



The first pink streaks of sunrise work as a silent alarm. Waking at the crack of dawn, farmers race the retreat of daylight hours.

The harvest won't wait.

And their summer-long labors claim rights of celebration this time of year.

The hard-won bounty spilling over into farm markets, harvest festivals, farm stands and community events stands testament to long hours and constant care.

Dozens of regional festivals pay final homage to the turned earth. On the farms, hands are still in the dirt.

### Harvest Scented

At Rivermede Farm in Keene Valley, four or five field hands attend to fresh greens, carrots, tomatoes, beets and squash.

Toting empty harvest boxes, they kneel in dusty paths between rows; their bodies disappear in the thick green foliage.

Liz Kaster crouched at the far end of one row, culling cilantro.

It takes a half-hour to gather and trim 10 bunches for the farmers market.

"It's the smell that amazes me," she said, pulling gently.

A newly vacant hole sent up a bright scent of cilantro and dirt.

"Like the carrots; they just smell so amazing coming out of the garden. I love eating them," she mused.

Kaster will cut, carry, wash and stack about four boxes of vegetables this morning.

Some produce goes directly to Rivermede Farm Market, a short half-mile away. The rest is brought to farmers markets or sold fresh to chefs nearby.

Rivermede farmer Rob Hastings rambled over in a John Deere-green gator.

He shut the engine off and got down in the dirt to help.

The big Tuesday pick is on. It's a race between the heavy morning dew and afternoon bake of late summer.

Field hands will work the Lake Placid farmers market tomorrow, knowing first-hand where the vegetables came from and at exactly what hour they were picked.

"It's great. That way, they can really answer a person's question intelligently," Hastings said. "It's also a way to keep the public informed as harvest continues, like telling people we're winding down on this batch of beets, but there's more coming, so stay tuned; or with the blueberries, this was the last pick."

### Wild Wood Fare

In Chateaugay, an hour north, herb farmer Jane Desotelle is busy, too.

"I'm up to my neck in harvest. Only I harvest from the wild more than from what I grow."

Desotelle's farm on six acres is a botanical sanctuary. Beside it, she gathers medicinal plants and wild edibles from the forest.

It is a continual harvest, starting with fiddleheads and watercress in early May.

"Now I'm harvesting wild ginger root and angelica to make a jelly," she said.

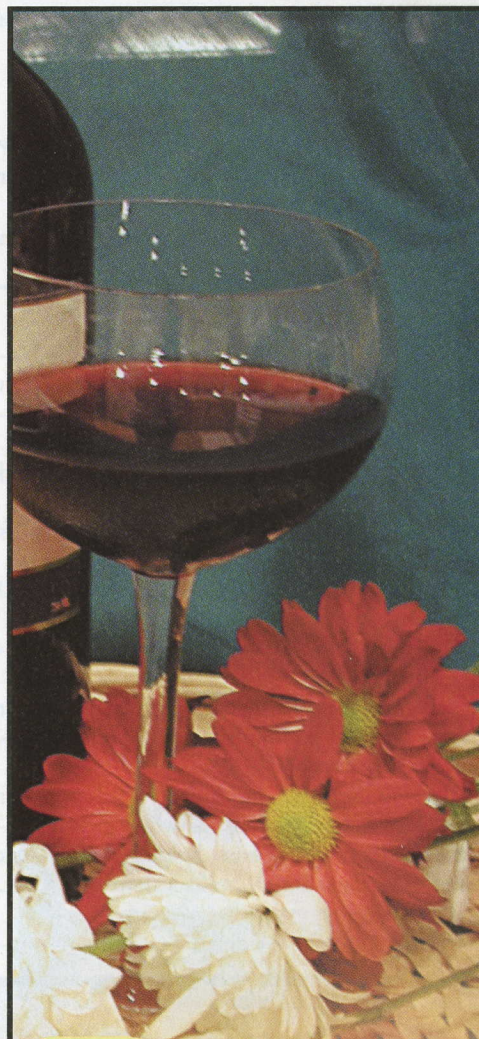
Other plants, picked and dried, will make teas and fragrant potpourri.

An herb garden overflows with orange, lavender and chocolate mint.

"The apple mint is already a foot and a half tall," Desotelle observed. "I've been making jelly like crazy this year." (next page)

Story and Photos  
by  
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photo: (top)  
Rob Hastings  
(left) and Liz  
Kaster (right)  
gather cilantro  
for a farmers  
market. (Left  
photos) Some  
of the harvest  
bounty at Riv-  
ermede Farm.



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