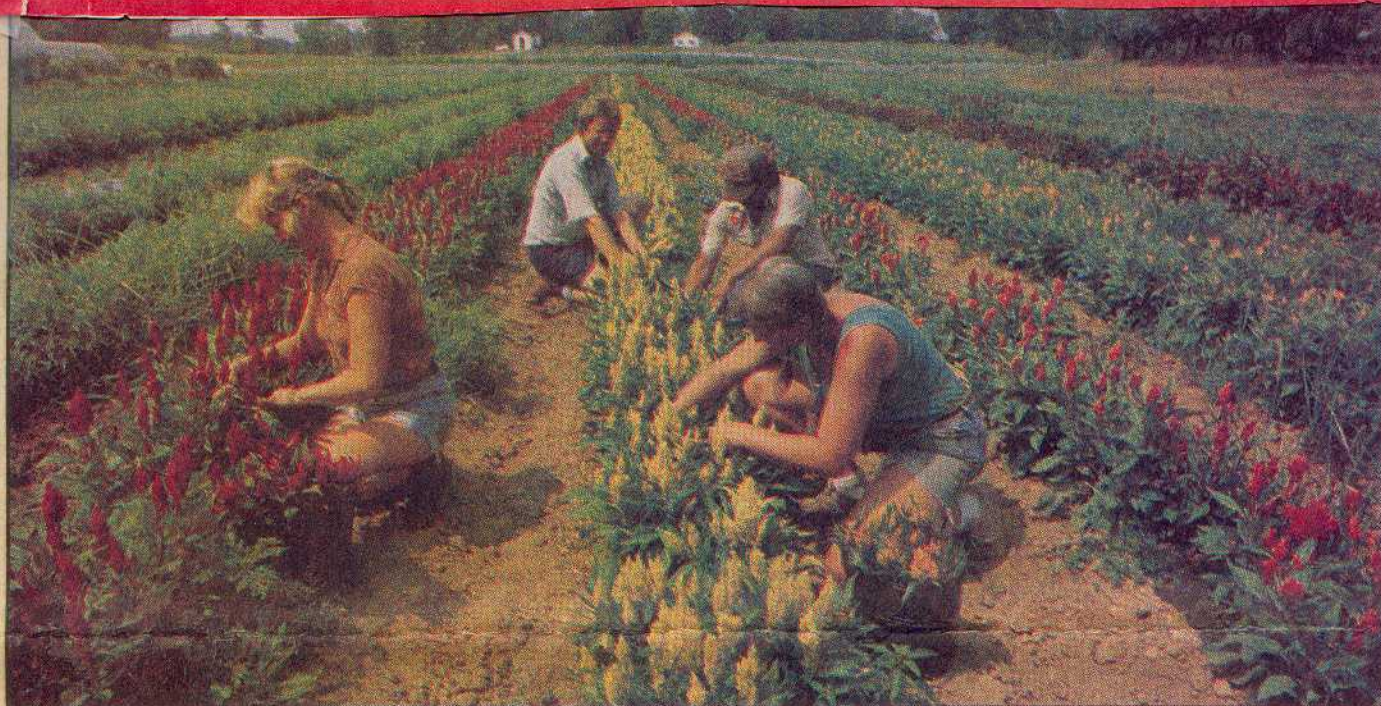


# MONEY



Photos by Don Preisler The Washington Times

Charlie Coiner and his staff work a field of celosia flowers (above) on his 20-acre Rock Garden farm near Winchester, Va. Mr. Coiner (right) holds a tray of herbs, ready for market.

## THE ENTREPRENEURS

# Edible flowers, herbs business in full bloom

By Pam McClintock  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**BERRYVILLE, Va.** — There's a new kind of farmer here whose livelihood depends upon a colorful field of edible flowers and acres of luscious herbs.

Charlie Coiner, tromping through the dust in the midst of the searing heat, sniffed out the smell of peppermint, spearmint, basil and many other culinary flavorings too unusual to spell. All told, he grows 69 different kinds of herbs on his 20-acre Rock Garden farm.

Then there are the edible flowers, such as pansies and nasturtiums, adored by bold chefs and used primarily in salads.

In just over a decade, Mr. Coiner has turned his farm into perhaps the largest fresh herb operation in the Washington area, supplying gourmet restaurants, hotels and Safeway stores. Rock Garden is about 70 miles from Washington near Winchester, Va., home of the late country singer Patsy Cline.

"I started out as an organic vegetable farmer. I'm still an organic farmer, but I've had to find a niche because I can't compete with a 5,000-acre tomato farm," he said.



Each week, Rock Garden sells between 2,000 to 3,000 pounds of herbs. A farm bought by Mr. Coiner in Costa Rica provides herbs during the winter months. He also has recently patented a plastic designed to package his product.

Tall and blond, Mr. Coiner, 26, grew up on a cattle farm in Appalachia. Upon graduating from the College of William and

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