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Peachblow Farm owner Robert Frizzell clears a field.

SARAH NELSON PHOTO

Locally grown, locally known Peachblow: a tradition since 1927

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Crops. That's the main focus at Peachblow Farm these days. Owned and operated by Bob and Polly Frizzell, Peachblow Farm has been in the Frizzell family for two generations.

After years of trial and error, Frizzell believes he's found his niche by focusing on crops rather than poultry or dairy - both of which Peachblow has experimented with in the past.

"Back in the early years, I was informed that the only way to make a living farming in New England is milking cows," Frizzell said. "I don't particularly enjoy working with animals; I enjoy the crops ... so if you can't do what you want to, why do it?"

Frizzell said he thinks this year will be better than ever, noting that many people in the area are beginning to prefer locally grown produce.

The Peachblow Farm of today is much different than the Peachblow of the past. Originally shrouded by acres of woodlands, Frizzell's father, who came to Peachblow in

1927, began removing the trees, which were cut at a portable saw mill; the lumber was later sold for making munitions boxes during World War II.

“I spent my whole life making Peachblow into a field, moving stumps and stones,” Frizzell said.

Across Peachblow’s rolling acreage, you will find dozens of carefully laid stone walls and small mountains of rock. The stones, according to Frizzell, have the potential to wreck his machinery.

Frizzell’s two main crops are strawberries and seedless straw. Pick-your-own strawberry season is a big draw for Peachblow.

“It’s one of the only times we have the public come to the farm,” Frizzell said. “The picking generally lasts for two to two and a half weeks.”

Frizzell said the strawberry season begins in late June, but like most things in farming, it’s a year-long process. Frizzell said he uses seedless straw to mulch the strawberry plants every fall. In the winter the mulch keeps the plants from freezing and thawing too much.

“And I use the mulch in the spring under the plants so when it rains the fruit doesn’t get so dirty.”

Seedless straw is the other big crop at Peachblow. Rye grain is planted in the fall and cut in early to mid-June, before the grain is able to pollinate and the weed seeds are able to mature, which makes the product appealing to New Hampshire customers because they’re able to buy locally rather than getting the straw from farms in western New York and Canada where the straw is a by-product of grain production.

Frizzell said the seedless straw is useful in mulching strawberries, garlic, new lawns, gardens - even building houses. The straw is available year-round on the farm at \$6 per bale in addition to bales of hay for the same price. Once the rye has been cut and harvested, Frizzell is able to grow squash and pumpkins for the fall.

“I used to sell a lot of pick-your-own potatoes, but people have no place to store them now,” Frizzell said. “Most people’s basements are warm and you need a cool, dry, dark place to keep them.”

Frizzell said he also sells boxes of field stones that “can be cleaned and cut and used for things like small walls or chimneys.”

“A lot has changed in my lifetime,” Frizzell said. “And I’m not even old yet.”

Pick-your-own strawberry season will begin near the end of June.

For more details visit the farm’s Web site at www.peachblowfarm.com.

SARAH NELSON PHOTO



Robert Frizzell, owner of Peachblow Farm in Charlestown.