

Green News Brief



Local Food and Agriculture

By Forrest Iwanik

No matter where you're headed, Princeton residents are spoiled for choice when it comes to buying fresh and local food. Aside from the obvious convenience of stopping by a roadside farm stand for your fresh corn, tomatoes, or squash on your way home from work, buying your food locally has numerous other benefits.

Reducing Our Carbon Footprint

First, supporting local farmers reduces the carbon footprint of our agricultural system and is one of the best things you can do to help the environment. According to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' [MassGrown Map](#), there are 74 farm stands, 23 community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, 20 farmers' markets, and 5 dairy farms within 15 miles of Princeton's town common. In contrast, according to research from Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the average piece of produce in the United States travels 1,500 miles from stem to your table via a conventional supermarket.



Some Farms in Princeton



Stimson Farm

207 Thompson Road

Hubbard's Farm

163 Houghton Road

Rattle Root Farm

89 Mirick Road

Andean Dawn Alpacas

313 Ball Hill Road

Charbrook Farm

71 Gates Road

Gleason Farm

72 Gleason Road

Deer Run Tree Farm

80 Calamint Hill S

Elzire's Acre

111 Wheeler Road

Green News Brief

Reducing Packaging

Your friendly neighborhood produce is often sold loose and often comes with zero virgin packaging waste. In contrast, the plastic bags, trays, and clamshell boxes that much of the grocery store produce is shipped in are designed to be “single use” and often immediately head to the waste stream.

Supporting the Local Economy

When you buy local, the farmer makes the most profit from their labor and your money stays within your community. Many small farmers cannot afford to compete in the economy of scale against larger farms so they must charge more to make even a modest living. Tending to farmland and livestock is intensely demanding work every day. Having participated as a working shareholder in a CSA, I've had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the dedication and passion that goes into growing the food we often take for granted. The day's harvest doesn't care if there is torrential rain, an early frost, a heatwave, or if the farmer really needs a vacation. Recognizing the value that local agriculture brings and choosing to support it helps nurture a strong, vibrant community economically and socially.

Did You Know?

According to [the USDA's Farm Service Agency](#), Massachusetts farmers contribute nearly \$500 million to the state's economy. Worcester County is home to 21% of the state's farms.



Photo courtesy Pixabay

Ways to Reduce Food Packaging

- Take your own produce bags to the grocery store.
- Choose unpackaged spinach, lettuce, carrots, and other vegetables and fruits, instead of packaged ones.
- If you can't find completely unpackaged produce, choose the least-packaged alternative, and reuse as much packaging as possible.

Green News Brief

Promoting Flavor and Good Health

Locally grown produce is often more nutrient dense and flavorful than its supermarket counterpart for several reasons. Many of our local farms are certified organic and many others use some organic growing methods, like using cover crops to increase nutrient density in the produce or growing pesticide and herbicide free but are not certified because they are not large enough to afford the fees associated with certification.

Local produce is also picked at its peak ripeness, which allows it to achieve its best taste, texture, and nutrition, whereas many mass-produced fruits and vegetables are picked early to ensure they don't spoil before they reach the market. Due in part to monocropping and to this focus on shelf life and yield over taste and nutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has estimated that during the last century about 75% of the genetic diversity of crops worldwide has been lost and livestock has been dying out at a rate of six breeds per month.

Livestock Farming: Small is Beautiful

The way we raise and consume livestock also plays a major role in making our food systems more sustainable and nutritious. Local livestock farmers are often part of a closed-loop and renewable cycle where animals are raised on pasture, their manure is used to help build soil health on their or other local farms, and that soil supports healthy plants which go on to feed livestock or people.

Article continues on the next page...



Photos courtesy Pixabay

Green News Brief

Keeping that cycle going improves the quality of life for the animals and makes for more nutrient-dense meat. Industrial-scale meat production separates the components of that loop, depleting soils of their nutrients on one hand while dealing with excessive animal waste in toxic amounts on the other.

Questions? Ask a Farmer

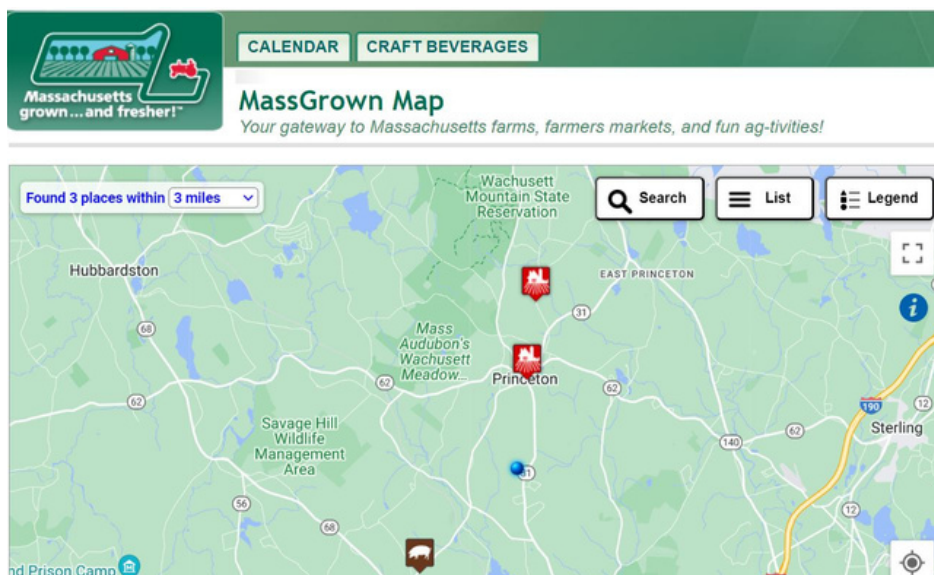
At the end of the day, the best way to learn about how local farming benefits you, your family, your community, and the environment is by asking the farmers themselves. Most farmers would love for you to engage with them, ask questions, and set up an opportunity to see their operations for yourself. To find farms near you, use the [MassGrown Map](#) or reach out to Princeton's Agricultural Commission, who are revitalizing Princeton Farm Day—for the first time since the pandemic—on Sunday, May 21st from noon until 4pm. Come out to meet your local farmers, see local art, and enjoy crafts and activities for the whole family. (See flyer, page 5.)



Courtesy Joey Hersh, Rattle Root Farm

About the Author

EAC member Forrest Iwanik has an educational background in geoscience and currently works in public drinking water filtration. He and his family spend most of their free time exploring the beautiful green spaces of Princeton and he cares deeply about protecting them.



For More Information...

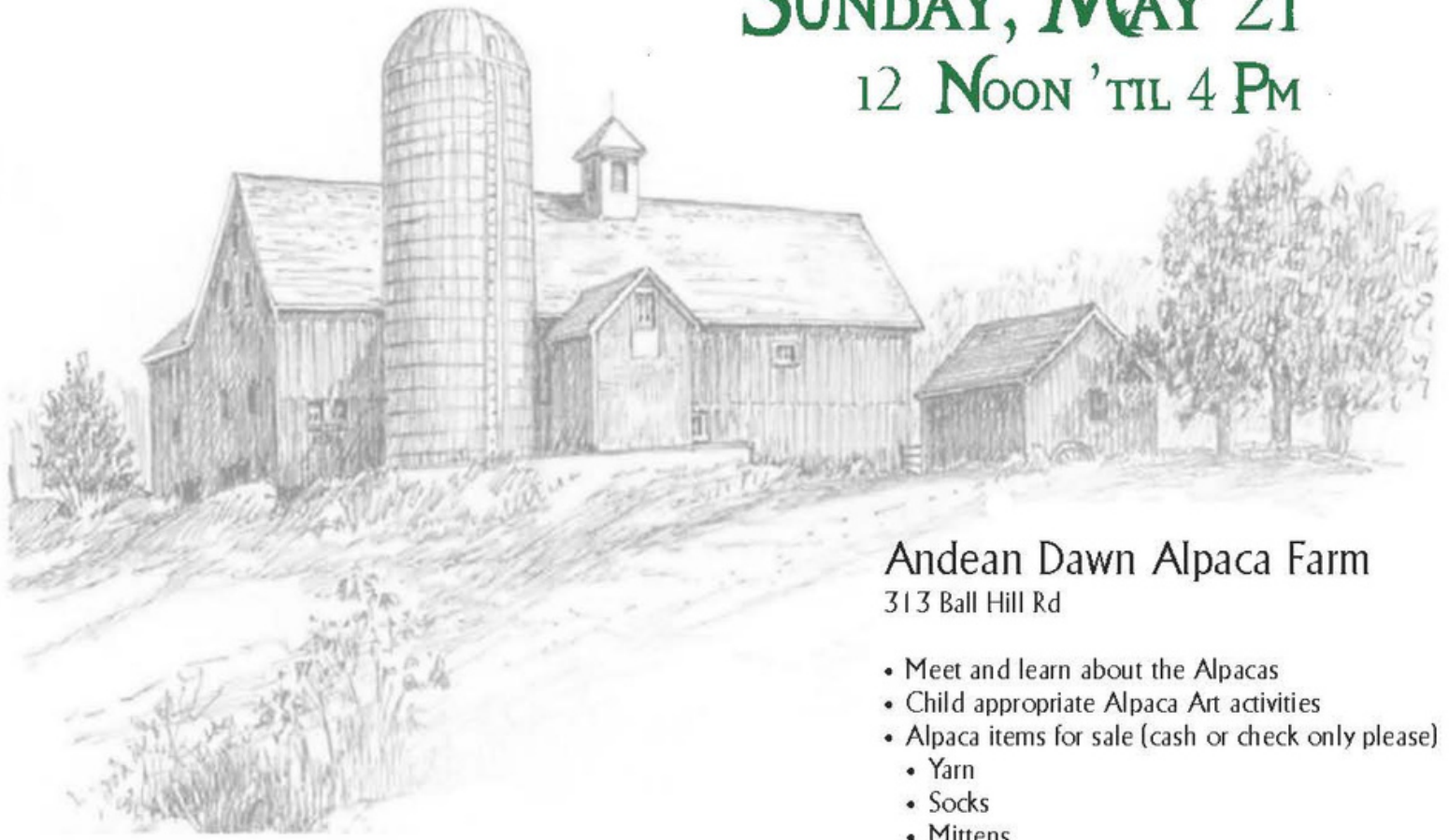
- [Princeton Ag Commission](#)
- [Central Mass Grown](#)
- [Massachusetts Farmers Markets](#)
- [Sterling Farmers Market](#)
- [Westminster Farmers Mkt](#)
- [Holden Farmers Market](#)



PRINCETON FARM DAY

SUNDAY, MAY 21

12 NOON 'TIL 4 PM



Andean Dawn Alpaca Farm

313 Ball Hill Rd

- Meet and learn about the Alpacas
- Child appropriate Alpaca Art activities
- Alpaca items for sale (cash or check only please)
 - Yarn
 - Socks
 - Mittens
 - Children's Activity Book

Rattle Root Farm

89 Mirick Rd

- Tour Princeton's new Community Supported Agriculture Farm
- Build a Bird House
- Pot a Plant

Stimson Farm

207 Thomson Rd

- Hay Maze
- Hay Rides
- Farmer's Carry Challenge
- Sheep Display
- Farm Equipment Display
- 11th Generation Historic Farm Display

Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary

113 Goodnow Rd

- Meet the Sheep
 - Fleece for sale
- Nature Crafts
- Scavenger Hunts
- Story Walk
- Canoeing
- Barn Tours
- Elzire's Acre Goat Milk Soap display
 - Goat Milk Soap for sale