

Look Over at the Pretty

Adding Cut Flowers to a Farmstand
Kenyon and Kerry Parsons
Parsons Vegetable Farm
Sharon Springs, NY 13491



Our Story

From out of business dairy farm to busy roadside stand

Bought farm in 1993

Focus in the beginning were vegetables sold from a picnic table at farm

Season was July and August

Started growing gladiolus 1998

Added lisianthus and zinnias, sunflowers, and asters 2003

Growing now : snapdragons, amaranth, millet,statice,
hibiscus,celosia,strawflowers, gomphrena, yarrow, bachelor buttons

What we sell: Hanging baskets to Christmas trees

Season now May 1 thru December 15



Location

Farm is located in Sharon Springs NY on US rt 20.

Sharon Springs is located approx 1 hour west of Albany and important for a roadside business ½ hr, east of Cooperstown

Business from Cooperstown has resulted in our gladiolus being thrown on the stage of Glimmerglass Opera.

Decorated NYS Executive Mansion for Halloween for three Governors

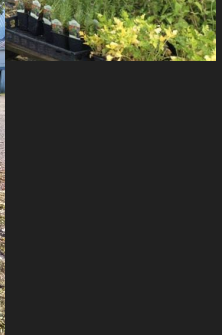


Why add cut flowers

Products sold

Hay, straw, bark mulch, topsoil, annual flowers and vegetable transplants, perennials, herbs, hanging baskets, vegetables from our high tunnel, field vegetables.

Cut flowers fill a nice niche between spring plant sales and fall mums and pumpkins.



Marketing

All advertising has been word of mouth.

We post on Facebook but most business is drive in.

Original target was opera crowd but now more diverse



Growing Pretty

Growing all annuals

Vegetables have taken priority in greenhouse

Target market season mid July thru mid September

Get started March 15 planting seeds in greenhouse

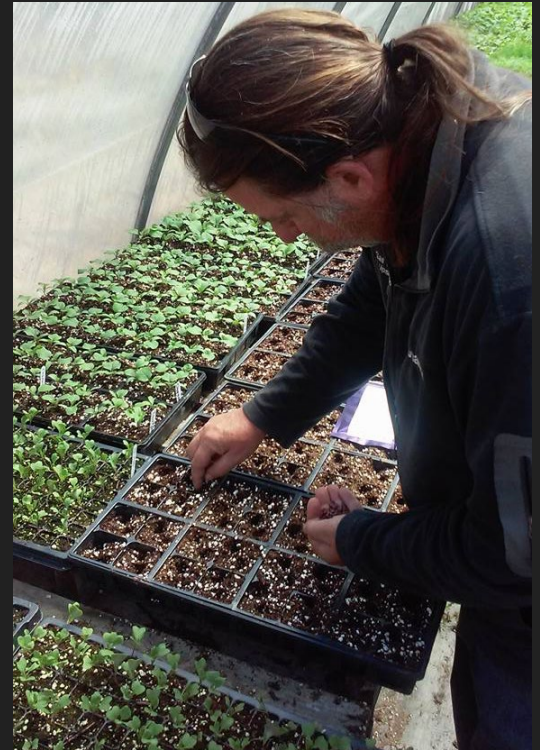
Try to have at least 2 plantings of almost everything
2 weeks apart

Should have 5 plantings of sunflowers

Seeds sown in 128 or 288 plug trays in Promix Bx

Everything homegrown but lisianthus

Be careful cold greenhouses



Transplanting

Ground is plowed and fitted May 5

300 lbs 17-17-17 broadcast and worked in

Transplanting starts about May 20 ends July 4

Transplants are set out on 4' black plastic double row
18" between plants using a waterwheel transplanter

Lisianthus should be tighter, maybe this year!

Try to set out plants to aid in harvest efficiency

500' rows of one variety of vegetable is great but 50'
of any one color is better



Sales

Flowers are sold by the stem

Bouquets are 13 stems

We cut and also allow U-pick

U-pick fits in with other ag entertainment activities such as hay and corn mazes, and U-pick pumpkins

Tried pick a bouquet from our bucket but that just kills pretty flowers

Due to space limitations haven't pushed at farmers markets

Local florists

Wholesale Learning how to wrap a bouquet

Most sales are right at farm

Weddings and photo venue Supplied flowers and cooler, wedding party did arrangements



Things on the test - Part 1

We grow what we like or better what you like

Sometimes what we like doesn't sell

Cactus Zinnias, anything orange, the horribly offensive Love lies bleeding to the over 50 crowd, the controversial purple millet, aka the relationship ender

Sell what you have

You want 50 white roses, I will sell you red sunflowers because that is what is great today

If in a hurry and a filler is needed, purple millet for the win

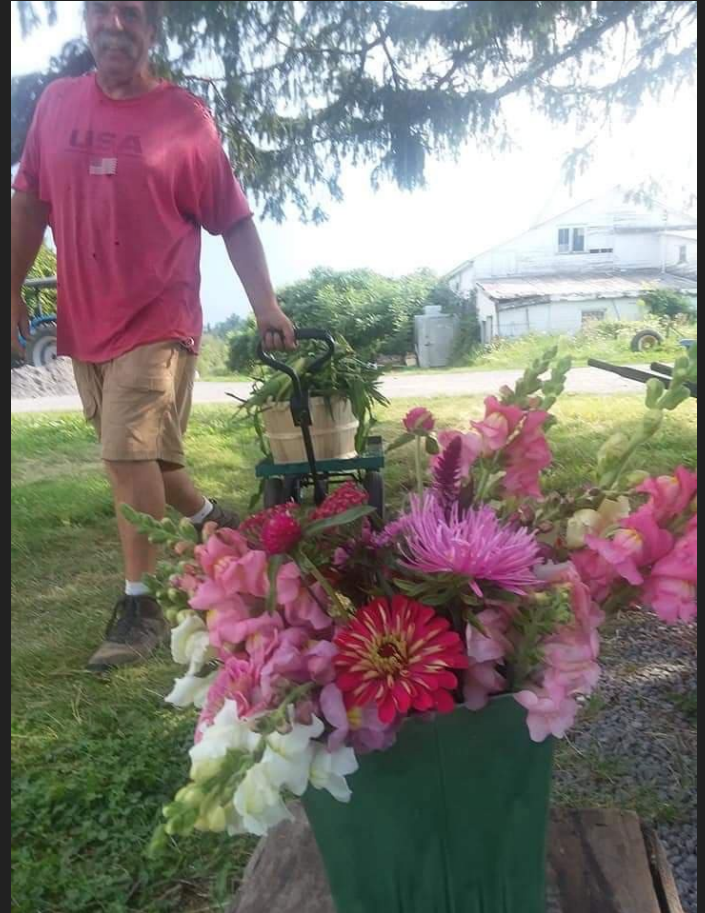


Things on the test - Part 2

Order came for sunflowers July 1, needed longer stems, had to talk customer off ledge

Bouquets are made based upon where cutter is in field, mood of cutter, and time constraints

My fav is white Lisianthus with deep red zinnias with 3 purple millet. Pretty if you are honoring the revolution



Varieties

Favorite flowers to grow and sell

Soraya sunflowers

Misty blue and champagne lisianthus

All Benary Giant zinnias

Giant ray asters

Getting more interested in fillers such as
red stripe amaranth



Conclusion

Cut flowers have increased sales and profitability

Fills gap in growing season

Growing 2 acres of we cut, U- cut, please anybody cut these flowers

No cut is not an option

Please come over and lets check out the pretty

Money goes in mason jar on stand, and it would be super if you would ride transplanter in May. It takes a village to run this place

