Rigby man grows dozen of plants in subterranean garden

By NATE SUNDERLAND nsunderland@postregister.com

RIGBY — It may be the dead of winter, but Rigby native Joseph Smith still eats freshly grown vegetables and herbs straight out of his garden.

A lifelong gardener, Smith, 75, maintains a large garden outside his rural home every growing season. He grows everything from orchids to ferns to tomatoes.

But he’s most proud of his winter crop.

For several years, Smith has grown plants during winter in an underground greenhouse he designed and built with repurposed plywood and glass panels.

“I wanted to use up the glass (lying around) and make a greenhouse,” Smith said. “I just thought it up — it was inspiration.”

While still rare in North America, walipinis have been used in South America for centuries for decades, said Wendy Infanger, a Brigham Young University-Idaho horticulture professor.

Smith’s subterranean greenhouse lies just 12 by 12 feet at its far side to 7 feet at its garden is 12 by 12 feet and 2 feet deep, Infanger noted. The walipini itself is 12 by 12 feet and 6 feet deep.

Joseph Smith is able to feed his passion for gardening year round with his walipini greenhouse. Smith started his “experiment” seven years ago in his home in Rigby. The greenhouse is partially underground, and the sloped glass roof faces south.

His small garden can reach more than 110 degrees, Infanger said. “This uses natural heat from the sun and the earth to keep it warm.” Consequently, a walipini can reach more than 100 degrees worth of solar or artificial energy to maintain plants.

“Walipinis can benefit eastern Idaho gardeners,” Smith said. “This is better than a freestanding greenhouse because in our cold weather there is no way to heat an outside greenhouse without significant cost, Infanger said. “This uses natural heat from the sun and I’ve kept it warm.”

During a sunny winter day, temperatures in the walipini can reach more than 110 degrees.

Smith’s walipini design at local nurseries starting next year. He estimates construction costs at less than $500.

Last week, Infanger’s horticulture class visited Smith’s walipini to gauge the possibility of building a subterranean garden at BYU-Idaho.

“With a little extra money, you can extend your harvest,” Smith said.

Women in Ag conference focuses on markets, finance

By CINDY SALO

TWIN FALLS — Novel markets for farm products and new and novel foods growing in consumer demand are the themes of the first Idaho Women in Agriculture Conference on Saturday in Twin Falls.

Organized by Cindy Salo, the University of Idaho’s Latah County Extension educator for small farms and sustainable agriculture, and Kelly Olson, administrator of the Idaho Barley Commission, the keynote speaker was Arlie Sommer, who retired to Emmet after a career as a financial advisor.

“I urge you, everyone to create and find the food delivery system you believe in and pursue your passion,” Sommer urged.

Arlie Sommer, who retired to Emmet after a career as a financial advisor, urged everyone to create and find the food delivery system you believe in and pursue your passion.

Centrally located and well-established in the intermountain West for over 30 years— We buy enough to serve you and still small enough to give your animal individual attention.

Let us help you maximize the breeding potential of your bulls or stallions. A farm in frozen semen is the cheapest form of breeding insurance that you can buy.

Give Us A Call Today (208) 733-7623 Office • (208) 733-8915 Fax email: horn@hornsbyco.com www.hornsbyco.com

1950 South Highway 99-91 • Logan, Utah 84321

Women in Ag conference focuses on markets, finance

BY CINDY SALO

TWIN FALLS — Novel markets for farm products and new and novel foods growing in consumer demand are the themes of the first Idaho Women in Agriculture Conference on Saturday in Twin Falls.

Organized by Cindy Salo, the University of Idaho’s Latah County Extension educator for small farms and sustainable agriculture, and Kelly Olson, administrator of the Idaho Barley Commission, the keynote speaker was Arlie Sommer, who retired to Emmet after a career as a financial advisor.

“I urge you, everyone to create and find the food delivery system you believe in and pursue your passion,” Sommer urged.

Arlie Sommer, who retired to Emmet after a career as a financial advisor, urged everyone to create and find the food delivery system you believe in and pursue your passion.