

## Northwest Organic Farm Will Be Weekly Vendor at Washougal Main Street Market This Season

For the past nine years, Joyce and Greg Valdivia have been operating Northwest Organic Farm on seven acres in the rolling hills of Ridgefield. Certified organic by Oregon Tilth, Joyce and Greg grow all of their crops using heirloom, organic seeds and this season they will bring their farm fresh crops to the Washougal Main Street Market each week throughout the season, beginning on Saturday, May 23rd.

Joyce and Greg have a complimentary partnership when it comes to working the farm. Joyce hates dirt but loves people! Greg loves the dirt and prefers working in the field over dealing with seed suppliers, customers and produce distributors. The two of them found what each does best and they focus on those talents. Everyday, Joyce is on the front line, happily working with the public. "I am a people person and I love the personal interaction that takes place at the Washougal Main Street Market," says Joyce. "It's a wonderful opportunity for people to meet the farmers who actually grow the food."

Joyce also loves company at their Ridgefield farm. Frequent visitors stop by to purchase farm fresh free range eggs, vegetables and fruit. Joyce greets them with her big smile and warm welcome. In the background, you can hear classical music piped from outdoor speakers which are mounted on the front porch of their large farm house. The sounds of Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky drift over the fields. "The chickens love music and so do my vegetables," says Joyce, with a smile.

When Joyce and Greg began their farming operation, they concentrated on heirloom tomatoes as their main crop. While they now grow a large variety of produce, they are still most proud of their tomato crop whose plants stretch up to the sun, some reaching as tall as eight feet. In addition to direct farm sales and farmers' markets, Joyce and Greg sell their specialty heirloom tomatoes to Zupan's Market, Peoples' Produce, Food Front and Whole Foods on Fremont Street in Portland.

After their first year in the tomato growing business, they added raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, apples and pears. Their large fenced orchard also serves as a gigantic chicken run for their flock of forty plus free range hens. They also focus on garlic production and host the largest garlic festival in the county each year. This year's event will take place at the farm on Saturday, September 19th. Greg's mother comes to the farm from her home in Mexico each July and stays through September to help with the garlic festival and other harvesting chores. "I always look forward to her visits," says Joyce. "Each morning, she makes fresh tortillas. I put butter on mine and they are so good," says Joyce. There is an entire garlic wing attached to one of several outbuildings on the farm. This is where Greg's mother spends most of her time, working from sunrise to sunset.

There is also a special seed room built onto the south side of their farm house. This is a glass enclosed room where seeds are planted each year in early February. There, they are nurtured until outdoor planting time. "This is one of our most important places on the farm so Greg does not allow me in there," says Joyce. After the seed room, trays of delicate, two inch tall vegetable starts are moved to a "hardening-off" green house. Each morning, Greg moves every tray outside and then returns them each night back to the warmth of the small green house. This continues for about a week. Then they are planted outdoors for their final destination. Greg moves another batch of trays from the seed room into the waiting green house where the same "hardening-off" process will take place. Each year, Greg keeps a meticulous diary, logging the dates of various seed plantings, outdoor temperatures, etc. This will serve as valuable information for next year's season.

The biggest challenge for Northwest Organic Farm is keeping up with the weeds and finding good help. Because they are completely organic, no sprays, pesticides or harmful chemicals are used anywhere on the property. Weeds must be eradicated the old fashioned way, by pulling them out by their roots. "We stay small so we can manage this operation," says Joyce. "It's a lot of hard work, but it's also a very good life."

During the months of December and January, Joyce and Greg do a lot of resting. "We spend a few months recovering from the busy growing and harvesting season. In January, I order our seeds," says Joyce.

NW Organic Farm is offering Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares for the first time this season. "We really like the concept of CSAs. To participate, we needed to plant a large variety of vegetables to make our CSA appealing to local consumers," explains Joyce. This year, in addition to their famous heirloom tomatoes and garlic crop, NW Organic Farm will offer sweet peas, spinach, radishes, turnips, onions, kale, chard, arugula, fresh herbs, squash, salad mixes, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, leeks, potatoes, corn and berries. These shares are available for sale at the Washougal Main Street Market beginning on Saturday, May 23rd. Families who participate in the CSA share program will realize a 10% savings in food costs and will be confident they are consuming fresh, locally grown organic produce.

Put simply, CSA is a produce subscription plan whereby members get a share of the vegetables grown during a set season. Typically, that season is about 20 - 30 weeks during the prime growing and harvest period, June through late November. At the Washougal Main Street Market, NW Organic Farm will offer 22 week CSA shares for \$598. Half shares are \$325. Shares will be available for pickup each week at the market in downtown Washougal. NW Organic farm has more information about its CSA program at its Washougal Main Street Market booth or online at [www.NorthwestOrganicFarm.com](http://www.NorthwestOrganicFarm.com).

The Washougal Main Street Market is open every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from May 23 through the end of

September in Washougal's downtown revitalized "Reflection Plaza" located at the corner of Main Street and Pendleton Way. For more information, visit [www.WashougalMainStreetMarket.com](http://www.WashougalMainStreetMarket.com) or contact Market Manager Jordan Boldt at (360) 901-6818 or email at [MainStreetManager@gmail.com](mailto:MainStreetManager@gmail.com). The website offers a complete list of vendors and products along with a schedule of special events throughout the season.