



## Is Selling at a Farmers' Market an Option for Your Business?

---

Do you want to reach out to new customers? Bring more of them to your garden center or greenhouse farm operations? Reach customers who have relocated to a new town in New Hampshire or who (after a long winter) might have forgotten about you? Can you handle a new offsite market?

All these questions should become part of your marketing and business plans and considered carefully before getting into a new market venture, such as selling at a farmers' market.

Farmers' markets, known as seasonal, open-air markets, have mushroomed during the last decade. New Hampshire now has more than 50 farmers' markets scattered throughout the state, operating at different times of day and different days of the week. Some markets open as early as Mothers' Day and run through late October.

These markets sell a variety of fresh produce, value-added farm products, cut flowers and bedding plants, as well as other farm related products. They typically become lively social gathering places, providing consumers with a way to get to know local growers and better understand and appreciate agriculture in our state.

For a listing of current farmers' markets in New Hampshire and their contacts, check the following NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food website: <http://agriculture.nh.gov/publications/> or the NH Farmers' Market Association <http://nhfma.org/market-locations.htm>. If you decide you want to sell at a NH farmers' market, you need to contact the individual farmers' market manager directly to see if that market is accepting new vendors and what their individual market rules are.

The biggest investment for you as a market vendor will be your time. How much time? First, you'll need to commit to being at the market every week, rain or shine. You'll need time to get your plants ready and loaded for the trip, time for traveling, setting up your display at the market, selling, and reloading your display and any unsold goods at the end of the market day.

Gardening remains one of the most popular hobbies for Americans. Patrons will be looking not only for good-looking, well-grown plant materials and new varieties, but also for how to use them in their gardens, plant, and maintain them. Your sales crew should be knowledgeable about

plants, consumer-oriented, and comfortable with multi-tasking, just to name some of the skills required.

Pay careful attention to customer service. Let your customers know that your crew is available to help them carry those plant trays, armloads of produce, cut flowers, pies, or other farm products to their car. Have a two-person sales crew, and hang a sign announcing, *We will carry your plants to your car!* After all, you are at the market to sell.

Markets seek diverse products for customers. What do people buy at farmers' markets or other farm retail outlets? Check the "Buying Products Directly From Farmers' and Valuing Agriculture: Behavior and Attitudes of N.H. Food Shoppers" at <http://ceinfo.unh.edu/Pubs/AgPubs/FCSR703.pdf>

To make sure that you've considered the details for a successful trip to the market, check the UNH Cooperative Extension Web site to read the fact sheet, *Selling at a Farmers' Market*. <http://ceinfo.unh.edu/Pubs/AgPubs/slfrnkt.pdf>

Selling at a farmers' market isn't for everyone, but we encourage you to explore the option. Winter is a good time to contact your local market coordinator or manager to learn about market guidelines, the availability of a spot and also if the market is accepting new vendors. At the very least, visit a couple of farmers' markets this season to get a sense of how they work and see if selling there offers an opportunity that fits your plans.

*Written by Nada A. Haddad, Extension Educator, UNH Cooperative Extension Agricultural Resources*

**Visit our website: [extension.unh.edu](http://extension.unh.edu)**

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.  
University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.