

CARES Recipient Profile



THIS FARM
CARES

Farm: Aquatica Tropicals, Inc.
Location: Plant City, Hillsborough
Date of Origination: 1988
Commodities: ornamental aquaculture



Marty Tanner started working on a fish farm at age 20, and just six years later began in the fish farming business for himself on eight acres east of Plant City. Marty and his wife, Sue, expanded that farm and purchased a second one, a 13-acre facility in Lakeland. Today, his company, Aquatica Tropicals, Inc., is a high-tech, ornamental aquaculture production facility using state-of-the-art technology with facilities in Plant City, Lakeland, and Ruskin. Between the three sites, the company currently is producing and marketing 150,000 to 200,000 fish a week.

Aquatica Tropical uses indoor facilities to breed and raise fish. Tanner constructed a 12,000-square-foot building that produces as many fish as 30 acres of outdoor pond culture. Working indoors allows the creation of a controlled environment that reduces the danger of weather damage. The facility has a heating and cooling system that controls water temperature and a water recirculating system that continually cleans and reuses more than two million gallons of water each day. The closed system eliminates potential pollution from surface or ground water while also reducing the need for ground water pumping. The system also saves labor in an industry that is labor intensive, and allows Aquatica Tropicals to use less than half the labor of a conventional fish farm. Still another benefit of indoor fish rearing is the elimination of losses to wading bird predation, which is a severe problem in outdoor pond culture.

Aquatica Tropicals offers tours to legislators, environmental regulators, school groups, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. The company also participates in their community's school activities by sponsoring students and donating to fund-raising events.

Tanner's view of the future of the Florida fish industry is rich with potential, including the use of his state of the art fish producing facilities to branch into the biotech industry by growing strains of fish to be used in areas of advanced medical research.

When asked why he is a farmer who CARES, Tanner said that "when you look at our industry in general, and at the ornamental industry in particular, we can better ourselves by raising a better quality fish, by raising a better quality product line, and by being more competitive in the marketplace. The industry will benefit, and the environment will benefit. It will be a win-win situation for everybody."

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2007