

Local food is growing in Caledon

Albion Hills Community Farm (AHCF) in Caledon is providing a healthy, sustainable, local alternative to the increasingly expensive imported produce people have heard so much about in the news recently.

This year, the farm is expanding its vegetable growing operation by 25 per cent to accommodate increased demand. Most of the veggies are being sold through CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares, as well as at the weekly market stall on the farm. "In spite of a slow start last year, sales picked up rapidly as spring approached and we quickly sold out," commented Shannon Stirling, farm manager at AHCF for the past two years. "We don't want to turn any customers away this year so we are expanding our planting plans."

Despite the rising tide of prices for vegetables and the challenges of small-scale, chemical-free farming, AHCF have decided to hold the price of their most popular item, a "half" share suitable for a couple or a small family, constant at last year's price.

When people buy vegetables at the store it is not always obvious where they were grown and more importantly, how they were grown.

"We encourage our customers to visit the farm, to find out for themselves how we do things," Stirling said, "and help us with some planting, weeding and harvesting, so that they see at firsthand how their food is being grown."

For those who would like to try growing their own vegetables, but don't have space or the right soil type at home, community garden plots are also available to rent at the farm, at a nominal fee. Community gardeners are also encouraged to volunteer some of their time helping in the market garden.

"It's a great way to learn effective gardening techniques and I know how important it is to the running of the farm," observed long-time gardener and supporter of the farm Carol Good. "We are so lucky to have this spot."

For more information on the farm, go to www.albionhillscommunityfarm.org