



# Dartmouth Week

## Local farms adjust to keep South Coast fed

Christopher Shea

Apr 26, 2020



The farm stand at Silverbrook Farm on Chase Road. Photos by: Christopher Shea

A couple of local cows pose for a photo.

A greenhouse at Eva's Garden.

Round the Bend Farm. Staff have a ten-page safety protocol

infolinks



Buy 2  
Get 1 FREE

HGTV Home® by Sherwin-Williams paint and Cabot® stain via Lowe's gift card r



With the ongoing coronavirus pandemic wreaking havoc in the Dartmouth farmers have found ways to adapt.

infolinks

Local farmers traditionally sell wholesale to retailers, directly through CSAs. With restaurants closed for dining and farmers

customer numbers for social distancing, many farmers all over town have had to change the way they operate.

Some farms, such as Eva's Garden on Jordan Road, have had to reduce the number of crops. Normally, owner Eva Sommaripa sells a variety of produce to chefs all over New England, but because many restaurants have closed, her farm had to make changes fast.

"At first we had to stop everything," she said. "It was very upsetting, almost all of our entire income came from that."

Immediately, Sommaripa cut back on what her farm was growing. Crops in the ground before the pandemic were donated to Our Sisters' School in New Bedford, which serves economically disadvantaged families. Despite the reduction in crops, the farm has also started growing more popular produce such as chives, rhubarb, and spring garlic.

Eva's Garden also retooled its online ordering platform to accommodate local deliveries and still sells to local restaurants like Little Moss and Farm & Coast Market in Padanaram, as both have implemented take-out options.

For staff, Sommaripa said masks and gloves are required for picking and packing, along with frequent hand washing and sanitizing surfaces and tools.

"Nobody except staff is allowed in buildings or greenhouses, or on the farm when staff are here, except to pick up or deliver orders in a designated outdoor place by appointment," she said.

Similarly, Silverbrook Farm on Chase Road has also seen reduced crop sizes. Normally the farm would be getting ready to bring produce up to spring farmers' markets on Cape Cod and Boston, but those have been canceled, with the fate of summer markets still unknown.

Co-owner Andrew Thornhill said any extra crops will be used either as future compost or to feed the farm's chickens. He would like to donate them, but is waiting for food banks to ease their rules.

In the meantime, Silverbrook farm stand is still operating, and is restocked daily with fresh produce and eggs, with plans to set up grab and go bags to avoid less contamination from people weighing produce.

"There's actually a lot of traffic coming to the stand," Thornhill said. "It's going better than expected."

"The worst thing you can do is panic," he added.

At Round the Bend Farm, Executive Director Desa Van Laarhoven said they are actually growing more produce as part of the farm's "Manifest Love" project.

The project, which began in March, is a collaboration between Round the Bend and New Bedford non-profits YWCA, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, and NorthStar Learning Centers to get food to those who need it.

Van Laarhoven said they started the project to provide food shares free of cost to more than 100 local families directly connected to these organizations. Round the Bend is currently in its fifth week of the program, and has served more than 20 families per week [infolinks](#)

Originally slated to start in June, the project schedule was modified to start providing healthy foods such as kale and peanut butter as soon as possible.

The farm has also put in place a new ten-page protocol for its staff to follow to ensure the safety of all its products.

"We knew this pandemic wasn't going to last just a couple weeks," Van Laarhoven said. "This will be for quite some time."

Most Popular

- **Mishaum Point inspires setting, themes for literary thriller**
- **Seathrift's storied past resurfaces, uncovering tides of history**
- **Patti M. (Reilly) O'Brien, 59**
- **Things to do: Week of July 4**
- **Ann Marie Costa, 69**
- **Red, white and brass: A patriotic picnic that hit all the right notes**
- **Barbara A. (Short) Theberge, 83**
- **Spreading the seeds of food security awareness**
- **Kids slither into knowledge at reptile rendezvous**
- **Opinion: Regarding possible criminalization of homelessness**