

Farm gives its customers the produce they want

By SARAH KICKLER KELBER
For the Capital Press

Many things have changed since Fordyce Farm opened in 1959, but one has remained constant: strawberries.

They started with 6 acres of strawberries each year, some of them set aside for "U-pick" starting in the mid-1970s.

"In the '70s, my father decided to dedicate more of the strawberries to U-Pick," said owner and operator Raymond Fordyce. "He put me in charge of that when I was 9. So I've been doing the same job for almost 40 years, and I'm not yet 50."

Not everything has remained the same, however.

Fordyce said his father was "a standard farmer, growing for canneries and seed companies and so on."

But he considers himself a "retail farmer."

"I sell direct to the public, not to wholesalers, but to customers," he said.

He's developed this philosophy by following those customers' lead.

"First, they wanted strawberries. Then blueberries. And they certainly want raspberries even though raspberries don't grow well here," Fordyce said. "Then, as some of our customers grew older, they wanted already picked fruit, so we needed a fridge."

In 2005, they built the store that sits on Sunnyview Road, open May through Oc-



Photos by Sarah Kickler Kelber/For the Capital Press
Raymond, left, and Graham Fordyce of Fordyce Farms east of Salem, Ore.

tober. Fordyce bakes as well, and a kitchen was added in 2010. The farm's baked goods are available at the Salem Saturday Market year-round and at the store when it's open for the season.

Following the customer has also meant many changes to the farm's crops.

"The problem with large-scale agriculture is that you've got to sell a lot of it," Fordyce said. "I can afford to grow small quantities because I sell direct."

Alongside their tomatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, beans, apples, plums, strawberries and other produce, you can also find black currants and sweet gooseberries.

"Black currants are uniquely horrible tasting," Fordyce

said. "But they sell like crazy to our Russian customers who turn them into juice, which, as it turns out, is uniquely delicious."

"We grow lots and lots of other things now," he said. "The store makes it possible to sell small quantities."

Graham Fordyce, Raymond's eldest son, manages the store, as well as helping with the harvest and everything in between.

"Almost all the berries we harvest are sold through the store and U-Pick," he said, "but about half the blueberries go to the Willamette Valley

Fruit Company."

They've been adding more foods to sell to customers at the store, such as grilled sausages and milkshakes made



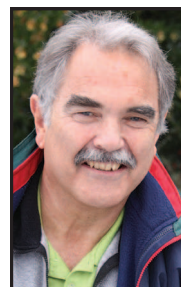
Triple Crown Blackberry vines are trimmed back for the winter at Fordyce Farms.

with fresh berries. They've also added nursery stock to the list of things they're selling, and opened up their display garden to events such as weddings.

"We also have a pumpkin patch and corn maze in the fall," added Graham, noting

that this will be the farm's 14th year offering those attractions.

But, Raymond Fordyce noted, "strawberries are the most important because people eat more strawberries than any other kind of fruit that we grow."



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Fordyce Farm

Owners: Raymond and Annette Fordyce

Where: 7023 Sunnyview Road NE, Salem, Oregon

Contact: (503) 362-5105

Online: www.fordycefarm.com, on Instagram @fordycefarm

Crops: strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, tomatoes, pumpkins, corn and more

Farming since: 1959

Acres: 60

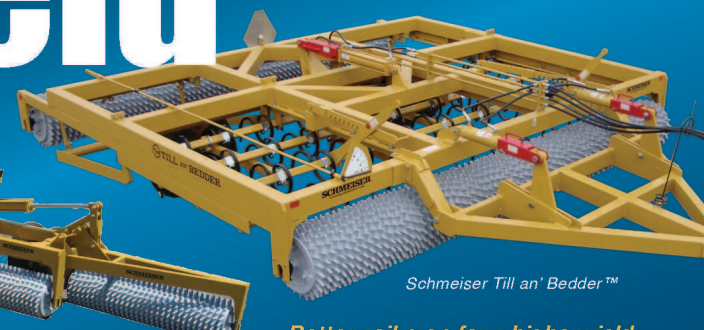
Available: At farm store starting May-October and at Salem Saturday Market November-May

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