



Johnson Farm to Table

Stan Johnson, of Poplar Grove, is no stranger to working in the field. Johnson grew up helping his father in the garden and to this day, he still grows and sells the vegetables he raises on his two acre farm at farmers' markets in Belvidere and Edgebrook.

"Farmers' markets are my social life," Johnson said. "All I live for is to see those people every Week."

Johnson takes pride in raising vegetables that he and his family, and other families across northern Illinois, can enjoy. Johnson's family is involved in the vegetable business as well, with daughter, Julie, and son-in-law, Al, working on the farm and Johnson's grandchildren helping during planting and harvesting.



(Left to Right): Brian Ackerman and Nicole Ackerman

"My grandchildren are really good at the farmers' markets," Johnson said. "They have been helping me for five years. They love the people, they always smile, and the people love them, too. Some of them come up just to see their curly hair," Johnson said.

Besides the common vegetables like tomatoes and peppers, Johnson grows strawberries, basil, garlic, dry onions, asparagus, zucchini, autumn raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, winter squash, carrots, sweet corn, and designer pumpkins and gourds. He also added fruit trees, including apples and pears, to his growing farm.

"When I moved here we tore out an old orchard and now we have a brand new one," Johnson Said.

Johnson also has added high tunnels to his farm to help extend the growing season and allow him to offer vegetables to his customers in the off-season. Additionally, the high tunnels offer better quality produce coupled with higher yields, and protects crops from wind and temperature Swings.

Johnson and his family are dedicated to producing premiere quality vegetables that all families can enjoy. Stan's Gourmet Vegetables can be preordered over the phone at (815) 765-3140 or can be picked up at the Edgebrook Farmers Market or the Belvidere Farmers Market. (Published July 7, 2015)

Update

Since this article was published, Stanley Johnson, at 85 years young (2020), continues to plant and grow for needs today and for the future.

He has now added Double Knock-Out Roses, Peach Trees and Sugar Maples to his ever-changing landscape and has studied and learned about each of these. Additionally, he plants new trees every single year; those will be enjoyed by future generations. He feels strongly about planting more every year. "We did not know 50 years ago about Dutch Elm Disease and how it would affect the trees in our yards. Planting a variety of new trees every year, hopefully, will help new stands of trees survive while others might experience a disease. I encourage everyone to plant trees."

Stanley remains an example of a lifelong learner. In addition to new types of plants, he has also been a beekeeper, and perfecting his baking and cooking skills (he has earned his Food Certification License also).

For many years he enjoyed the larger markets in our region and met some great people along the way; friends that became customers... and customers became friends; a blessing indeed. Family has always been involved; Marilyn (his wife, who passed in September 2014), daughter Julie, son Dave, grandchildren Nicole and Brian, and brother-in-law Steve.

Does he have a wide variety? Yes! He grows garlic, asparagus, rhubarb, carrots, blueberries, pears, beets, kohlrabi, onions, tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, green and yellow beans, summer and winter squash, pumpkins and gourds, blueberries, raspberries, apples, flowers, basil, cilantro and rutabagas on his farm in Boone County. Rutabagas are new to Stanley this year after an amazing meal with family on a trip to New Mexico.

He maintains a small market stand for the 2020 Season at Steve's Automotive located at 321 North State Street in Belvidere, IL. He is there on Saturdays from 9am-12pm; weather

permitting. He will be there through the pumpkin-winter squash season of 2020. (Masks and safe distancing are practiced. Cash accepted; please plan ahead and bring \$10s, \$5s and \$1s.)

Stanley was born a farmer... it is a significant part of who he is. The mechanical engineer in him fits perfectly with the farmer in him. After serving in the United States Navy, working days at Sundstrand Machine Tool, Stanley found himself dedicating most of his free time building his farm with his wife Marilyn, where they raised their family of four. The boy and his farm and the farm and his boy; forever connected. Being closely connected to the land feeds his soul, energy, meals, freezer, pantry (canning) and family. (Updated August 6, 2020 by Chloe Gustafson, WBFB 2020 Intern)