



TOWN OF HARBOUR GRACE
BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

HOME GROWN FARM

BUSINESS PROFILE

Started in 2021, **Home Grown Farm** is an agricultural business located in Harbour Grace and operated by Aaron Janes. Home Grown Farm strives to provide **high-quality, local produce for the Conception Bay North area**. During the harvest season, customers can find Home Grown Farm's produce on the shelves at Powell's in Carbonear and Bay Roberts, Riverside Mini Mart in Harbour Grace South, Best Kind General Store & Boutique on Water Street, and Clarke's Country Corner in Upper Island Cove.



GET IN TOUCH!

Interested in Home Grown Farm's products? Reach out to Aaron at homegrownfarmnl@gmail.com.

Make sure to follow Home Grown Farm on Facebook for the latest updates:
www.facebook.com/HomeGrownFarmNL

QUESTION & ANSWER

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I'm Aaron Janes, owner and operator of Home Grown Farm here in Harbour Grace, where we grow fresh produce for the local market. I spent around 18 years in the electrical trade before making the transition to fulltime farming in 2021.



WHY'D YOU MAKE THIS TRANSITION?

Well, we saw a gap in the market and decided to give it a try. I always did a bit of piddling around, growing things for use in my own household. My wife Ashley grew up with farming, and we had access to some family land; that opportunity influenced the transition. **I love the work, too, that's key.** Farming is unlike any other industry: you don't start farming unless you love it beforehand. It's hard work—you're out there from sunup to sundown, every day—but I take a lot of pride in it. And when you have people compliment your produce, give you that positive feedback—it's a great reward.

HOW WAS THE FIRST SEASON OF OPERATION?

Busy! So busy, it's not even funny (laughs). I knew it'd be a lot of work, but it's been more than expected. Obviously, the learning curve is high when farming on a large scale. There's a lot of experimentation, learning from mistakes, reading and researching after the working day and during the winter months. However, all of this work has paid off—I'd consider our first year a big success.





WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES YOU FACE?

Well, there's a logistical challenge. A lot of the plots we're farming are here and there; it's not one large tract. You spend a fair amount of time travelling from site to site. Overall, that's a minor concern, though.

Unfortunately, the biggest problem initially was vandalism. Last year, when I just started getting my feet wet with farming on a larger scale, we had a few ATVs tear apart a field we had planted. That was tough to see, particularly when you put so much of yourself into it. **There's been less of that this year, thankfully.**

HOW DID COVID-19 AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS?

If anything, it helped the local farming industry. **People are far more conscious now of where their food comes from—the logistics, environmental footprint, things like that.** We're so connected to the mainland, to the ferry—everything is tied to that. When the ferry isn't running, you can see it in the grocery store. COVID-19 showcased a similar impact.

You look at some vegetables in the supermarket and wonder, 'How are we selling carrots from Israel in Newfoundland?' If COVID-19 makes people realize the importance of supporting local, the farming industry will benefit. **Purchasing more local food means there's more incentive to plant.** And that strengthens the island's food security as a whole.



PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Firstly, we'd like to expand the direct-to-market opportunities in Harbour Grace—vegetable stands, farmers' markets, etc. I think there's a gap here, especially without a grocery store. I'm looking at building a small greenhouse to get things started earlier. Also, I think we'd love to create some on-the-farm experiential opportunities further down the line.

Ashley is passionate about farming from a healthy eating perspective, too, so we're hoping to collaborate with St. Francis School on education around farming and locally produced food. I think there's a real opportunity to introduce farming to the next generation, and we have a fantastic resource with St. Francis's greenhouse. If our youth can see that farming is a viable career choice in a more formal capacity, we'll probably get more local farmers here in Newfoundland & Labrador.



WANT YOUR BUSINESS FEATURED?

If you want to be featured as our next 'Business of the Week,' contact Matthew at (709) 596-3631 ext. 4 or email matthewmccarthy@hrgrace.ca

