

I'M STARTING AN AGRI-BUSINESS AND I NEED LAND....



KNOW YOUR MARKET.

If you are cultivating fast-growing crops, know your immediate market. Growing hops? Meet micro brewers. Composting? Find sources of food waste and customers who want to think out of the big box store. Growing for the future? Count on waiting 5 to 15 years to harvest fruit or maple syrup.

If you plan to sell produce at a Farmers Market, make sure the Market will accept you. Markets have limits on number of vendors and types of produce.

Ideas:

Community Loan Fund business start up classes
businessplans.com



KNOW YOUR CROPS.

Light exposure is key. With the possible exception of mushroom cultivation, most flowers, trees and vegetables require full sun or part sun exposure.

links/ideas:

<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2013/02/07/new-guide-to-urban-farming-in-new-york-state/>

Capital Roots, Cooperative Extension? Master Gardeners?



CHOOSE YOUR LOT

The Albany County Land Bank (ACLB) is the BEST source to buy vacant lots in Albany County.

<http://albanycountylandbank.org/>
518-434-5250

If you need to know who owns a lot you like, contact the city assessor
<http://www.albanyny.gov/Government/Departments/PlanningandDevelopment/BZA.aspx>

If the land you are interested in is privately owned, consider real estate agent or lawyer



KNOW YOUR LIMITS. CHECK WHAT ZONE THE PROPERTY FALLS IN.

Need help understanding the Zoning requirements? City Staff
TAP,AHF,SEIC

links/ideas:

518-4345250

<https://www.albanyny.gov/Government/Departments/PlanningandDevelopment/BZA.aspx>

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KNOW YOUR SOIL.

If you are not purchasing from ACLB you may have to pay back taxes or liens. The compacted soil of an urban lot won't work for most plants. Plan on 12-inch deep raised beds (untreated cedar or hemlock), so that annual crops don't reach old soil. Cover old soil between beds with grass or clover. Learn about soil health and building raised beds here:

Links/Ideas:

<http://albany.cce.cornell.edu/agriculture/soils-climate>

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/garden-guidance/foodgarden/>

Cornell Cooperative Extension: 518-765-3516



KNOW YOUR TOOLS.

Much like car or home repair, match tools to the task. Consider renting equipment such as rototillers or bob cat.



KNOW HOW TO GROW.

Fertilizers are best when they are organic, meaning finished compost or aged animal manures. Synthetic fertilizers are highly soluble and create water quality problems when they wash into the Hudson. A soil test will help you determine soil nutrients, or, absent a test, add couple shovel-fulls per bed and see how the plants respond.



GET THE LAY OF THE LAND

Understand your new neighborhood. Visit during different times of day. Observe the activities, the sun exposure, the storm water. Introduce yourself to neighbors and maybe attend a community meeting. If you have a permitting issue you will need them to support you.



HAVE A PLAN.

Measure the property and create a scale drawing of it. If the dimensions don't match up with the tax map ask adjacent owners if they have property information. Sketch the locations of your plantbeds, raised beds, rain barrels, compost, tool shed, etc. Be sure it is enough space to meet your business projections.

Tips:

If you are going to need site plan approval or a zoning variance, you may want to hire an architect, landscape architect or planner. City planning office may be able to make a recommendation.

TAP, AHF, SEIC



CHECK THE PRICE TAG.

You will have short term and long term costs. Don't take on more than you can support.

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MEET THE NEIGHBORS.

Introduce yourself again and let neighbors know your schedule for clean-up, maintenance, and construction work. It's disappointing to have a new owner take over a vacant lot and then let it sit without maintenance.



CLEAN IT UP. BUT TEST THE SOIL FOR HAZARDS FIRST!

Dig right in as soon as possible, but be careful! Every new owner, no matter the planned use, should test the soil for heavy metals, primarily lead. Broken glass and metals are common hazards too. Use good work gloves and hard-toed boots. Protect against ticks and insects.

Cornell Cooperative Extension: (518) 765-3500

<http://albany.cce.cornell.edu/agriculture/soils-climate/how-to-take-a-soil-sample>



TAKE IT AWAY.

Understand the regulations for disposal of debris and vegetation from the lot. You may need to schedule a dumpster. You may want to rent a chipper for small trees.



COVER IT UP.

If it's going to be a while before you get around to improving the lot, ground cover helps keep weeds from growing back. Some ground covers will help revitalize soil.



STAKE YOUR CLAIM.

Consider whether fencing is necessary. A fence may provide safety, but it may also be damaged by plowing.



DIG SAFE !!

ALWAYS contact Dig Safely New York before you excavate or dig. An inspector will come to the site and mark out and electrical or natural gas utility lines near your site. You do not want to accidentally discover these utilities on your lot. Most empty lots were once buildings with utility lines that may not have been properly terminated.

1-800-962-7962

<http://www.dps.ny.gov/W/PSCWeb.nsf/SN/DigSafely>

<http://www.digsafelynewyork.com>