

# NEWS TIMES

## Grabbing a share of the Harvest

BY ALANA KANSAKU-SARMIENTO

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**A lot of Pacific Northwest gardeners are happy if they get a dozen ripe cantaloupes by the end of the season.**

Greg Shipp is shooting for 4,000.

Given that he grew 2,500 last year, he's not worried about hitting his goal.

"I'm good at it," said Shipp, owner of Wildberry Organics in Forest Grove. "Most people say it's hard to grow melons out here, but I got a touch."

Opened only three months ago, Wildberry Organics is the Forest Grove area's newest community supported agriculture (CSA) farm (see box). The business model relies on a special agreement between farmer and buyer, in which the buyer pays a flat fee for the entire season and, once a week, receives a share of that week's harvest.

This season, Wildberry's rate will be \$350 for a small share (which normally feeds one or two adults per week), and \$650 for a large share that can feed three to four adults a week. For those buying later in the season, prices will be discounted.

Weekly shares can be picked up at Wildberry Organics, but those who would rather stay in town can pick up their shares at the Forest Grove Farmers Market on Wednesdays.

### Extended season

Because of the long, cold spring, shares will be extended by a week at the end of the season.

Customers have already been enjoying salad greens, radishes and other early season vegetables. Later this month Shipp expects that raspberries, marionberries, plums and strawberries will be available, along with turnips, broccoli and cabbage. By the time July arrives, Shipp's famous cantaloupes will have arrived, much to the delight of his customers.

Shipp previously worked at B Street Permaculture Project - better known as the B Street Farm - a sustainable agriculture project sponsored by Forest Grove community members and Pacific University. Last year, Shipp's juicy canteloupes were grown and harvested on land owned by Robin Lindsley, an educator who helped start Forest Grove's community school.

Shipp began Wildberry Organics after meeting Diane McKinnon at one of the many yard sales he would crash to barter his home-grown melons.

"He just came flying up the lane with his cantaloupes, saying,

'Anyone want to buy a cantaloupe?'" McKinnon recalls of their first meeting.

"I was like, 'Hey, this is my yard sale!' But he was really likeable."

The two hit it off and soon were working out a deal. Shipp needed to expand his melon patch. McKinnon had five unused acres.



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Greg Shipp's extensive horticultural experience has helped transform fallow fields north of Forest Grove into productive acreage that's yielding a variety of fruit and vegetables he's selling to local individuals and families via subscription.

McKinnon and her mother, Jean, have owned their property, just off Thatcher Road, north of Forest Grove, since 2000.

“When we moved in it was just a pasture,” she said. “We always wanted to do something with it. It took eight years, but here we are.”

She said Shipp has transformed the property.

“Greg is a miracle worker. It's so nice to see the land working,” McKinnon said.

Lately Shipp has been sharing his gardening secrets with students at the B Street Farm, many of who have also been volunteering their time at Wildberry Organics, where there is much planting, tilling, and maintenance to be done. When he has more time, Shipp hopes to conduct classes for the students at Wildberry Organics.

Along with the students, Nora Johnson has also been working on Shipp's new farm. He hired her two years ago, when he still worked at the B Street Farm, and now, Shipp says, Wildberry Organics wouldn't have happened without her.

“I wouldn't have nothin' done if it wasn't for the people around me,” said Shipp. “They deserve the credit, (and) that's the truth.”

### **Getting your share**

Western Washington County is home to several farms that offer shares of the season's crop through community supported agriculture programs. Here's a sample:

**Wildberry Organics**

45245 N.W. Wildberry Lane (two miles off Northwest Thatcher Road)

503-313-6928

**Vicki's Harvest Boxes @ Sungold Farms**

6995 N.W. Evers Road

503-357-3851

**Square Peg Farm**

6370 N.W. Evers Road

503-357-1214

**Love Farm Organics**

46125 Hillside Road

503-515-9939