



Rowley, Iowa

Kenneth and Donna Harms

"I always encourage people to shop farmers markets and not just with me."

Kenneth and Donna Harms live on the edge of a little Iowa town called Rowley. They work and sweat side by side to care for four large vegetable gardens and a brood of over a hundred chickens. The Harms sell lettuce, rhubarb, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, kale, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, beans, beets, carrots, chard, farm fresh eggs and precious little bags of cracked black walnuts.

The Harms have been gardening most of their lives. Donna remembers the two large swaths of land planted on her family's farm when she was a young girl - one plot filled with potatoes & sweet corn and one plot for a wide host of vegetables. With help from her five kids, Donna's mother Ardith canned hundreds of quarts every year. Kenneth also grew up with gardens as a constant. He remembers picking potatoes, picking bean and pulling parsnips (which he didn't like as a young boy but loves now). So homegrown food has long been a constant for the Harms, something integral to existence way before "local" became a buzz word. They know that things grown on a small scale are not only better but have a richer flavor.

2014 marks the Harm's eighth year as a farmers market vendor in Independence. Their oldest daughter, Mariana Lawrence, is also a vendor at the market. In fact, her stand is right next to her parents - a perfect location since she persuaded them to start selling in the first place. Mariana has dried herbs, jellies, pesto, fresh herbs, and a variety of baked bread, nicely complementing the bounty of fresh produce displayed by Kenneth and Donna.





When asked what he likes best about selling at the market, Kenneth replies, "the people." And, not surprisingly, the people like him back. It's hard not to. Kenneth and Donna appreciate that the farmers market allows for honest, personal relationships and they actively cultivate relationships of just that sort. They love to talk about the produce as well as how young people might get started on a garden of their own. Kenneth is eager to share what he's learned from years of experimenting, research and being a Master Gardener. Want to know how to build a raised garden bed? Kenneth will make sure to send you home with his perfect ratio: $\frac{1}{3}$ compost, $\frac{1}{3}$ vermiculite, $\frac{1}{3}$ peat moss. He'll also be sure to tell you that before you dump in the dirt mix, line the bottom with chicken wire and a layer of cardboard. Kenneth is all about keeping the weeds at bay.

You can meet Kenneth and Donna, learn about gardening (and many other farm things) and purchase their homegrown goodness at the Saturday's farmers market in Independence from 8 am to Noon. Look for their sign Ken & Donna's Market.

