

## **Mt. Pleasant Farm & Gardens**

Vegetable boxes

Cost: \$25 a week. Four payment plans (monthly; or in one, two or three installments)

Info: [www.mountpleasantfarmfresh.com](http://www.mountpleasantfarmfresh.com)

Where: 6125 Mt. Pleasant Road, Lincoln

Gregg Novotny is not your mother. But he still wants you eat your vegetables. Fresh, seasonal, locally-grown veggies that is.

“We are challenging people to look at how their food is grown,” said Novotny, owner of Mt. Pleasant Farm & Gardens, just outside of Auburn.

Novotny is a proponent of “community supported agriculture,” which connects the community to their source of food, their farmer, and the land. People pledge to support a local farm, and in return receive a “share” of what is produced there.

Novotny – who has nearly 40 years experience in biodynamic gardening and organic horticulture – once studied with Alan Chadwick, master gardener and leading innovator of organic farming techniques.

Chadwick is often cited as inspirational to the development of the “California Cuisine” movement. Novotny would like to see a movement against the “mega-market mentality,” where consumers expect anything at any time of year.

“When you go into a supermarket, there’s not a lot of fresh food there most of the year,” Novotny said. “Food grown for supermarkets has to travel a long distance, so it’s harvested days before. They grow tomatoes that can take a beating but have no flavor. Our focus is growing vegetables with far superior flavor at the peak of freshness for people in the area.”

Mt. Pleasant Farm & Gardens takes up 10-acres between Auburn and Lincoln. Novotny is busy working the land, preparing for a spring launch of his subscription service. For \$28.50 a week, he will deliver, to your neighborhood, a box of farm-fresh, seasonal veggies.

In winter, that might include mixed greens, carrots, beets, cauliflower, green onions and lettuce. In summer, you may find tomatoes, new potatoes, peppers, eggplant and cucumbers inside.

Whatever you get, you can be sure it was grown nearby without any chemicals or artificial fertilizers. Novotny has built hedgerows around the perimeter of his property. These will be home to native plants that attract insects beneficial to farming, and critters that will take care of those that are not. A cover crop of fava beans will be sowed under to increase soil fertility.

Rich Ferreira has lived in the property across from Mt. Pleasant Farm since 1975. He remembers earning spending cash working at some of the ranches in the area when he was in high school

“I’ve driven by that open field for the past 30 years,” Ferreira said. “It’s difficult to see it change, but Gregg’s doing good things to it.”

Ferreira grows mandarins on his property, and has seen the agriculture market evolve.

“Farming is not a guaranteed return,” he said. “The old model for growing fruit fell apart. Farmers around here used to take their crops to Newcastle. This was one of the largest fruit growing areas in the world. But it no longer became viable to ship it. But direct sales are a whole different model.”

A model that Novotny hopes will catch on. He will start with four acres and expand as demand grows. He would like to add fruit boxes to his business, as well as cut flowers.

“Community supported agriculture has value to both the consumer and the farmer,” said Carol Arnold, general manager of Foothill Farmers’ Market. “It gives farmers another way to sell direct to the public, without a middle man. It’s excellent for people who like the convenience of having their fresh, local vegetables delivered to them.”