

Shoestring Farm

Colrain, Massachusetts

Springtime at Wild Oats would not be complete without the beautiful spring bedding plants the co-op gets from Shoestring Farm.



Owned and operated by Rich Pascale, Shoestring Farm is located in Colrain, about 30 miles east of Wild Oats and a mile from the Vermont border. Rich cultivates three acres of his 22-acre farm, growing a range of vegetables and small fruits as well as perennial and annual flowers, vegetable starts, and herbs. The farm also produces maple syrup and honey. Rich has been farming Shoestring full time since 1972.

Rich's partner, Therese Fitzsimmons, works part-time on the farm and does the outreach work for Shoestring's two CSAs. Jay Snyder, Rich's working partner on the farm, has been farming with Rich for almost a decade. Although Shoestring has chosen not to apply for organic certification, Rich and Jay adhere to organic standards in everything they grow.



In addition to Wild Oats, Shoestring sells wholesale to Green Fields Market in Greenfield, MA; McCusker's Market in Shelburne Falls, MA; and Rowe Conference Center in Rowe, MA. Shoestring sells retail through the Greenfield Farmers' Market and its CSAs.

Sustainability on a Shoestring

Rich did not always know he wanted to be a farmer, but he knew from early on that he wanted to live sustainably, in a natural setting. Around the age of 21 (he is 61 now), he tried his hand at farming while still living in his home state of Connecticut. Although this venture did not last, the farming bug got into his blood. A year or so later, he started Shoestring Farm. While he was confident that he could sustain himself as a farmer, Rich began farming without an abundance of resources (for many years he had a manual plow; only recently did he purchase a tractor) - hence the name *Shoestring*.



"It's still pretty much that type of farm," says Rich. "We use whatever we can - we try to make do - living simply isn't always simple. But that's our goal here - to go easy on the planet. I've made a lot of mistakes in life but farming is not one of them. It's a part of my life that has always brought me joy."