

We, Robin Ostfeld and Lou Johns have been organic vegetable farmers since 1981. We are self-educated, and have experimented with many crops, growing schemes, marketing ideas, and pieces of farming equipment over the years. Well over 100 people have worked for us, and we've learned a little something from each of them. We have 150 acres near Seneca Lake, one of the largest of the Finger Lakes. Ten acres are used for growing a wide variety of vegetables, herbs and strawberries. For over 10 years, we've been using a permanent bed system in all of our fields, with strips of native vegetation between each bed. This enables us to avoid soil compaction, be more accurate in applying soil amendments, and provides habitat for beneficial insects. Although we grow over 40 kinds of vegetables, the main crops are lettuce, spinach, root crops, and bunching greens. We also grow ornamental and vegetable transplants, as well as early tomatoes and greens, in two greenhouses and two unheated hoop-houses.

Marketing is also diverse. We sell at the Ithaca Farmers' Market, about 20 miles away, every Saturday. We sell to two large food co-ops and several restaurants in the local area. In addition, we've developed a winter produce subscription system, delivering boxes of mixed storage vegetables to customers in the Ithaca and Rochester area during January, February and March.

The farm work varies according to the season. In the spring, we're busy with field preparation, seeding and transplanting, (which are mainly done by tractor) and greenhouse work. As the crops grow, there is plenty of weeding, thinning, hoeing, cultivating, and irrigating to do. From late June on, much time is also spent on harvesting, washing, and packing, transporting, and selling the produce.

The work requires the ability to do repetitive tasks quickly and efficiently, a love of the outdoors in all kinds of weather, a strong back and tough knees, an eye for details, and the ability to work well with other people. Although the work is hard and physically tiring, there are many rewards. Every day is different, but every day the results of our efforts are clear. The main results are so important -growing healthy food in a sustainable way, and providing it to local consumers.

We will be hiring 4-5 full time people. Normally everyone works five 8-hour days per week, Tuesday through Saturday, with Sunday and Monday as days off. We try to be as flexible about scheduling as possible. Most people live locally, but we do offer housing on a first come, first served basis. There is a two-bedroom apartment with shared living room, kitchen and bathroom, on the second floor of a small barn. We charge \$160 per month for rent and utilities, which is normally taken from the biweekly paycheck. We are agreeable to exchanging yard work for all or part of the rent. Starting pay is \$7.50 per hour, (more for those with significant farm experience) plus produce for personal consumption, plus a bonus based on total hours, paid at the season's end. Merit-based raises are always a possibility. We need people from around May 1 to November 15, and give priority to those who can stay the whole season.

If you are interested in working here, please contact us to arrange a visit. If you have additional questions, feel free to call or e-mail at (607) 582 6336, bluheron@empacc.net.

