

The Bedford



Pound Ridge

# RECORD

# REVIEW

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## Let's make sustainability part of our daily lives

By BEN SPINELLI

When the harvest was just about at its peak this fall, we paid a visit to Louisa Purcell and her new farm stand at Tarrackin Farm on Guard Hill Road. Louisa sells tomatoes, beans, squash, scallions and other produce that she grows on little more than an acre of land. Well into her first year of operation, she told us she was thriving and was looking forward to expanding next year.

But there were two things we especially liked. One was the question Louisa said she hears most frequently from her customers. When considering whether to buy her produce, they want to know: Is it local? For residents of Westchester, that's a big part of what sustainability means — having a steady supply of good, fresh, local food available.

The other thing we especially liked was that the land Louisa was cultivating was part of Tarrackin Farm, owned by Beth and Bob Mancini, and

protected by a conservation easement with us, Westchester Land Trust.

For decades, Tarrackin was a horse farm. When the Mancinis bought it and began working with us on a conservation easement, neither they nor we were thinking that it might be a good place to grow vegetables. But we knew enough not to preclude that, and so we worked with the Mancinis to design the conservation easement to allow agriculture on the 59 acres they've protected.

When we worked with the Raymond family, also on Guard Hill Road, on a conservation easement that protects 38 acres, we agreed that agriculture was a conservation value worth protecting, and Raymond Farm indeed is a steady producer of local food.

And a small part of the 80-acre Louis-Dreyfus conservation easement, on Wood Road in Mount Kisco, supports a thriving market garden, too.

We also collaborated with local partners to help Stuart's Fruit Farm, in Granite Springs, and Hemlock Hill

Farm, on the Yorktown-Cortlandt border, receive state farmland protection grants. Now there's no threat that those local farms will turn into subdivisions.

Not all properties that we've helped protect are suitable for agriculture. Many have extraordinary wildlife habitat or watershed protection values; a few allow hiking or horseback riding.

But on 24 of the nearly 180 conservation easements we hold, agriculture is among the prime conservation values we are protecting, and we're working on another half-dozen easements that, if they bear fruit, also would allow agriculture.

Westchester Land Trust wants to do more of this kind of work, and we want sustainability to be more than a fashionable buzzword. Protection of farmland must be part of a comprehensive land protection strategy, one that helps preserve both the agricultural economy and the character of our communities.

To help the cause, we are organizing a five-part cutting-edge lecture series called "Food, Land, Sustainability," about the environment, the way we live today and the way we'll need to live in the future, for late this year and early 2010. Visit [www.Westchesterlandtrust.org](http://www.Westchesterlandtrust.org) to make a reservation.

And if you have land that you think might be valuable for agriculture and worth protecting, please call our director of conservation outreach, Eileen Hochberg, at 241-6346, ext. 12.

Sustainability encompasses many worthwhile goals — reducing carbon footprints, protecting water supplies and planning smart growth development among them. Protecting farmland for local agriculture is just one way that Westchester Land Trust is doing its part.

*Ben Spinelli is the executive director of Westchester Land Trust, based in Bedford Hills. He is the former executive director of the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth.*