



**Down to Earth:
Reports from the field**

Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program (ISFOP): West Central Region

So Many Farmers' Markets: How To Choose

by Katie Nixon

Farmers' markets are one of many venues for selling produce, meat and value-added products. Selling at farmers' markets can be challenging and is not for everyone. However, many growers who choose this avenue for selling find it rewarding. Deciding which market you want to sell at can be challenging as well, especially with so many markets to choose from. Within our program's seven-county region, there are over 35 farmers' markets. You can also look outside this seven-county area and find countless other farmers' markets.

How much time do you have to market? You will need to balance your time between production and marketing. There is a farmers' market for nearly every day of the week. Some growers will spend multiple days selling at markets, but unless you are a big operator, you will most likely not spend any more than two days at the market. Some farmers' markets operate two days a week, but most are once a week. We at ISFOP have a farmers' market spreadsheet with locations, contact information, and the days and time of operation. If you would like a copy of this, please let one of us know and

(continued on page 3)

County	# Farmers Markets	Days operating
Cass	3	Sat., Wed., Thurs.
Johnson	2	Sat., Wed.
Lafayette	4	Sat., Tues., Wed., Thurs.
Ray	2	Sat., Thurs.
Clay	6	Sat., Wed., Thurs., Fri.
Platte	3	Sat., Tues., Wed.
Jackson	19+	Sat., Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sun.

In The Spotlight: Peas On Earth

Urban intensive farming in Kansas City

'Peas changed my life' was Tasha Karsk and Julie Coon's slogan last year, their first in an urban farming venture. Peas on Earth, Karsk and Coon's farm, is located in the Westside neighborhood in the heart of Kansas City, Missouri. What was once a vacant lot now flourishes with a variety of herbs, greens and vegetables. In its first year of production, Peas on Earth has sold to five restaurants and had many customers who purchased produce directly from the farm.

So how does one get inspired to start a farming venture in the city? These two ladies were laying around in hammocks on a warm Spring day in 2010 brainstorming meaningful projects they could take on. They got inspired by the idea of expanding the lot Coon had started a small garden on, just down the street. At the time, Coon was just growing food for her own consumption. With plenty of room to expand, they got growing!

The two of them brought important complimentary skills to their venture. In 2006, Coon went through the Growing Growers

(continued on page 3)

Inside this issue:

	Page
Farmers' Markets	1 & 3
Peas On Earth	1 & 3
Meet an ISFOP Staff member	2
Mamma's Edamame, LLC	2
Events	3
IPM Corner	4
Contact Information	4

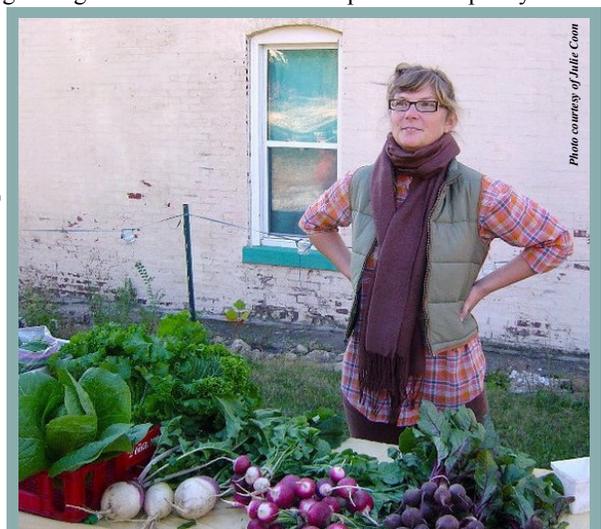


Photo courtesy of Julie Coon

Julie Coon, co-owner of Peas On Earth

Mamma's Edamame: A fun-to-eat healthy snack

by Janet Hurst

Call it a bean, call it a snack or just call it delicious. Edamame is all that and more. If you are not familiar with this innovative snack, you may be surprised to know edamame is an edible soybean. Whole pods are blanched, salted and then popped out of the pod right in your mouth. According to Monica Goodin of Charleston, Missouri, edamame is a favorite with children and adults. To promote healthy snacking, Goodin has led an effort to make this a popular food in Missouri. Edamame is well-known in Japan and could be considered that country's national snack food.

Goodin says, "I'm a stay at home mom with four children. One night, my husband and I went out to a restaurant we like in Cape Girardeau. We met the chef there and started talking. We told him about our farm and mentioned we raised [traditional] soybeans. He immediately responded that we should grow edamame. We enjoyed the conversation but passed it off as an offhand comment and didn't give it much thought. However, about a year later, I was having lunch with my husband at a sushi bar and we started eating those green pea-like vegetables. They were delicious. It dawned on me that this is what the chef had been talking to us about. I came home and did some research and that was the beginning of Mamma's Edamame!"

Monica's husband is a sixth generation farmer so growing soybeans is not a new venture to this family. However, his equipment is sized for large-scale production, so there has been a huge learning curve for the couple. Scaling down equipment, figuring out how to harvest the pods, and learning what types of soybeans would grow best in

Missouri's climate have all been a part of their education. Growing the edamame without chemicals or weeding, and harvesting by hand has brought a whole new meaning to the word 'homegrown'. "We are one of the few farms in the United States attempting to grow these types of beans. There isn't a lot of information available and, in fact, universities are now coming to us to learn," Goodin explains.

After learning how to grow the beans, the next step was to introduce them to people and get them to taste edamame for the first time. Goodin says, "I've done tastings and parties by taking huge bowls of edamame and showing people how to prepare it and pop it out of the pod. These party settings made the connection and were the beginning of our market. Edamame is great with beer and is often served in place of peanuts at high-end bars. Japanese people also enjoy it at ballgames."

The next step was to hit the farmers' markets. Monica began participating in the weekly farmers' markets and would sell out every time. She also worked through Sappington Farmers Market and other St. Louis venues, providing samples and educating consumers about the nutrient

value of this vegetable. The beans are low in fat and sodium, high in protein and cholesterol-free. Best of all, they taste great and children love them. Monica is very popular with her children's friends. The Goodins didn't name the business

'Mamma's Edamame' for no reason. Goodin went to area schools and provided taste tests for children at lunchtime. The children love edamame! "My children help me in the business, pulling weeds, picking and sorting. I could not do it without them. They are learning how to run a business, through first-hand experience."

Goodin received a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

Farmer/Rancher grant last year to assist with her research efforts. She states that she still has a lot to learn. Last year, after planting two acres, she is slowing down a bit in order to research and learn more. The plants yield roughly 3-4 pounds per plant, so the labor involved in picking is monumental. "There is specialized equipment available but we have to look and see where we want to go with this. We are happy to share information with others who are interested in attempting to grow this unusual crop."

Look for Mamma's Edamame, LLC on Facebook.



Monica Goodin, Charleston, Missouri

Meet ISFOP Staff member: Jim Pierce



Jim Pierce at a farmers' market

Jim Pierce came on board in November of 2009 as a Farm Outreach Worker (FOW) for ISFOP. Pierce started his agriculture education during his youth, growing up in a small town and riding a bicycle to work on surrounding farms. The farm operations ranged from cow/calf to Christmas tree farms to orchards. In his mid-30's, Pierce went to Northwest Missouri State University for more formal training in growing fruits and vegetables, and came away with a Bachelor of Science degree.

While attending college, he started growing a wide variety of vegetables and plants for local farmers' markets and has been growing these for over 15 years now. It was at the farmers'

market where he gained an understanding of how to market his products in an effective way. He has used his experience and education in the greenhouse to grow herbs and vegetables for retail.

Pierce's experience includes many successes as well as failures in starting his own business and growing different crops. He is always happy to help any small farmer overcome challenges in growing and marketing crops. Clay and Platte County small farmers will benefit from his expertise and experience. He can be reached at PierceJ@LincolnU.edu or by phone at (660) 352-6182.



Peas On Earth urban farm

Peas On Earth *(continued from page 1)*

Their complimentary academic backgrounds and practical farm experience make a great recipe for success.

Karsk and Coon have been surprised at how well they have been accepted by the community. People in the area are proud to have them there, especially the restaurants two blocks away that they sell to and who get the freshest food possible to serve to their customers. During the growing season you will see that Peas On Earth produce is featured on the menu's of Blue Bird Bistro, Westside Local, Füd and several other restaurants in Kansas City.

"I went into this project thinking it was only Julie and I that would be growing our dreams and hopes, but quickly realized that our farm doesn't just belong to us," says Karsk about the farm and the way the community has embraced them. Peas On Earth was so happy with their first

year of production that they are expanding this year. Coon's long-term goal is for the farm to be her primary source of income. To make this happen, more space is needed and that is exactly what they found. In addition to the lot they now farm on, Peas On Earth is expanding to three more city lots, all within a half mile of their present location. They are also starting a weekly farm stand at their original, main location at 19th and Summit Street.

When asked what advice they would like to share with other beginning farmers, they simply said, "Go for it!"

"There is no place we would rather be on a sunny, spring day, a rainy afternoon, or even in the heat of summer. It's incredibly rewarding to supply our community with the nutritious fruits of our labor," says Coon.

(www.growinggrowers.org) apprenticeship program, which trains new and potential farmers in the Kansas City area on the skills needed for a successful farm operation. "It was invaluable," said Coon. Karsk's degree in business brings the skills needed to run a successful farm business. They are also hard workers and active seekers of new ideas and knowledge that will help them produce better food for their customers, and better yields for the farm.

Farmers' Markets *(continued from page 1)*

we will send it to you. You can also look on the Agri-Missouri website (<http://agebb.missouri.edu/fmkt/dir/view.htm>) where the farmers' markets are listed by county. However, there are a couple of farmers' markets that are not listed on this website.

How far are you willing to drive? As gas prices go up, this is becoming more of a relevant question. If it costs you \$70.00 in gas to get to market, that is going to affect the profits you take home on market day. It is also very important that you factor in your time at market. Remember, you need to get paid too! Factor in your hourly wage when figuring out how far you are willing to drive.

There are more questions you need to ask in order to make a good decision on which market to go to, but to get answers you will need to do your homework. Call the contacts or market managers of the markets you are interested in and ask them about their market. Here are some pertinent questions to ask:

- *Is the farmers' market licensed and insured?*
- *How much does it cost to have a vending space?*

- *Is there a contract?*
- *Does the market have rules or by-laws? If so, how are they enforced?* Most markets have a set of rules. For example, maybe vendors can only sell things they produce (or only local products can be sold). It is good to know if these rules are in place and enforced.
- *How many customers do they get at the market?* If it is multiple days ask them about each day separately.
- *How do they advertise the market to get new customers?*
- *Are they able to do electronic sales of any kind?* Some markets have debit and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) card machines. This can increase customer spending at a market.
- *Do they have a covered area or will you need to bring a tent?*
- *If you need electricity make sure they have it.*

Finding a good market is important, but if you have an unattractive stand, it won't matter how good the market is or not. In order to be successful in this venue, you need to have fairly good customer service skills and be able to sell not only your produce, but yourself, too. At most farmers'

markets there are at least five other vendors that are possibly selling the same kinds of produce as you. What will make your booth stand out and draw customers to it? Let us know if we can help you in anyway.

Upcoming Events

- **Growing Growers Workshops:** Throughout the year targeted towards vegetable growers. Call (816) 305-0362 or visit www.growinggrowers.org.
- **Chestnut Grafting:** May 3, 2011. Center for Agroforestry. Columbia, Missouri. Call (573) 884-1448.
- **Elderberry Production:** June 9-10, 2011. Hartsburg, Missouri. Call (573) 999-3034.
- **Kansas City Community Gardens:** Learn growing skills every Friday during lunchtime 12 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Kansas City, Missouri. Call (816) 931-3877 or visit www.kcg.org/events-workshops.

ISFOP

If you are a small farmer and need information, please contact an ISFOP Farm Outreach Worker (FOW). FOWs live and work in your community. They can provide information on ways to better manage your resources, reduce expense and increase income. They can also provide information on other programs and resources that may increase your income and the overall quality of life for your family.

You are eligible to participate if:

- Your family lives on a farm, rural or urban.
- Farm products or income from the farm are necessary for you to live where you do.
- Your family provides the management and most of the labor for your farm.
- Your total annual family income is less than \$50,000.

How to Contact West Central Regional ISFOP Farm Outreach Workers:

- **Katie Nixon**, West Central Regional Coordinator and Jackson County

NixonK@LincolnU.edu

(816) 809-5074

- **Jeff Yearington**, Cass and Johnson Counties

YearingtonJ@LincolnU.edu

(816) 899-2181

- **Susan Jaster**, Lafayette and Ray Counties

JasterS@LincolnU.edu

(816) 589-4725

- **Jim Pierce**, Clay and Platte Counties

PierceJ@LincolnU.edu

(660) 232-1096

For general information call the LUCE ISFOP office at (573) 681-5312.



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Lincoln University of Missouri, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating. Dr. Steve Meredith, 1890 Administrator, Cooperative Extension. Distributed in furtherance of the Food and Agricultural Act, 1977 PL 95-98. Dec. 22, 1981.

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Publications are available upon request. Contact Pamela Donner, Media Center Coordinator at: DonnerPJ@LincolnU.edu



THE IPM CORNER

by Dr. Jaime Pinero
Integrated Pest Management specialist

IPM Tips for Tomato Disease Prevention and Management

The following tips can help minimize disease development in tomatoes grown in your garden, field or in high tunnels:

1. Use disease-resistant varieties. Mountain Magic and Plum Regal (plum tomato), available at <http://www.johnnyseeds.com>, are the first varieties released with resistance to **late blight**. They also have resistance to **early blight** and **Septoria leaf spot (Septoria blight)**.
2. Maintain optimum crop growth by providing adequate nutrients and soil moisture. Plants will grow healthy and are less prone to suffer from disease and insects. Avoid periods of little or too much water. One technique to monitor soil moisture is to use a tensiometer. A tensiometer measures soil moisture tension in centibars (cb). The drier the soil becomes the higher the centibar reading from the tensiometer. Generally, for tomatoes, the soil moisture tension should be maintained between 10-20 centibars. When soil moisture tension exceeds 20 centibars, irrigation should occur.
3. Use raised beds covered with plastic mulch and drip irrigation tape buried beneath each bed. This increases soil temperature providing earlier crop maturity, higher yields, increased quality, improved disease and insect resistance, and more efficient water and fertilizer use.
4. If possible, use wider plant spacing and remove suckers to increase air circulation. **All of the foliar fungal diseases are favored by high relative humidity (> 85%) in the tomato canopy**. Thus, the length of time above 90 percent relative humidity should be limited.
5. Choose a sunny location for your tomatoes. Leaf disease problems are less likely in a sunny location rather than in a semi-shady one.
6. Control weeds, particularly horse nettle and other species in the *Solanum* genus, in and around the edge of the garden, field or high tunnel.
7. **Do not over fertilize**. Vegetative growth can occur at the expense of fruit production or quality. Over-fertilization may result in higher incidence of certain diseases (e.g., early blight), increases in pests (e.g., two-spotted spider mites, aphids, thrips), pressure and with excessive salt buildup in the soil, over time.
8. Practicing good sanitation is critical. Always remove diseased tomato plants or plant parts, sterilize plant stakes prior to re-use, and clean tools and implements frequently to prevent transporting problems between fields.

Keep in mind that some diseases are difficult to manage once they become established. However, if diseases are identified early in the epidemic and all of the appropriate cultural tactics have been employed, fungicides or bactericides can be applied to reduce disease spread. Always apply a product according to label directions at the first sign of disease. For bacterial spot/speck, fixed copper sprays can be used. For early blight and Septoria leaf spot (Septoria blight) several chlorothalonil (e.g., Bravo, Echo, Equus), mancozeb (e.g., Dithane, Mancozeb, Penncozeb) and maneb (e.g., Maneb, Manex) formulations are labeled for use at various rates. Quadris, a reduced-risk fungicide, is another option. For organic producers, fixed copper formulations (e.g., Cueva, Champ WG) can be used to suppress both fungal and bacterial infections.



Septoria leaf blight (*Septoria lycopersici*), a common fungal disease of field-grown tomatoes.