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## **BRODHECKER FARM'S SUNFLOWER FIELD CATCHES THE EYE AND CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION OF SUSSEX COUNTY**

SPARTA NJ A seven- acre stand of black oil sunflowers planted along Route 15 in Sparta, NJ burst into magnificent color late last week- and has been attracting the attention of countless passersby who stepped out of their daily routine to drink in the beauty. Families, photographers and "battle weary" travelers along the Rt 15 corridor are finding the sunflower stand a welcome and joyful break in their day. One spectator commented, "Whoever planted this field must have known how happy it would make people to see these beautiful flowers. We can all use a little break now and again, this is just amazing- thank you to our Sussex County farmers."

While the children delight in the height, color and seemingly endless rows of flowers and photographers snap away, many folks just simply stand still for a time and smile. As they gaze out over the seven-acre field-drinking in the intense greens and yellows brought to life by the constant movement of busy honey bees they are reminded to take a moment... just to enjoy.

The sunflower blooms are now hitting their blossoming peak and will soon start going to seed. As the yellow flower petals fade, each head will be filled with hundreds of sunflower seeds, laid out in an equally eye catching circular pattern. This intricate mosaic of matured seed will then be ready for harvest. Black Oil sunflower seed is a "first year" crop for Brodhecker Farm of Newton, who planted and maintains the field. The Brodheckers have dedicated two seven-acre fields to sunflower seed production. If all goes well, they hope to harvest, dry and package the black-oil seeds under the Brodhecker label and will sell the Jersey Grown, locally produced birdseed at their farm later this year.

Brodhecker Farm began selling black-oil sunflower birdseed at their farm location in early spring 2010. Steady sales and growing demand for the product prompted the farmers to put a local crop into production and harvest to be used in their own Jersey Grown birdseed product. The farm is already a NJ licensed livestock feed manufacturer and is a fully operational farm, growing field and forage crop in addition to livestock and poultry. The farm also sells a wide assortment of farm equipment, fencing, livestock shelters and animal health products. Brodhecker Farm's consumer product line includes storage sheds, fencing and

a full line of farm-raised meat and poultry products. All are sold directly to the consumer at the Hampton Township farm location.

Initiating a new product which requires specialized equipment, careful harvest and on-site processing is a large undertaking. The Brodheckers have been in consultation with NJ Audubon, who has been developing a similar initiative in other parts of NJ for several years. " NJ Audubon has shared valuable "lessons learned" from their experiences," said Phil Brodhecker "we look forward to building on our relationship with them in the future." Currently, NJ Audubon sells NJ produced black oil sunflower seed under their own S.A.V.E. label. NJAS/S.A.V.E. black oil birdseed is available at NJ Audubon centers throughout the state. Check with your local NJ Audubon center for availability.

Brodhecker Farm has been a staple of Sussex County agriculture for over forty years. The family credits the sustainability of their farm operation to the ability to assess and respond to market demand, providing products and services which meet the needs of the consumer and producer.



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