



Promoting and supporting educational gardens for youth.

Sponsor of the Month



Backyard Farms

Always Tomato Season

It all started on a cold February day in 2004, when the future owners of Backyard Farms noticed that not only was every tomato in the grocery store grown in another country, after traveling long distances they weren't even really ripe. As lovers of great tomatoes (like the kind gardeners get from their own backyard gardens in the summer) they wondered if they could grow fresh tomatoes in Maine all year long? As a result, through a lot of hard work and a bit of New England ingenuity, Backyard Farms was born.




Caption: Backyard Farms grow cluster, cocktail and beefsteak non-GMO tomatoes in their 42 acre greenhouses in Madison, Maine and market them throughout the Northeast.

Using a system of **Personal Gardeners** who tend to the same vines from planting to harvest, they are able to treat their plants with the attention that they would in their own garden. Although each gardener has about 7,000 plants under their care, the head grower oversees the entire operation, determining how much heat and water to give the plants and when to perform each task.

Unlike tomatoes that are packed to ship before they are ripe for long distance travel, these tomatoes are allowed to ripen on the vine before they handpick each cluster and send it off with care to local grocers, often on the same day. Customers are able to enjoy that just-picked-from-the-vine experience each time they reach for a Backyard Farms tomato.

Growing indoors presents some unique challenges. For example, a team of onsite experts is constantly monitoring the health of the plants and practices Integrated Pest Management (IPM) by letting bees and insects interact naturally with the plants to promote good, healthy growing. Bumblebees are used for pollination, naturally turning the flowers into the best tomatoes possible and ensuring perfect size and ripeness on every cluster. They constantly bring in new bees and manage them to peak performance with over 20,000 bees buzzing in each greenhouse. In addition, to counteract possibly harmful insects, they introduce nearly 1 million beneficial insects to their crop each week to build their own defense army of “good bugs”.

Want to know more?!

- To learn more about Backyard Farms such as recipes and tips as well as information about their sustainable practice, go to their website at BackyardFarms.com.
- Also check out this video on YouTube:  Backyard Farms - Who We Are .