

## Growing interest in new Farmers' Market

Diversity, freshness, quality... and a reduction in both transportation costs, and the emissions released into the atmosphere by transport trucks.

Those are just some of the benefits of "Buying Local" – choosing locally-grown produce over

products shipped in from sources that, these days, can include California, Mexico, and China. In fact, from a nutritional and economic standpoint, buying local just makes sense, as an increasing number of consumers have come to realize.

In Bradford West

Gwillimbury, right in the heart of Ontario's Vegetable Basket, where Holland Marsh growers produce everything from carrots and onions to bok choy and organic wheat grass sprouts, consumers have long complained that they have trouble finding

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locally-grown produce in grocery stores.

That's one reason why the Holland Marsh Greenbelt Association, and

entrepreneur Iggy Natoli of Buncha Farmers, have worked with the Town to establish a new Farmers' Market this summer. Located in a parking lot at the northwest corner of Holland St. and Barrie St., the Farmers' Market will be open every Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will feature locally-grown produce and hand-made products.

For the Grand Opening, July 18th, there were berries and jams from Brooks Farm in Mt. Albert, Marsh-grown vegetables from Springh Farms, KIBO hand-made soaps by Kim Boland of Aurora, European smoked meats, pretzels and breads from Palgrave, honey from Schomberg, flowers from Mid Valley Gardens on Hanemaayer Lane, Finch Haven Orchards' apples and apple cider, baked treats from Buncha Farmers in Queensville. Every booth was booked - in fact, said organizer Natoli, "We're full. We have a waiting list." - with all of the items produced or grown within 100 km. of Bradford.

Shoppers started to arrive even before the market was fully set up at 10 a.m. – snapping up radishes the size of apples, purple bulb onions, Swiss chard and fresh carrots. After only an hour and a half, Peter Singh, of Springh Farms had to make another trip back to the Marsh, to pick and wash more produce for the Market – from farm to consumer in under an hour.

On hand to help cut the ribbon and officially open the Farmers' Market were Councillors Ron Simpson and John McCallum, Mayor Doug White, and Manager of Economic Development, Mike Disano, who has worked closely with the Holland Marsh Greenbelt Association to find a location for the Market.

The close co-operation between Town and Association won praise from Bradford Board of Trade president, Martha Marton. "I think they're beginning to understand how important this industry (agriculture) is to our community. We should support our local businesses," she said.

And Mayor White, welcoming the crowd to the Opening, noted, "They call the Holland Marsh the Salad Bowl of Canada, so it makes sense to have a Farmers' Market."

Free coffee from One Red Chair, a free BBQ, face-painting and coloring contests for the kids, live music by guitarist Declan Hamilton-Browne, were all part of the opening, making it an "event" that attracted both residents and motorists just passing through, for a taste of the Holland Marsh.

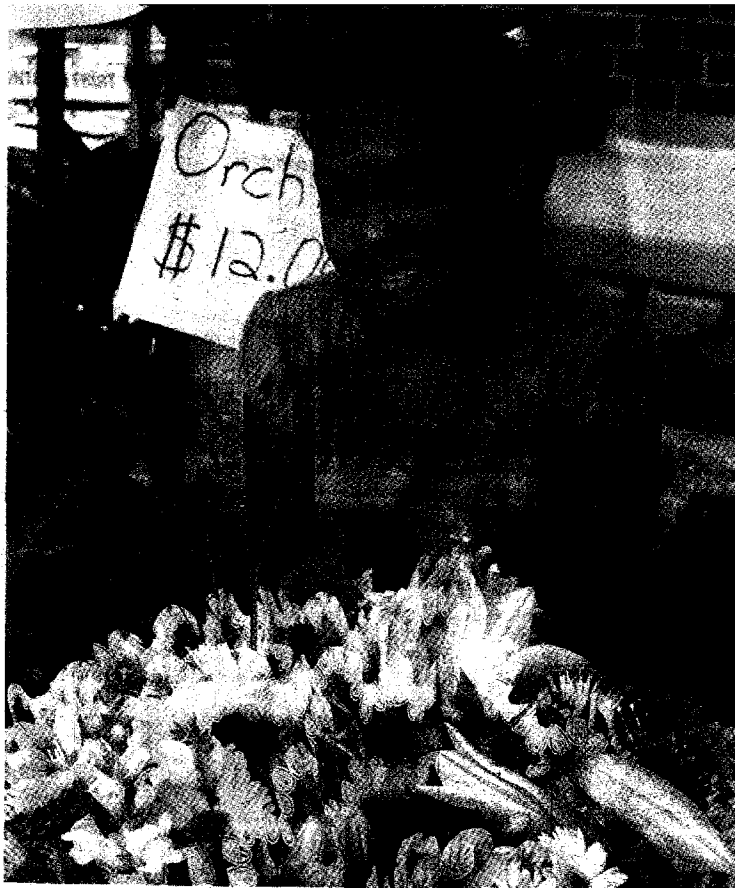


Above: Phylcia Chan with fresh produce from Springh Farms. Top: Zach buys tomato plant, at Market.





From left, Councillor Ron Simpson, Economic Development Mgr. Michael Disano, Iggy Natoli, Mayor Doug White, Holland Marsh Greenbelt Assoc. members Laura Young and Caroline Weatherhead, Councillor John McCallum at opening of Farmers' Market.



Teresa, 12, with cut flowers from Mid Valley Gardens in the Holland Marsh, at the new Holland Marsh Farmers' Market in Bradford, July 18. For more photos, see page 10.