

# Her picnic table roadside market is so successful that little remains for her family



Carol examines one of the "caps" they are experimenting with on the broccoli. She says she is always learning.



While Carol is happiest when she is working outside, she shows plenty of skills in the kitchen. Here she takes a freshly baked cake from the oven.



Most of the weeding is done with this cultivator, but Carol still finds she must pull some weeds by hand.

By SALLY BAIR  
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LANCASTER — "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else," Carol Hottenstein says with conviction. "I love it - we all like it."

Carol is referring fondly to the way of life her family enjoys on their farm at 1900 State Road, Lancaster. She and her husband, John H., and their three children have lived on the farm for seven years, and it is truly a way of life for them.

Carol is a busy farm wife, and for the next several months she'll be busier than most women. Like most farm wives, Carol raises vegetables. Unlike most farm wives she raises them by the acre and sells them by the bushel! Carol has a self-service roadside market in her front yard, and on her little picnic table there will be a wide variety of bounty for anyone who wants fresh - and perfect - produce throughout the vegetable season.

Gardening brings great joy to Carol, and she laughs about how she got started selling vegetables.

"It became my project by accident. I had a few leftover sugar peas at our home along the Harrisburg Pike and I sold them for pin money," she says.

That was 11 years ago, and now she no longer has leftover sugar peas. In fact, she states, "People have wanted to buy everything. I keep selling more and more."

When she was selling her "leftover" sugar peas, she sold mostly wholesale to local stores. However, she says, "The last few years I haven't sold anything wholesale."

Her picnic table is so successful that she has trouble keeping food for her family. "Last year I could have sold everything I grew. I had to say 'no' or we wouldn't have had anything." This year she vows, "I'm making my freezer a priority. I'm prejudiced, but mine tastes so much better than bought vegetables. I really try to see that my freezing gets done. Why should I sell vegetables and not have any for my family?"

To keep the steady supply of produce coming, Carol has expanded some of her

planting, and has added some new crops for sale, including 500 broccoli and cauliflower plants. The variety is wide: green and yellow beans, sugar peas, sweet corn, onions, cabbage, tomatoes, squashes and others. Carrots and red beets are new this year and she says candidly, "I don't know how it will go." Hull peas are offered as pick-your-own.

there. I try to give good measure, and I keep my prices down."

In setting prices, Carol said she calls local markets to find the going rate, and usually sets her prices several cents below the lowest price. She said she feels she can do that because she has no overhead, although customers have told her she

including the children Johnny, 8; Jimmy, 5; and Doug, 2. "The children help - they are often with me. That's what we really like - the fact that we can do it together. We're with them."

Any trampled vegetables? Carol says, "They must learn and must be careful where they walk." When the children tire of helping, they have lots of open space where they can play and still be near their parents as the work is being done.

John helps with the vegetables, and Carol, of course, helps with the field work. On the 68 acres available to them, 45 on their home farm, they raise corn, hay, wheat, oats tobacco and the vegetables. So far, very early in the growing season, Carol has two acres planted. Since she is expanding, the total size could go larger, but she explains that some vegetables will be planted after others are harvested.

Carol grew up on a dairy farm in the Manheim area so she said she feels that spurred her interest and love of farming.

"As the oldest of four children I was always the one to help Dad. We always had a garden too," she states. However, she admits with a laugh that her current love of gardening was not always evident then. "When I was a kid, I would do any other job to get out of picking peas," she laughs.

Carol readily states that she is still learning, and that trial and error accounts for much of her useful experience. Not every crop is successful every year. She said, "I read books and refer to them often, and I talk to friends. People have been very helpful to us in giving advice as we get started." Carol keeps a complete and detailed record of when vegetables are planted and harvested.

Carol says she often rises before the children, works in the garden and then gets breakfast for the family before returning to her work. Last year they managed to do all the work themselves, but she said she may need help this year with the extra vegetables.

To keep the large garden looking good, Carol uses a tractor to cultivate the rows. This takes care of most weeds with an

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How can she be so successful? Carol explains, "I'm fussy with my vegetables. I pick things young, but not too young. I like to sell something that's perfect. People want quality and they want fresh things. When you buy vegetables in a super-market you don't know how long it's been

could charge more because of the freshness and quality."

Another reason she can sell so much produce, Carol surmises, "People are freezing more now and are more conscious of preserving their own food."

Everyone pitches in at the Hottensteins',



Carol enjoys a moment with her 2-year-old son Doug at the kitchen table.

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