

Berry Brook Farm Summary

On Tuesday, June 3, 2025, Extension members from Delaware, Schoharie, and Sullivan Counties visited Berry Brook Farm in Hamden, NY, for an insightful tour of its packing and washing system. Owned and operated by Patrick Hennebery, Eleanor Blakeslee, and their family, Berry Brook Farm has been an operating organic produce farm in Delaware County for years, operating across multiple locations in upstate New York.

The tour highlighted the farm's efficient packing and washing system, housed in a repurposed dairy barn. The barn's former milk tank now serves as a water reservoir for washing mixed greens, while an old washing machine is used to dry them. For other produce, the farm employs feed troughs with minimal plumbing and a dedicated root washer. The system is both resourceful and sustainable, highlighting creative reuse of existing infrastructure.

Berry Brook meticulously uses checklists for harvesting and packing. These ensure precise quantities are prepared for each market, with estimates tailored to sell out or nearly sell out, optimizing efficiency and minimizing waste. Thoughtful systems and adaptive practices drive the farm's thriving organic produce business.

Creative Practices at Berry Brook Farm

Repurposing Existing Infrastructure

- Transformed an old dairy barn into an efficient, customized washing and packing station tailored to their workflow.
- Clever reuse of equipment:
 - A former milk tank now serves as a water reservoir.
 - An old washing machine functions as a salad spinner.
 - Feed troughs are adapted for washing produce.
- These resourceful solutions minimize cost and environmental impact while maximizing functionality.

Use of Standardized Checklists

- Harvest quantities are estimated using past sales data to consistently aim for sell-outs.
- Sales data is tracked and analyzed to fine-tune production planning and market readiness.

- Overharvesting is avoided, helping to reduce food waste, labor costs, and excess inventory.

Efficient Wash & Pack Workflow

- Equipment and tools are arranged to support a smooth flow from harvest to final packaging.
- Emphasis on workflow design ensures cleanliness, speed, and team efficiency during busy processing times.