

Northwoods Farm tapping into CBD product market

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Health benefit claims swirling around cannabidiol, commonly shortened to CBD, oil are germinating all over the internet. And with agribusiness's interest in turning hemp into the new cool-cash crop, farms big and small have been trying to set down roots into the market.

But in 2020 — the year of COVID-19 — that hasn't been easy.

Hemp tolerates a wide range of soils, said Jason Fischbach, UW-Madison Extension agriculture agent for Bayfield and Ashland counties. So growing the plant isn't a problem so much in the Northwoods, whether it be for making CBD oil or tinctures, or selling it as a grain or fiber.

The question is once the farmers harvest the crop, will they find a market for it?

One Ashland-area farmer says yes.

Gil Schwartz is a farmer and forager growing hemp on a small scale to make CBD hemp products under the banner Northwoods Botanicals to sell directly to consumers.



Schwartz

Outside the box

Schwartz is no stranger to thinking outside the box when it comes to the ag business. A forager since a young age, he established Seasonally Sourced Foods, a professional wild foods harvesting service and specialty crop farm in April 2015. The farm offers a variety of wild vegetables, salad blends, root crops, fruits, mushrooms, culinary herbs, edible flowers and more.

And last year, when hemp called Schwartz's name to be added to the business, he answered the call.

After successfully navigating the spools of red tape necessary to get a license to grow hemp, Schwartz planted the first crop in spring 2019. And then settled down to wait.

Unlike a plant such as lettuce that can be planted, harvested and placed into consumers' hands within a couple of months, hemp takes six months to produce the flower vital for making CBD.

About Northwoods Botanicals

Location: Seasonally Sourced Foods near Ashland.

Something to Know: Northwoods Botanicals' hemp is grown sustainably, and each plant is hand-sown, transplanted, watered and harvested to protect the delicate flowers and preserve their cannabinoid.

After a long summer, the flowers of Schwartz's first crop burst forth, and he started harvesting in a wet and chilly October to begin in earnest his new CBD oil entrepreneurial endeavor.

"We learned a lot last year," Schwartz said. "Things have been off to a really good start."

Schwartz proudly states his new operation is quite small, and he grows the hemp outdoors in the sunshine without synthetic or harmful pesticides, herbicides or fertilizer. When the time is ripe, he harvests the crop by hand, giving the plants the care and attention needed to preserve their cannabinoid-rich trichomes.

The farmer cures and dries the plants, paying careful attention to temperature and humidity before processing and sending them off to a licensed processor in St. Paul.

Full spectrum The end product is a high-quality, full spectrum hemp flower extract made in Bayfield County, Schwartz said. Legally it can't have more than a 0.3% concentration of delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) on a dry weight basis, so Schwartz's hemp products are completely non-psychoactive.

Schwartz is careful not to make health claims for Northwoods Botanicals' CBD oil, only sticking to claims he is comfortable standing behind as tested by a third-party lab.

However, information on the Internet claims that the oil has shown therapeutic health effects on humans, cats and dogs, including pain relief, reduction of anxiety and depression, and the alleviation of cancer-related symptoms such as nausea and vomiting.

Northwoods Botanicals' lineup of CBD comes in



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY GIL SCHWARTZ

Rows of hemp grow at Seasonally Sourced Foods, a specialty crop farm in the Washburn and Ashland area. Gil Schwartz started growing the plants last year to produce cannabidiol oil.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY GIL SCHWARTZ

Northwoods Botanicals, a CBD hemp product business Gil Schwartz established this year, sells a variety of flavored hemp flower extract tinctures.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY GIL SCHWARTZ

1-ounce dropper bottles in four flavors — classic, orange, mint and cinnamon — although Schwartz has more in develop-

ment. He's particularly excited about his upcoming bacon-and-chicken-flavored CBD to sprinkle over pets' kibble.

As an example of personal use, Schwartz said he puts drops of the cinnamon flavored CBD in his coffee.

For more information visit northwoodsbotanicals.com.



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