

## **Farmers Market Week**

### **Local News**

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Port Townsend, WA - It's like having a giant retail store that has to be put up and taken down in the same day. That's how Will O'Donnell describes a farmers market, and he should know. He's the manager of the Port Townsend Farmers Market, winner of this year's "Best Large Market" award from the *Washington State Farmers Market Association*.

What started out as 10 farmers in a small parking lot behind City Hall now takes up a downtown street and boasts 75 vendors with sales of almost \$1 million a year. O'Donnell says it's about more than money, though - that most farmers markets are nonprofit groups, fueled by volunteers who want to foster a sense of community.

"We're a town of 9,000, and we regularly have 2,000 people out at the Farmers Market on a Saturday. Our goal is always to increase the amount of local and healthy produce that those community members are coming out and taking home."

A statewide list of farmers markets is available at [www.wafarmersmarkets.com](http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com); the list of sites for the pilot beer and wine sampling program is at <http://liq.wa.gov/licensing/farmers-market-pilot>.

O'Donnell says putting even a small farmers market together is a major undertaking, and many are planning special behind-the-scenes tours during Washington State Farmers Market Week, through Aug. 13.

In September, 10 farmers markets have been selected for a pilot program to offer wine and beer sampling. The legislature had to vote to allow it.

Mike Louisell with the Washington Department of Agriculture says it's an important acknowledgment of a different facet of farming.

"We are the number one hop-growing state in America, and of course, we are a producer of premium wines in the United States, second only to California. It's certainly a growth industry, and a vital part of Washington agriculture."

The most famous farmers market in Washington is Seattle's Pike Place Market, but Louisell says there are more than 160 farmers markets statewide, in 36 counties. According to the Washington Department of Agriculture, farmers market sales are up from \$32 million in 2009 to \$39 million last year.

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