "sustainable landscaping" movement you may have heard about.

As the popularity of native plants continues to grow, there will be increasing demand for native trees and shrubs in all areas. Potential customers include landscapers, who tend to be keenly aware of new trends and enjoy educating their customers about them, and individual homeowners and property owners who want to plant low-maintenance native plants. In addition, native trees and shrubs are often required for many conservation and reclamation projects.

Another profitable market is native fruit and nut trees for orchardists who want to grow traditional plants, such as shellbark hickory, chinquapin, or chokeberry. To get a better idea of what's possible, visit www.gonativetrees.com

A local grower in my area specializes in large "specimen" trees and shrubs, costing up to \$1,000 each. Buyers are homeowners and landscapers who need an "instant" tree large enough to look like it's been there for years, replacement trees for those damaged by disease, vandals, or car accidents, and even new construction projects where money is no object but size is.

Common Questions

Are you looking for some answers? This list of the most common questions asked by those who want to start their backyard nursery will guide you through the steps to starting up and succeeding.

Is it expensive to start a backyard tree and shrub nursery?

It will require some money, but you should be able to get all your supplies for under a few hundred dollars. You don't have to have thousands of dollars to be a success. Remember, start small with your business and grow naturally.

Does it require a full-time commitment?

No. You can work as little or as much as you like. Plants need attention, but you can still have a day job or other commitments.

How much space do I need for my nursery?

There's no specific number, but you need enough space to make your nursery profitable. Think about the size of the plants you want to grow. If you want to grow plants in one-gallon containers, you can fit 3,000 in a 1,000-square-foot nursery. In that same space, you can fit 400 fifteen-gallon containers. Remember, bigger container sizes can bring considerable money, too, but take longer to grow. Just do some research and find out what will work best for you.

Do I need any licenses or permits?

Yes, you will need a business license. Some towns require a special permit for a backyard nursery. Check with them to find out. You'll also need a resale license if your state requires sales tax.

What plants should I grow?

Visit a gardening center and see what they're selling. Pay attention to the items that they stock in large quantities. Also, ask landscapers and other people what they're looking for. What are they buying? Do a web search to research the trees and shrubs you're interested in and learn what others are growing.

What type of fertilizers should I use?

Use time-release fertilizers (also known as slow-release fertilizers). These give nutrients over a long period, significantly easing your work. Plus, they're safe for your plants and soil.

What's a good soil mix?

You can buy pre-mixed soil or make your own. If you make your own, try following this formula:

Six parts topsoil or compost

Three parts peat

Two parts sand

How can my business be successful in the long term?

Grow slowly and naturally. Don't take on too much at first. Also, keep with it. Just keep trying to get better. As with any business, your plant-growing business will benefit from a plan for the future. Where do you want your business to go, and how can you get there? Learn from mistakes and try to get better. You'll get there soon enough!

To learn more, read *Growing Trees for Profit*, which is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to go directly to the book's page.

Chapter Seven

Growing Mushrooms for Profit

For those without space to garden, growing mushrooms for profit can produce a great return in a small space. Exotic mushrooms, such as oyster and shiitake, make sense, as they can be grown indoors without soil. Oyster mushrooms, for example, produce around 25 pounds per square foot of growing space in a year. At the current price of \$6 a pound, that's \$15,000 worth of mushrooms from a 10'x10' space! Exotic mushrooms do not travel well, so small local growers will always have an edge over distant producers. The oyster mushrooms are also the first to sell out at our local Saturday market.

The Six Steps

1. Get your spawn and substrate

You'll need a spawn to start the culture. You can produce your spawn using a sterile culture or buy ready-to-inoculate spawn, which suppliers carry. You'll also need to buy the substrate, usually straw or sawdust.

2. Prepare the substrate by heating it to sterilize it, then spreading it out to cool before using.

3. Pack the plastic bags

It's time to pack plastic bags with the straw and spawn. Pack two or three inches of straw into the plastic bag and lightly sprinkle the spawn. Repeat this until you've filled the bag,

4. Incubation

Now, it's time for incubation. Keep the growing area dark and around 78 degrees F.

Place the bags on a shelving unit. When you notice tiny pinhead mushrooms near the air holes in your bag, you're ready to move on to the next step.

5. Fruiting

For your fruiting room, you need a high level of humidity. The temperature will need to be 65 to 70 degrees F. Unlike the incubation room, you'll need a lot of natural light—at least 12 hours a day.

6. Harvest

It's time to harvest just before your mushroom caps are fully uncurled. To do so, twist the stem off as near the growing block as you can. You've now harvested your mushrooms.

Selling Your Mushrooms

After your oyster mushrooms are grown, they're ready to be sold. Mushrooms generally do best when they're sold fresh. If you can't sell your entire supply soon, freeze or dry the remaining mushrooms, and you can sell them sometime in the future. For the crop you're ready to sell now, you have several ways to do it:

1. Restaurants

Many restaurants love to use fresh mushrooms. Talk to local restaurants and see if they are interested in what you're growing. Next, give them some free samples. If the chefs like the taste of your mushrooms, you could see a lot of repeat business – the best kind for a mushroom grower, as you'll have fresh mushrooms to sell weekly.

2. Grocery stores

Many people turn to grocery stores to find the mushrooms they want. In particular, targeting grocery stores that carry exotic mushrooms and produce is a good idea. These are often “upscale” grocers, frequently catering to customers interested in buying premium mushrooms. Oyster mushrooms have a relatively short shelf life, an advantage for local growers who can pick and deliver the same day.

3. Farmers' markets

Farmers' markets routinely draw crowds eager to buy from the best local growers. In particular, many people turn to farmers' markets to find mushrooms they can't find at their local grocery store. Set up a stand or booth and get selling. If the spots at your local farmers' market are all sold out, consider asking another grower if you can share their stand or booth.

4. Dried mushrooms

Consider drying for less-than-perfect mushrooms you don't want to sell. This can turn into a significant market for you and your mushroom-growing business. It's pretty easy, too. Most food dryers/dehydrators should do an excellent job of drying.

Questions about growing oyster mushrooms

Why oyster mushrooms?

Exotic mushrooms are in high demand. Last year alone, Americans grew more than a million pounds of exotic mushrooms. Oyster mushrooms, a type of exotic mushroom, are one of the easiest to grow. They can grow in about six weeks and sell for about \$6-\$8 a pound. They're reasonably easy to grow, they grow quickly, and they can make you good money—all reasons you should choose oyster mushrooms to grow for profit.

How should I get my spawn?

There are two ways to get your spawn: You can make your own using a sterile culture or buy ready-to-inoculate spawn from a supplier.

How can I increase my sales?

Give out free samples of your oyster mushrooms. This is how you can sell to grocery stores and restaurants. They'll want to taste your mushrooms before buying them. If a grocery store allows, put on demonstrations. Giving free samples of your oyster mushrooms (lightly sautéed in butter tastes excellent!) is a great way to increase business.

How much-growing area do I need?

Because oyster mushrooms are so productive, you don't need much growing area to be a success. Here are some numbers to get you thinking about what you might want. In a growing area of about 100 square feet, you can produce around 2,500 pounds of mushrooms annually. Selling at \$6 a pound means even a tiny 100-square-foot growing area can be worth about \$15,000 annually.

What do you think I should use for a substrate?

Your growing medium is a substrate. Growers usually use straw for oyster mushrooms and hardwood sawdust for shiitake mushrooms.

What if I can't sell my mushrooms right away?

Your oyster mushrooms will be at their best when fresh, and that's when you want to sell them. If you can't sell them immediately, freeze or dry them to sell later. Freezing or drying enables you to sell your oyster mushrooms days or months in the future.

To learn more about growing oyster mushrooms for profit, read **Growing Gourmet Mushrooms for Profit** at Amazon.com. Enter the book title in the Amazon search bar to go directly to the book's sales page.

Chapter Eight

Growing Ornamental Grasses for Profit

Because ornamental grasses are drought-tolerant and low-maintenance, landscapers and homeowners use them more and more. Because there are hundreds of shapes and sizes, they can be used for everything from ground covers to privacy screens. It's easy to start growing ornamental grasses: You simply buy the "mother" plants and divide the root clump into new plants as it grows. It's possible to grow thousands of plants in a small backyard nursery using pots.

Five Profitable Ornamental Grasses for Your Backyard Nursery

So you'd like to turn your backyard nursery into a garden of profitable plants. One of the best possibilities is ornamental grasses.

Ornamental grasses are relatively easy to grow and in high demand. What separates them from regular grasses is their distinctive form or color. They also vary in size, from six-inch tufts to twenty-foot giants. Plus, they have many uses.

Landscapers love them because they can be used as a ground cover, specimen plants, near ponds, and more. Decorators and floral arrangers enjoy using them as cut flowers and everlastings. Cities love them for urban landscaping because they tolerate poor soil and air pollution.

Ornamental grasses offer a vast range of choices for growers. That's why they're perfect for you to grow. When deciding on what ornamental grasses to grow, ask around and find out what landscapers are looking

for. You could see a lot of business if you can grow quality plants at reasonable prices. Be sure to keep in mind your climate and environment when deciding on specific varieties to grow.

To get you started, here are some profitable ornamental grasses you could grow right in your backyard plant nursery:

1. Blue Lyme Grass – This is the bluest of the blue ornamental grasses. It's tough and can spread quickly. That's why it's a top ornamental grass for erosion control. At top height, it'll be about 30 inches tall.

2. Fountain Grass – This is one of the most popular ornamental grasses with growers. It can produce mounds of six-inch flower heads and grow up to five feet tall with the proper care.

3. Purple Moor Grass – A breeze can set them in motion, earning them the nickname "dancing grass." The tall form of purple moor grass is known as "Windspiel" and can grow up to six feet tall, with purple flowers arriving in the summer. "Variegata" is a small form that grows to a three-foot height.

4. Blue Oat Grass - It looks like a blue hedgehog when fully grown! It prefers well-drained soil and plenty of sun.

5. Feather Reed Grass - This is one of the best grasses to grow. It is easy to grow and can tolerate most soils and drought.

6. Northern Sea Oats - These look like a 3-foot-tall bamboo plant at first glance. In the fall, the leaves turn a bright bronze color.

Ornamental grasses can also be grown for drying and dyeing. Switch grass, plume grass, rabbit tail grass, and eulalia grass are popular types frequently used for drying. If you'd like to dye your grasses, you could find even more interest in them. It's simple and can lead to big sales at gift and craft shops. Try growing these ornamental grasses in your backyard plant nursery. Sell them as is, or you could consider drying or dyeing them. Many growers find drying and dyeing are an excellent "value-added" way to turn the season's surplus into profits.

Read Start Your Own Backyard Plant Nursery, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), to learn more about growing these fascinating and profitable grasses. Enter the book title in the search bar to go directly to the sales page.

Chapter Nine

Growing Garlic for Profit

Garlic is a member of the same family as onions, shallots, leeks, and chives. Garlic has been used for cooking and medicinal purposes for thousands of years. Recent scientific research has proven many historical claims for garlic's health-giving and medicinal powers. Its chemical ingredients can fight bacteria, lower cholesterol levels, and act as an organic insecticide.

According to a Vegetable Crops Specialist at Cornell University, "There's a booming market for fresh local garlic. Those growing it can sell every clove they produce. Elephant garlic, for example, retails for \$6 to \$10 a pound and produces up to 15,000 pounds per acre."

Garlic is an ideal crop for the small grower, as it's labor-intensive and almost foolproof. Losing a crop is tough because it tolerates various soils and weather. For decades, growers have nicknamed garlic "the mortgage lifter" for that very reason.

Most small growers use "value-added" techniques to get a higher price for their garlic, such as garlic braids and garlic powder. One Pennsylvania grower has found more ways to add value to his garlic crop. In addition to selling bulbs and braids, he sells "garlic gardens" sized to grow on a windowsill. He also discovered that the Chinese have long harvested the garlic greens for seasoning, much like chives, so he now sells greens and a recipe for garlic greens pesto sauce for \$15 a pound in season!

There are two types of garlic: soft neck and stiff neck. Soft-neck garlic is what you'll find in almost all grocery stores. Small growers can do better with gourmet hard neck varieties, which are more flavorful, do better in colder climates, and produce larger cloves. Popular hard neck varieties include Porcelain, Rocambole, and Purple Stripe. Another famous gourmet garlic is Elephant garlic, so named because the bulbs are giant. Elephant garlic has a milder flavor than most garlic, which may account for its popularity.

Gourmet garlic varieties attract higher prices - over \$6 a pound is expected - from food lovers who appreciate the distinct flavors. These higher prices translate into a very profitable crop. Another important consideration is that customers who love gourmet garlic expect to be able to buy organic. So, you should

use organic practices, fertilizers, and pest controls to ensure your garlic meets organic standards. Typically, organic garlic also attracts higher prices.

Next, make sure your garlic is growing healthy and strong. Check to see if your soil has a pH between 6.2 and 6.8. That's what garlic prefers. Look for weeds, pests, and disease problems. You also need to make sure your soil is well-drained. Waterlogged soil can lead to many problems. Consider growing your garlic in a raised bed, which will help with drainage. A bed that is at least six inches high should do the trick.

Start planting your bulbs and seed cloves about six weeks before the first frost of fall. When planting your bulbs and cloves, try to plant them four to six inches apart. After years of experience, you can start planting them even closer together.

Garlic growers will keep more profits if they sell directly to the public. One of the best is the Saturday market or Farmer's market. Farmers' markets are popular events that draw big crowds eager to find the best local produce from the best local growers. That could be you.

Set up a stand or stall, and put your garlic on display. Consider putting out a sign-up sheet for a mailing list to keep in contact with your customers. Farmers' markets can fill up fast, so if you cannot rent a stand or a stall, consider asking another grower if you can share one with them.

Making value-added products is your chance to get creative with garlic. You can make several products with garlic. For one, you can make a safe garlic-based insecticide. You can also make a deer repellent. Or what about taking your "cull" garlic bulbs (ones with blemishes or an odd shape) and filling a half-pound mesh bag that you tie off at the top? This can make for an excellent natural flea repellent. Garlic greens are popular Spring sellers at any Farmer's market.

With a steady demand and high prices, gourmet garlic could be just the backyard cash crop to boost your bank account. To learn more, read **Growing Gourmet Garlic for Profit**, available at Amazon.com. Enter the book title in the search bar to find the book's sales page.

Chapter Ten

Value-Added Plants

Bonsai

Bonsai is the famous Japanese method, which involves stunting trees and shrubs without altering their natural appearance. Most commercial growers sell bonsai plants in three types: starter, trained, and specimen. Prices vary based on size, type of bonsai, and overall appearance. Although collectors pay thousands for prime specimens, popular sellers are usually younger trees priced under \$100.

Hypertufa

Hypertufa is a lightweight artificial stone that's quite simple to make. Mix three parts Portland cement, four parts peat, and five parts perlite. You can use everyday plastic containers for molds. The finished container can be filled with one or more plants, and you're on your way to a big seller. It's a great way to sell a \$3 plant for \$20. One local grower embeds a small piece of fused glass in each hypertufa container, fills them with succulents, and sells thousands of dollars at the Saturday market.

Table-top Christmas trees

More and more people live in apartments and condos and don't have room for a full-sized Christmas tree. That's why you could make some nice money growing table-top Christmas trees. Two particular varieties are widely used: Elwood cedar and Italian stone pine. Living varieties in a pot are the most popular, as they can be moved to a patio after the holiday season and be enjoyed year-round.

Trellised plants

You can add value to a plant by training it on a simple trellis instead of a stake. How does making double the original amount sound? You can make a trellis by ripping cedar fencing boards into narrow strips and using an electric stapler or brad nailer. Trellising works best for bigger pot sizes, such as the 3- 5 gallon containers, as a trellis can provide stability.

Read **Start Your Own Profitable Backyard Plant Nursery** to learn about value-added plants. Our book ***Growing Trees For Profit*** contains even more information about bonsai trees and Christmas trees.

Both books are available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Enter the book title in the search bar and go to the book sales page.

Chapter Eleven

Lavender Farming

Lavender farming can produce a substantial income for small growers. The fresh flowers are sold in bundles or used to make lavender oil, and the dried flower bunches are sold to florists and hobbyists for dried arrangements and wreaths. The harvested lavender is also used to make dozens of value-added products, from dried buds to aromatherapy products, skin-care products, sachets, and herbal pillows. All are easy to make and in demand from consumers who love the scent of lavender. That's the beauty of lavender - unlike other perishable crops, nothing goes to waste, and profits are year-round.

When Mike & Jadyne Reichner decided to try growing lavender, they started with just 19 plants and earned a first-year profit of \$88. In the few years since then, they have expanded their growing area to 7 acres, with thousands of plants and dozens of value-added products like lavender soaps and potted lavender plants, and now gross over one million dollars a year!

Because demand for lavender and lavender products is booming, there is an opportunity for others to start growing lavender on a small scale and cash in on the growth of the lavender business. Lavender farming can be as small as a backyard patch of a few dozen plants or as large as acres of plants. For example, Rosemary Litz grows just 80 plants in her Colorado backyard. She uses the harvested lavender to create hand-crafted products she makes with her sewing machine, such as decorative sachets and herbal pillows. As you can see, there is room in the lavender world for growers of all sizes. It's an ideal part-time business that can produce a tidy income year-round.

Lavender is a long-lasting herb lasting 12-15 years in the ground. New plants are usually produced from cuttings, so replacing older plants, expanding your growing area, or producing lavender plants for sale at almost no cost is manageable. In addition, because lavender is so easy to dry, it can be used to make value-added products year-round instead of just during the growing season.

You can start a lavender-growing business with just a tiny amount of money – as little as a few hundred dollars for plant starts and hand tools. Lavender is easy to grow and is quite disease-free as long as you give the plants well-drained soil, as it hates wet feet.

Most lavender growers agree that the best way for new growers to ensure their success is to “add value” by selling lavender products in addition to fresh-cut lavender flowers. Here are just a few examples of value-added products you can sell:

They dried lavender bundles. Crafters and florists use dried lavender bunches to create floral arrangements, wreaths, and other craft products. Drying the bunches is simple – hang them upside-down in a well-ventilated space.

Sachets. Lavender sachets have dozens of uses and are steady sellers at Saturday markets, retail stores, and repeat customers. Sachets are used in bath bags, closets, and drawers as air fresheners, in the dryer to give clothes a delicate lavender scent, and even in pillows to promote restful sleep. One enterprising grower wholesales thousands of decorative sachet bags to local retailers annually.

Aromatherapy oil. Lavender oil is one of the most used essential oils, valued for its calming, soothing effect. Many growers sell the oil in small personal-sized bottles and personal care products like lotions, creams, and shampoo.

Lavender soap. This popular value-added product has always been a big repeat seller and gift item. The affordable essential lavender bars are best-sellers.

Lavender lotions. With markups of 500% to 1,000%, it's no wonder many cosmetics entrepreneurs have become millionaires! Unlike mass-market factory-made products, small growers can use their lavender oil to make lotions, creams, ointments, and shampoos with all-natural ingredients.

If you want to learn more about this aromatic specialty crop, get a copy of our comprehensive guidebook, *Growing Lavender for Profit*, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Enter the book title in the search bar for the sales page.

Chapter Twelve

Growing Microgreens for Profit

For many years, microgreens were grown primarily for sale to upscale restaurants. These tiny plants are used as a garnish for main dishes like fish or pork to add color and taste, as a mini-salad, or added to a salad of larger leaves such as spinach or arugula.

Today, that has all changed, and microgreens have become widely known and used, not just by trendy chefs and “foodies” but by anyone who appreciates fresh, tasty food. One food writer called it the “microgreening of America.” National Public Radio recently named microgreens one of the new “culinary buzzwords,” and the National Restaurant Association calls microgreens one of the top five food trends.

Money can be made when food goes from unknown to hot food trends. Unlike most other specialty food crops, microgreens are easy to grow and can be ready to sell in just ten to twenty days. They can be grown indoors or outdoors, so microgreens are a perfect crop for urban farmers who may not have access to a patch of dirt. Many small growers prefer indoor growing, as it allows more control over light and temperature so crops can be grown more quickly and harvests are more predictable.

Because microgreens are expensive, selling for \$20 to \$50 a pound, growers can produce a solid income in a tiny space compared to traditional farming. For example, growing microgreens on a rack or shelving system that uses vertical space more efficiently can produce several pounds per square foot per month.

What Are Microgreens?

Microgreens are tiny, edible greens older than a sprout and younger than a full-grown plant. Microgreens are harvested after their first true leaves have developed before they develop into larger plants. They are the most petite salad greens and herbs, smaller than the “baby greens,” and can be grown from almost any plant variety that would produce a mature plant, such as arugula, spinach, radish, or basil.

What’s The Difference Between Microgreens and Sprouts?

Microgreens are not sprouts. Sprouts are just germinated seeds grown in water that are eaten whole, with the seed, root, and stem still attached. Microgreens are not grown in water. They are produced in soil or a sterile medium such as a fiber mat. They require plenty of light, low humidity, and good air circulation.

The seed density is low compared to sprouting, which allows plenty of room for each tiny plant to grow and develop. At harvest, they are cut and packed without any roots.

Microgreen flavor is often more intense when harvested than the mature plant, like the spicy micro-radish or micro-mizuna. This intense flavor is part of their culinary appeal. The most common microgreens come from the crucifer, or cabbage, family of plants and are packed with vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. So not only do microgreens supply flavor, texture, and color to a salad or main dish, but they're also nutritious! Some of the most common microgreens are amaranth, arugula, beets, basil, cabbage, celery, chard, cilantro, cress, kale, mustard, parsley, radish, and sorrel. Most commercial growers also offer microgreen mixes to blend tastes and colors.

You can start a microgreen business with just a tiny amount of money - as little as a few hundred dollars for seeds and supplies. Microgreens mature quickly, so it is not uncommon for growers to earn back their investment quickly or use their profits to expand their growing business. It doesn't matter how much growing space or gardening experience you have. If you can spare as little as an hour daily, you can start growing microgreens for profit.

One successful grower, Kate Brun, went from growing in the sunroom of her home to a 400 square-foot greenhouse, then a 1,600 square-foot greenhouse in about a year. Kate grows several varieties of organic microgreens, from broccoli and arugula to sunflower and popcorn. In addition to her regular restaurant and grocery customers, she sells her greens at several local farmer's markets.

She says, "*As far as a chef is concerned, microgreens are like a bow on a present. You can wrap it in paper, and it'll still be good, but putting a fancy bow on top makes it gorgeous.*" One of her chefs loves her microgreens because "*I can utilize every pound or ounce I buy. It makes for a prettier plate and makes everything more polished and refined.*"

Our growing guide, ***Growing Microgreens For Profit***, gives new growers all the information they need to grow this very profitable specialty crop. You'll find it at Amazon.com. Enter the book title in the search bar to go directly to the book page.

Chapter Thirteen

Japanese Maples

How to Make \$60,000 Growing Japanese Maples For Profit

For centuries, Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) have been grown and admired by gardeners, who view them as a "collector's tree" because of their unique beauty. These lovely trees make a unique addition to any garden, with foliage ranging from delicate lacy leaves to variegated leaves in a rainbow of colors from red and green to pink and white highlights. Landscape designers love Japanese maples because they can be used in many ways.

Most retail garden centers and nurseries don't have the space to display more than a few of the hundreds of varieties, so it can be challenging for a retail customer to find a suitable Japanese maple for their needs. That is why a small specialty tree nursery business with a good selection of varieties can do so well, both in profitability and in attracting customers looking for that "perfect" tree, such as a landscape designer or homeowners.

Because Japanese maples are smaller trees, they can also be quickly grown in containers to allow more plants in the same space - ideal for those growers with limited space. A backyard nursery can hold hundreds of these sought-after trees, and at the high prices for most varieties, even a tiny growing area can produce thousands of dollars of profit each year.

This beautiful tree has hundreds of cultivars with endless color, form, leaf type, and size variations. It can be downright confusing for a beginner, so remember that most Japanese maples fall into two broad types, broad leaf and cut leaf, and two primary colors, red and green. The cut leaf - also called lace leaf - varieties are called "dissectum," for example, *Acer palmatum* "dissectum."

Common examples of each variety are:

Japanese Red Maple is a spectacular tree for fall color, with red leaves in summer that turn even brighter red in fall. Also popular are the attractive dissectum varieties, with deeply cut feathery leaves and a weeping shape.

Crimson Queen Japanese Maple. This dwarf variety only reaches ten feet in height at maturity. Its frilly leaves and weeping branches make it an outstanding specimen tree.

Cutleaf Green Japanese Maple. This is the "standard" cultivar for the green dissectums. A dwarf variety, it reaches only six feet at maturity. In summer, it has green dissected leaves that turn golden in the fall.

Growing Japanese maples can be a very profitable "niche" tree nursery business if you can supply the essential ingredients for success:

Most varieties are hardy in zones 5 to 9, so be sure your regional climate falls into this range.

Many varieties require partial shade for protection from the hot summer sun. A simple, inexpensive shade cloth canopy over a growing area can provide this.

New growers must be patient, as it can take several years to grow out the larger specimen trees that bring high prices. For immediate income, grow the common varieties from seed or seedling in one-gallon pots, which can be sold in a year or so.

Although building an inventory of high-quality Japanese maples takes time, it can be worth the wait. Current prices of standard varieties like Bloodgood at retail nurseries are \$100 to \$150 for six-foot tall potted trees and \$150 to \$250 for 2" caliper (trunk diameter) trees. Rare varieties can bring twice as much.

If you're looking for a profitable niche in landscaping trees, Japanese maples could be just right for you. The rewards go beyond profits, as the satisfaction of creating these beautiful trees is something you have to experience to appreciate. A side benefit is having a small collection of these specimens in your yard for grafting to produce even more unique trees.

Our growing guide, ***Growing Trees For Profit***, includes a section on starting a tree nursery specializing in Japanese maples. It covers the ten best-selling varieties, growing tips and techniques, and a resource section telling you where to find the best books and videos on these lovely trees. The section also includes wholesale sources for seeds, seedlings, and other essential supplies.

The book also covers several other specialized tree "niches," such as bonsai trees, heirloom fruit and nut trees, high-value tree products like the figured wood used to make musical instruments, and even that proven money-maker, Christmas trees.

You can get your copy of the book at Amazon.com. Enter the book title in the search bar, which will take you to the book's sales page.

Chapter Fourteen

Heirloom Tomatoes

Heirloom Tomatoes – Ugly, but very Profitable!

Heirloom tomatoes never look perfect, like supermarket tomatoes. They have wrinkles or blemishes, and some varieties are just plain ugly. But beneath that ugly skin, you'll discover rich and wonderful flavors.

Once a shopper has tasted a heirloom tomato, they're hooked. That's why heirloom tomatoes can bring big profits to backyard growers – as much as \$100 per plant, and repeat sales from customers who love the old-fashioned taste and flavor.

Growing heirloom tomatoes can produce over \$16 per square foot of garden space, which makes them an ideal crop for backyard growers with limited space. Since they do not ship well, they must be sold close to where they are grown, fitting the "buy local" trend. Today's consumers are choosing to spend more on high-quality local produce that is healthy, flavorful, and preferably organically grown.

You can earn more by growing healthy, flavor-rich food you can be proud to sell and get your share of these dollars with heirloom tomatoes. In my town, three backyard growers sell at the farmer's market. They sell out early, and sometimes, they find a line of customers waiting to ensure they don't miss out!

I live in a town with a short growing season, so growers here tend to focus on short-season varieties ready to harvest in as little as eight weeks, such as Earlie Annie, Marinade, Moskovich, Northern Lights, and Siletz.

Suppose you live in a warmer climate or have a greenhouse or hoop house. In that case, the red heirloom varieties are the most popular, such as Amish Paste, Brandywine, Costoluto (my personal favorite that's been grown in Italy for over 200 years), and Italian Tree, which produces vast quantities of meaty one to two-pound tomatoes.

My in-depth guidebook, **Growing Heirloom Tomatoes for Profit**, covers over 60 proven heirloom varieties, how to double your harvest yields, and how to get top dollar for your harvest. A resource chapter includes seed suppliers, free university research, and how-to-growing videos. Just enter the book title in the Amazon.com search bar to order either the E-book or the paperback version.

Chapter Fifteen

Profitable Woody Ornamentals

Grow "Woodies" and Harvest Profits For 20-30 Years!

Woody ornamentals, also known as woody cuts or simply "woodies," are trees and shrubs whose branches are harvested and sold to florists and individuals for floral arrangements and craft products such as wreaths. Most woodies have colorful stems, like Red Twig dogwood, unusual stems, like curly willow, or stems with attractive berries, buds, or flowers. Some of the well-known woodies include holly in winter, pussy willows in spring, and smoke tree, forsythia, and hydrangea in spring and summer.

Unlike annual plants like flowers and vegetables, woodies can be harvested repeatedly for many years. There is no annual tilling, planting, or soil preparation. Woodies can also provide a year-round harvest income, as different species are ready to harvest during all four seasons. For example, witch hazel can be harvested and sold in early spring, then ninebark in spring and summer, filberts and smoke tree in summer, boxwood and beautyberry in the fall, and nandina, wax myrtle, and holly in the winter.

Outside Washington, D.C., in the rural suburbs of Maryland, Leon and Carol Carrier have turned their two-acre lot into a money-making woody ornamental nursery. You'll find old crabapple and dogwood trees that yield profitable branches every year and more unusual plants, like *Magnolia grandiflora*, that could easily be called their "money tree." The tree's long-lasting leafy stem bunches bring about \$6 each at the farmer's market, and one tree produces over 120 bunches!

A growing bed full of best-selling winterberry is popular during the winter holiday. It produces hundreds of single stems, bringing \$3 each to the market. The row of winterberry plants was established 14 years ago and will continue to produce steady income for years. Another bed holds flowering quince, producing as much as \$800 worth of stems per plant per year.

Katherine Lewis, a basket maker, weaves willow baskets. She and her husband, Steve Lospalluto, grow a variety of colored willow stems on their Washington state farm, Dunbar Gardens. The willow stems are harvested, bundled, and sold to other basket makers in the area, who value the wide range of colored willow stems that bring life to their woven creations.

In addition, they sell willow cuttings to crafters and anyone who wants to grow willow to harvest. The willow plants at the farm are tightly spaced, as close as 9 inches apart in rows, only 32 inches apart, to keep the stems from getting too large for basketry. Some of the stems harvested for sale are bundles of 8-12 inch cuttings to start new plants. This allows weavers to create amazingly colorful baskets and other craft items, such as wreaths, garden ornaments, and furniture.

Researchers at the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture recently studied the profit potential for just one woody species, willow. They concluded that smaller plots of 1/4 to 1 acre could produce a return of up to \$56,000 per acre!

Because demand for woody ornamentals is increasing, new growers can start producing woody stems on a small scale and cash in on that demand. Shipping woodies is expensive and can often damage delicate buds and flowers, reducing vase life. That's why florists and other woody users prefer to buy locally to ensure freshness and higher quality.

Many woodies can be dried and sold year-round. For example, crafters and florists have a huge demand for dried hydrangeas. Many woodies can also be used to create wreaths and other craft products, such as woven willow baskets and rustic woven willow furniture. One grower produces willow rocking chairs that sell out each year! The fruit of two woodies, flowering quince, and rose hips, is used for making value-added jams, jellies, and chutney.

Although some growers produce woodies on up to 160 acres, most are much smaller growers, with as little as a quarter or half an acre. There is room in the woody growing world for growers of all sizes. It's an ideal part-time business that can produce a substantial income year-round.

Most woodies are long-lasting perennial plants with 20-60 years of lifespan. Europeans harvest woody stems from plants that are hundreds of years old! New plants are usually produced from cuttings, so replacing older plants, expanding your growing area, or producing potted woodies for sale to local buyers or the local garden center is easy.

You can start a woody ornamental business with just a tiny amount of money - as little as a few hundred dollars for plant starts and other supplies. Woodies are easy plants to grow, and most are disease- and pest-free. Growing woodies is also an ideal part-time business for new growers with full-time jobs, as much of the work can be done when available.

Our growing guide, **Growing Woody Ornamentals For Profit**, provides all the information you need to start. You can order your copy at Amazon.com. Enter the book title in the search bar to go to the book sales page.

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Conclusion

Thank you for reading this book and discovering the amazing potential of growing specialty plants for profit. Whether you are looking for a side hustle, a full-time career, or a hobby that pays for itself, this is the perfect opportunity for you.

You don't need much money to start - some of the most successful growers began with just \$50 worth of seeds and essential tools - and you can scale up as you grow. You can extend your growing season with a simple greenhouse or hoop house and enjoy the benefits of working outdoors with nature.

Many growers find growing for profit in their backyard nursery a relaxing and rewarding experience, while others love the challenge and excitement of running their own plant business. In this book, I have shared my favorite specialty crops, which are easy to grow, in high demand, and profitable.

These crops have been tested and proven by hundreds of specialty crop growers, and they can be grown by anyone who has or is willing to learn the essential gardening skills. You can choose one or more of these crops to start your backyard plant-growing business and create a steady and sustainable income for yourself and your family.

Don't wait any longer - get growing today! If you are ready to start your backyard plant-growing business, you can find all the information you need in my growing guides available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

These guidebooks cover everything from planting, caring, harvesting, and marketing your specialty crops, and they are written in a clear and easy-to-follow style.

To ensure everyone can access these valuable resources, I have priced them very affordably - you can get any guidebook for just \$4.95 for the E-book and \$14.95 for a printed copy.

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Thanks so much for your support!

Craig Wallin