



## Farming in Faraway Places

**A soldier in Iraq writes about a small hobby farm he and other worked to grow sunflower, green beans, corn and melons.**

By Chad Trenary  
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Most mornings you could find the Camp Speicher farmers watering, cutting or just admiring their gardens. How small is too small to be considered a hobby farm?

I am writing to you today from Camp Speicher near Tikrit, Iraq.

Several others here and I got tired of just having dirt piled up around our living quarters, so we got some of our loved ones to send us various types of seeds to plant.

We have found that sunflowers, corn, green beans and watermelon do very well here in the hot Iraqi sun. Some guys here just enjoy growing grass; we have several strains of Bermuda and Fescue that are flourishing.

Our little hobby hasn't been without trials, the biggest one being water. To get over this little hurdle, we put our heads together and came up with a couple of different ways to water.

Keeping for their crops watered was the biggest challenge for the hobby farmers at Camp Speicher. When we first started out, we could get away with just using water bottles filled up from the bathroom, but as the plants began to grow, we needed more water. It didn't take us long to figure out how to rig up some hoses to one of the showers and another that hooked onto the sink faucet.

Loved ones have sent us potting soil, fertilizer and some gardening tools. The soil is the other challenge; when it's dried up, it's just like cement, so we have to keep it as wet as possible.

As we move into June, we have sunflowers that are beginning to make their flowers, and watermelons that grow more than 2 inches a day. The grass stays green and we all talk about how our crops and yards are doing.

We are always looking for ways to improve; our latest thing is to try to make our own compost. We are trying to gather up the leftover salad and vegetables from the dining facility since we don't have any other way to get any green matter.

If a stranger were to hear us talk, they may think that we are gathered around the co-op on any They started with corn, green beans and watermelon and found that the sunflowers did the best in the hot Iraqi sun.given morning, but we're doing it right here in Iraq.

You can have a hobby farm anywhere you want. You're only limited by your imagination.

When you walk through Life Support Area 4, you can't help but smile at all the green grass and veggies growing.

Most mornings around 0500 you'll find all of us farmers watering, cutting or just admiring our hobby farms. Even in the worst conditions, Americans are going to farm.

All of our gardeners are pilots from 2-1 General Support Aviation Battalion out of Ft. Riley, Kan.

Editor's Note: For his Reader Resumé, we sent Chad a care package full of seeds, gardening tools, farm-logo gear, magazines and sweet treats.

Chad's Response: Many thanks to you and the staff of Hobby Farms for the box of tools, magazines and treats. We are getting good use out of the gardening tools as we're having to prepare for our next planting season.

Unfortunately, once July rolled around and we had sustained temperatures of 115 to 120 degrees F, we just couldn't keep our gardens wet enough. My corn did produce ears, but they only had a few kernels on them. I also got a couple of watermelons about the size of tennis balls and a couple of even smaller cantaloupes.



The sunflowers did the best: great, big beautiful sunflowers that the bees really loved. It sure was fun growing them.

Although it's the beginning of August; it seems as though it has cooled down some. It's only getting to around 101 to 103 degrees F each day so we're planning on trying to get a second season in the fall. The magazines were a hit, laying around on tables throughout the Battalion, folks that had never heard of Hobby Farms were entertained by them and many who do a little farming (but had no idea about the magazine) really liked them.

Chad will receive six 1-lb. containers of QuikStrike Scatter Bait, Starbar's insect management solution using the industry's most innovative technology ([www.starbar.com](http://www.starbar.com)), for use on his farm upon returning from Iraq.

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