

Fiala Farms a Reward for Consumers and Farmers

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For Richard Fiala of Fiala Farms, reward is everywhere. There is natural value in being able to produce something from seed or plant to harvest, but that is just a small part of it.

Fiala Farms has been located on 56 acres of property in West Linn for over 100 years. Bought in 1906 by Richard's grandparents from the Czech Republic, the farm is now a third-generation family-owned farm, operated by Richard and his three siblings, Anne, Wes and Doug.

Richard worked on the farm during his teenage years and became involved full-time in 2009 after a career in the computer industry.

"Our parents ran this farm in the late '50s and '60s. We were a pole bean farm. Once upon a time the Willamette Valley was the king of pole bean production for the whole country," said Richard.

Pole beans are still grown at Fiala Farms along with a little bit of everything else, ranging from tree fruits and melons to summer squash and broccoli. Potatoes and onions were just added this year as well. Jams, jellies and honey are also sold at the farmstand. However, pumpkins are their most popular crop.

Everything that is grown at Fiala Farms is sold in their farmstand.

"We've put a lot of money into building a farmstand we can be proud of and that serves people well. They come to the farm, buy our product and walk around the farm. With people coming here, it lends itself to the other part of our farm business which is cut flowers," said Richard.

The farm has about 1200 dahlia tubers and sells zinnias, marigolds and sunflowers. "Not only are people coming to buy their food, they are also leaving with a bouquet," Richard explained.

During pumpkin season, the farm has a five-acre corn maze. It is usually open from Labor Day weekend until October 31--the end of the season.

"It's a very hard corn maze. We don't give people maps and there's no satellite view pictures that they can look at. I've had a couple people tell me that we are the hardest corn maze that they've been to. About 30 percent of the people who enter the maze end up coming out through the entrance," said Richard.

It is important for the farm to make connections to the community.

“There's gratification whenever something goes out that we have grown. One of the most fun things is to see people come back in October. We've got families that have been coming back for ten years. We've got three ladies who were pregnant when they came to buy pumpkins the first year. They come back every year and I get to see their family grow,” said Richard.

Richard also enjoys seeing the differences in wildlife on the farm from when he was a kid to now. He mentioned that he rarely saw deer or birds of prey on the farm when he was younger. Today, wildlife has flourished at the farm which is fulfilling for Richard to see when he is out on his land.

“There is satisfaction of being out and understanding what's going on in the physical world around you and how circumstances have changed to allow us to get back to more nature instead of less,” said Richard.

According to Richard, Fiala Farms moves more deliberately and slower than others. They are working to maximize the property they have in production and utilize their space efficiently.

“Our challenge is continuing to have [natural] growth so that we can continue to see the gain year-to-year. Our business is growing at a very large percentage each year. The challenge is how we continue that. We try to predict what we can do with the business to bring in more revenue. For example, jams and jellies and the honey business are growing. We've invested in young fruit trees so we can deliver more tree fruits,” explained Richard.

Richard has two adult children who have committed to running the farm in the future. They are predicting that their investment of time and finances in the farm now, will continue to build value in the years to come.

Fiala Farms is one of 17 stops on the Farmlandia Farm Loop, which is part of Oregon Farm Loop. Connect to this farm stop through website FarmlandiaFarmLoop.com, Facebook, or Instagram, or email: farmloop@gmail.com and sign up for monthly e-newsletters by texting “ORFARMLOOP” to 22828. Oregon Farm Loop connects local family farms and value-added businesses with the local and traveling public and is a program of Oregon Agritourism Partnership (OAP), an Oregon nonprofit. OAP programs are made possible with the help of various partners, including local farms, OSU Extension Service and Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

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