

Harvest Queen Farms Florida, NY Alex Kocot III



The beginning of the Kocot Farm dates back to between 1917 and 1920. Alexander Kocot I, Alex's great-grandfather, was a Polish immigrant who came to America with a lot of ambition and a dream. He worked many long, hard days for other farmers in the area until he saved enough money to purchase five acres of black dirt, which he cleared by hand with a horse and an axe. He also dug drainage ditches by hand, which today are dug and cleared with specialized ditching equipment. He continued to farm these five acres until he saved enough, once again, to purchase another five acres, which he also cleared and ditched without the help of any mechanized equipment.

In 1920, he acquired the original homestead, located on Big Island Road on twenty-five acres of upland soil. The property consisted of a two-story farm house as well as three barns. As time went by, the farm was handed down to his son, Stanley Kocot. Stanley added another five 5.5 acres to the family farm. In the early 1950's, Stanley's son, Alexander Kocot II, basically took over the farming operation at which point the acreage grew from 15.5 acres to 45 acres. By the mid 1970's, the acreage had then grown to 75 acres, then increasing to 90 in the early 1980's.

Alex II's son, Alexander Kocot III, graduated high school in 1980 and began farming full time with his father. He formed his own company, Harvest Queen Farms Ltd. in 1983. The name was chosen because Alex's sister, LoriAnn, had been crowned Onion Harvest Festival Queen that same year. Since then, the farm has continued to grow. Alex had continued to improve the operation through the 1980's along with his father. With the untimely death of his father in 1987, the entire farm was then passed on to Alex. Since then, major changes have come about.

In 1990, the harvesting process had gone from "small container" (80lbs. crates filled out in the field) to "bulk harvesting" in which the harvester directly fills a light tandem axle dump truck which then transports the onions to the warehouse to be dried and packaged. In 1993, an eight-row precision planter, built by Alex himself, was added to the list of equipment to be used. In 1995, an additional 325 acre tract was purchased which included 165 acres of tillable land and 160 acres of uncleared land. More recently, an eight-row onion harvester was also purchased.

Alex works hard to meet the growing challenges by nurturing his crop in a very detailed and scientific manner. His attention to detail to his land, onions and workers he hopes will be repaid at harvest time. So far, this formula has worked well for Alex and he continues to manage even what most would consider the tiniest of matters himself.

Shuback Farms
Goshen, NY
Sod Growers of Pine Island



Orange County is home to eight sod growers. One of these growers is Mickey Shuback of Shuback Farms, Inc. Mickey was born and raised here. His grandfathers began farming vegetables here in the 1890's.

Mickey Shuback started his Florida farm in 1958 just after he graduated from Cornell University. He began with 15 acres of onions. His business was a partnership in the beginning, but the partnership dissolved over time. Through the intervening years, Mickey purchased more land and leased additional parcels. He and his sons Thomas and Kevin now farm over 950 acres of black dirt. Approximately 400 acres are leased land. Mickey transferred ownership of the farm to his sons in 1995, but he still works side by side with them.

The Shubacks began growing sod in 1969. Currently, 850 acres are in sod production. The remaining acreage consists of 8 acres of onions, 50 acres of pumpkins, and a few acres of Indian corn. Mickey grows the novelty crops primarily at the request of some garden centers that purchase sod. This also allows him to practice some crop rotation.

In addition to garden centers, landscape contractors and builders make up the majority of their sod customers. Approximately 80% of their business comes from referrals. With a steady base of repeat customers, they no longer retain a salesman or invest in much advertising. Shuback Farms is primarily a wholesale sod operation, but occasionally a homeowner will show up at the farm to buy sod. Sod cutting begins early in the morning (3:00 AM) to fill orders for shipping that day. Shubacks cut an average of 1 1/2 acres of sod per day, with 2-3 acres being cut daily during their busy season. Because it is cut in large quantities as it is sold, it is not feasible for them to run a walk in retail operation at the sod farm. Some garden centers will purchase extra pallets of sod to keep on hand for those homeowners looking to purchase small quantities. They usually have an area where they roll out the sod and keep it watered.

The Shubacks have 18 employees. Twelve of them work 8-9 months of the year, and 6 are year-round. Housing is provided for the workers at no cost. The migrant workers usually arrive in March and work through December.

When asked about the challenges of the sod business, Mickey said that both weather conditions and financial management were concerns. Financially, sod growers must deal with collecting from buyers and establishing lines of credit for customers. Equipment costs are also a concern. Mickey summed it up "When I started farming, there were around 700 vegetable farmers, now there are around 60 with about 40 being full-time. There are fewer, but bigger operations. High equipment costs make it too expensive for small operations to afford large pieces of equipment."

Old Field Farm
Goshen, NY
John and Debbie Corr



Old Field Farm is exactly that, the Old Field of Indian Summer farm. The Corr Family established their Horse farm in 1991. The field was the Old back field of Debbie's family farm, Indian Summer Farm, used for hay and riding.

The Farm is 37 acres and has 15 horses on it today. The Farm is located in Goshen and has 400 hundred feet of its' drive way in the town of Hamptonburgh. On the Farm there are horse trails, two barns, one with an indoor riding arena, an outdoor riding arena, and a cross country course. The farm has trails that are used by the Mid-Hudson Horse Trails Association. This farm is connected to two other farms by an old privately owned Rail bed; Wells Ridge Angus Farm owned by The Sueneholtz and Stone Lonesome Farm.

Old Field Farm is a Sport Horse breeding Farm, a boarding farm and riding facility. We also offer special foaling for people who do not really want to take care of this aspect of breeding by themselves. Debbie Corr has a great deal of experience in imprinting foals and working with the youngsters. The Corr family and Debbie's family both have extensive backgrounds in Hunters and Jumpers. John's two sisters Colleen and Jean, and Debbie's sister Mara Deutsch, were lucky enough to qualify and show in Madison Square Garden. John and Debbie's Children have followed in the path of their aunts showing and training Hunters. Lindsey who is 15 is sure to go to the Garden.

Old Field Farm is also home to the Corr Family, John and Debra Corr, and their five children: Jessica 21, Sean 17, Lindsey 15, Tara 10 & Robert 7. Sean can be seen on Saturday night as a regular in the Pure stock division at the Orange County Speedway, look for # 8.

John Corr is the Owner Trans Group a family-run school bus business, which is a group of 10 different companies throughout New York.

Debbie Corr is very vocal in the community as the President of the Mid-Hudson Horse Trails Association, Inc. and is the community relations Chairperson for the Orange County Horse Council.

**Techni-Growers Greenhouses
Warwick, NY
Deborah and Michael Sweeton**



Deborah and her husband Michael Sweeton grew up in Orange County. Deborah and her parents started Techni-Growers Greenhouses in 1976. The business was originally located in Amity, NY. In 1981, it was moved to the current location. Techni-Growers is a wholesale greenhouse business. In 1985 Deborah and Michael opened their retail garden center- The General's Garden at the same location. Deborah quickly moved from Sales Manager to Production Manager/President. Michael became Vice President of Operations.

Currently, the wholesale and retail operations account for equal portions of their business, but the Sweeton's plan to move away from wholesale to a 100% retail business. Competition is stiff in the Northeast, and it is difficult to make enough profit in the wholesale business. Production costs are high due to a number of factors such as energy costs. The retail garden center has become more profitable for the Sweetons because their profit margin is higher. They can charge retail prices which are competitive with other local retail operations.

Currently, Techni-Growers greenhouses grow a wide variety of plants-over 500 cultivated varieties of perennials, 300 to 400 cultivated varieties of annuals, and 300 to 400 foliage plants. There are two websites, one for the store, and one for the mail-order business. They employ 6 full-time year round employees and 4 part-time seasonal employees.

Deborah has been an active participant in Cornell Cooperative Extension's Integrated Pest Management Program. She has served as chairperson and vice chairperson of the Agriculture Program Committee as well as on the Board of Directors and Finance Committee at Cornell Cooperative Extension. She is currently a member of the Cornell University Greenhouse Advisory Committee. She is also a member of the NYS Nursery & Landscape Association, the Perennial Plant Association, the Orange County Greenhouse Growers Association, the Ohio Floriculture Association, and the New York State Flower Industries.

Bellvale Farms
Warwick, NY
Al and Judy Buckbee



Al and Judy Buckbee have owned the farm since 1971. Part of the farm has been in their family since 1819. Their son Albert Buckbee III (Skip) and daughter Amy are the 6th generation involved in the farm operation. Amy and her husband Tim Noteboom have joined the operation and have two children, Jasmine and William. This farm is more than a dairy; they are diversifying with a farm stand selling local fresh vegetables, fruits and pick your own pumpkins and they are developing plans to produce and market cheese and ice cream.

Bellvale Dairy Farm consists of 55 registered Holstein cows in their milking herd and they raise 60 heifers for replacements. Their milking cattle are housed in a 48-stall barn and are milked two times daily with 4 Bou-Matic units. Their dairy herd average is 21,000 lbs. of milk per cow per year (approx. 2600 gallons) at 4.0% butterfat. It is one of Orange County's top producing herds. The farm is made up of 460 acres of which 275 acres are tillable, 65 acres are planted to corn, 100 acres of alfalfa and 110 acres of grass. Approximately 10,000 bales of dry hay are produced for their own use and for sale.

Since the original purchase in 1971 of 225 acres, the Buckbee's have made five additional land purchases totaling 460 acres. In 1998, they participated in the NYS Purchase of Development Rights Program for 330 acres of their farm.

The Buckbee family actively participates in community affairs. Judy is a former member and Chairman of the Town of Warwick Planning Board. Al is Director and Chairman of Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District and a member of the Orange County Farm Land Protection Board. Skip is a trustee of the Orange County Land Trust. Tim serves as a member of the Town of Warwick Agricultural Advisory Board.

**E.P. Jansen Nursery
Florida, NY
Jan and Liz Jansen**



The nursery is a proprietorship, founded by Elizabeth (Liz) and Jan in 1972. The business is located on what was a farm owned by Cornelius Alders, Liz's father. Since 1942, the farm has seen a lot of change as economic realities dictated a steady evolvement from pigs to chickens to gladiolus, delphiniums and cut flowers to chrysanthemums.

The first crop grown by E.P. Jansen Nursery was field grown chrysanthemums which were dug and sold to retail garden centers and farm stands in the fall. After 2 years, field production was abandoned in favor of container production. Other plant lines were added over the years. As the plant product line expanded, there were constant requests for other landscape plants and products, bought in and finished on site or bought and sold immediately. Around 1980, chrysanthemums were discontinued and garden roses were bought bare-root, planted, finished and sold to garden centers. During this time, the wholesale nursery continued to develop. What you see today is a full-service wholesale nursery yard which is set up to provide all the supplies and plants needed to complete a landscaping project or re-stock a garden center.

The customer base consists of landscape contractors, lawn maintenance companies, golf course managers, builders, municipalities, local, State and Federal agencies. The facility is still run by Liz (office and books), Jan (Owner and General Manager), son Ben (Nursery Manager), and son Scott (Hardscape Manager). There are another 11 employees currently employed in the operation.

In addition, Jan is president of Tri-County Nursery/Landscape Association, past president of the New York State Nursery / Landscape Association and N.Y.S. Governor to The American Nursery/Landscape Association.

S&SO Produce
Goshen, NY
Stanley Oszczepinski

Stanley Oszczepinski and his father, Stanley are owner/operators, along with several family members, of this 250 acre mixed vegetable farm. Stanley's Grandfather, on his father's side, came to America and started farming in the early 1900s. After high school graduation, Stanley started farming onions full-time in 1964 on the Pawliczek Farm of his mother's family. In 1976, he started growing other vegetables (lettuce, parsley and other herbs) as one of the first farmers in the NYC Council on the Environment's "Greenmarket" Program.

Today S&SO Produce farms over 100 different varieties of vegetables on 250 acres, some of which is rented. That equates to almost 500 acres farmed since many of the fields are double or triple cropped. They service 6 markets in the Metropolitan area as well as do some wholesale business. S&SO hires 28 seasonal employees, mostly Mexican and 5 year-round employees. Those employees, plus a few others who man the markets, are the workforce for S&SO produce.

Roe's Orchards
Chester, NY
Mark, Carol & Tom Roe



The Roe farm has been in their family since it was purchased by Mark's great, great uncle in 1827. Originally the farm consisted of a few cows and a few apple trees like many of the other farms of that time period. Over the years, the farm transitioned from focusing on dairy to being mainly a fruit operation with some poultry, but by the 1950's the farm was focused solely on fruit.

In the 1960's, the Roes saw the need to enter the retail market and opened up their farm stand. They began growing a variety of vegetables and added a cider mill to their farm. As the popularity of their store increased, their farm switched from being focused on wholesale market to the retail market such that their retail business now accounts for approximately 75% of sales on their farm. The other 25% is wholesale in fruit and fresh cider.

Roe's Orchards is based on 240 acres with 60 acres in orchards and about 60 acres in vegetables. The remaining 120 acres are in pasture and hayfields. They try to provide a wide variety of basic produce items and often add other locally grown items such as onions, potatoes, carrots and berries.

The farm is owned and operated by Mark, Carol and oldest son Tom Roe. Steven Roe, Mark & Carol's younger son, runs greenhouses on the farm providing bedding plants, hanging baskets and geraniums for sale in the spring months. By August 1st, the stand opens with produce and fruit and stays open through February. Cathy Roe Pietrzak, their daughter, operates a bakery on site specializing in homemade apple pies and donuts.

Pawelski Farms
Goshen, NY
Chris and Eve Pawelski

Pawelski Farms has been in existence for almost 100 years. In 1903 Chris's great-grandfather Frank came over from Poland and purchased a dairy farm, the barn of which still stands across the road from their farm. Initially Frank only had milking cows, but at some point he added onions. Eventually the milking cows were sold and when the farm passed to Chris's grandfather John, onions, lettuce and carrots were being grown on approximately 20 acres. At that time farm work was done by hand and share cropping was a common practice. John was one of the first people in the valley to use a riding tractor on the black dirt. Following the path of mechanization, the farm became increasingly focused on onions and by the time the farm passed to Chris's father Richard it was the sole crop and has continued to be so. The farm has expanded in size over the years but this has been only to keep up with increasing costs, as prices have remained virtually stagnant. Farmers who did not or could not increase their acreage have long since gone out of business.

With the aim of making the public aware of the needs and challenges facing farmers, Pawelski Farms has appeared in *The Times Herald Record*, *Cable 6 News*, *RNN*, *WALL Radio*, *WTBQ Radio*, *The Warwick Advertiser*, *The Warwick Valley Dispatch*, NY Farm Bureau's *The Voice of New York Agriculture*, *Farm Journal* magazine, as well as a cover story in *American Vegetable Grower* magazine, *CBS Evening News* and *CNN*. They also appeared in a feature story in *Successful Farming* magazine.

Dagele Brothers Produce Co.
Florida, NY
Frank, Robert & Randal Dagele

Dagele Farms was started in 1919 by their grandparents, John and Josephine Dagele, as a 40-acre muckland and 10 acre dairy operation. Dagele Bros. Produce, as it is known today, has evolved into a 400 acre diversified vegetable operation that is operated by Frank, Robert and Randal Dagele. The crops grown on the farm today are 180 acres of cooking onions, 125 acres of salad greens, 40 acres of pumpkins and winter squash, and 20 acres of different vegetables that range from artichokes to zucchini. The large acreage crops are marketed through the conventional brokerage system, while the smaller crops are marketed through local produce stands and farmers markets. They would like to increase the diversification of crops and markets, but many different crops need many hands and agricultural workers are in short supply in Orange County.