

# Profitable Flower Business Begins With 4 Canna Bulbs

Thomas Sherfick Invests \$1.00 to Good Purpose

By J. J. Reid

Five years ago Thomas Sherfick of Martin County, Indiana bought four canna bulbs at a cost of \$1.00 and made his debut in the "flower business." Today Tom has seemingly endless rows of cannas and dahlias and is shipping bulbs and cut flowers all over the country. The business which started from \$1.00 worth of cannas five years ago has grown into a truly commercial proposition. Five varieties of cannas and 15 varieties of dahlias bloom in Tom Sherfick's garden today, vying with each other in a riot of color. It is a beautiful garden but that is only part of this story; it is also a profitable one.

In addition to the original four bulbs Tom has purchased some half dozen of each variety represented in the garden, and these small purchases represent the entire outlay for stock. Under the owner's care these have multiplied rapidly and many dollars' worth have been sold. This industry is a pleasant combination of business and pleasure and represents the realization of boyhood dreams for Tom has always been interested in flowers, and this interest explains his success.

The Sherfick family lives in the Lost River country south of Shoals and farms 460 acres of land, 250 of which are under cultivation, but Tom is sure that as a business proposition, his flower garden has everything else beat on the place.

Tom keeps Poland China hogs and his father raises Chester Whites, and naturally enough the rivalry is keen. Do not misunderstand and think that the Sherficks are in the hog-feeding business. Hog feeding is not particularly profitable in Martin County but the raising of feeder hogs on the other hand has proven to be a money-making business, and as such the Sherficks are interested in it.

Every acre of the Sherfick corn, and there are an even hundred of them, contains soy beans, and the wheat acreage on the place is gradually being reduced in favor of this legume. Sweet clover too has found a valuable place on the Sherfick farm furnishing bee pastures and assisting in preventing erosion, a serious problem in Martin as in many other southern counties.

There is nothing haphazard about the manner in which the Sherficks take care of their bees. They have found that there is good money in apiculture, and that it is worthwhile to devote some time to this feature of their business.

Sixty head of Angus cattle, 50 Shropshire ewes, and 300 White Leghorn hens render their contributions to the Sherfick pocketbook, and a 30-acre apple orchard does its share toward making this Martin county farm profitable. The presence of a large number of coyotes in the Lost River country makes the sheep business a rather uncertain quantity but the Sherficks have found the ewes to be money makers and are loath to relinquish them. The coyotes, known ....in this region, put.... [unreadable]

The Sherfick farm is for the most part clay upland but includes black land in the Lost River bottoms. Clover production has been on the decline and in the words of Tom Sherfick, "the farmers or southern Martin County will never raise clover successfully until lime is used." The soy bean is temporarily replacing clover but the

progressive farmers are looking to the day when their fields, made sweet with limestone, will again be rendered fertile by their old stand-by, little red.

The problems of transportation have always been felt acutely in Martin, but with a net work of new roads under construction and some recently completed that particular difficulty is being removed. As to roads the county is now better off than many of its neighbors.

Diversification is an absolute prerequisite to success in this county, and most of the farms are found to be as diversified as that of the Sherficks--except for one thing. Tom is the only florist in the region.

**My grandpa loved to garden and did it in a big way until the great depression hit and forced him to leave his passion to make money as a salesman. He would have many other jobs in his life, but I doubt if any gave him as much satisfaction. The newspaper article was run in 1923. He would have made his discovery in 1918 when he was only 17 years old. He didn't marry my grandmother until 1924.**

**Cyndy McAtee**