

Kosinski Farm in Westfield and Feeding Hills

Gene and Sue Kosinski

Recipients of several Local Farmer Awards, seasoned farmers Gene and Sue Kosinski are among the top five blueberry growers in the region. They have three farm sites in Westfield and Feeding Hills.

Laser Bird Deterrent prevents blueberry crop destruction (2021)

Anchored on the top of a wooden pole, the **Laser Bird Deterrent** helps minimize crop loss that results from flocks of birds. It acts like an electronic scarecrow, preventing birds from destroying fruit crops, especially the Kosinskis' 50 acres of blueberries. Explained Jim, "We needed to go beyond the use of mesh netting as a cover, which is not only difficult and terribly time-consuming to lay but can also be a trap for birds and other animals." From its vantage point above the crops, the laser frightens off birds by oscillating, thereby simulating a predator, following an ever-changing pattern across the field of crops. Though the fruit may still experience minimal bird damage, the Kosinskis no longer have to fear large flocks swooping down and destroying an entire crop. The birds are scared away from the crops, but not harmed by the laser light.

"The possibility of the award motivated us to prioritize this costly item in our budget and, considering the savings in labor and materials, allot additional funds," said Jim. "After all, you need to stay abreast of technology, and technology takes money." The laser bird deterrent is so critical to crop success that today the Kosinskis have three of them in various locations.

Fermentation Tank to expand production of fruit wines (2016)

A few years ago, the enterprising Kosinskis saw the potential of using bruised fruit or "seconds" to expand into winemaking, in addition to their selection of value-added products. They partnered with a vintner who developed an impressive array of delicious fruit wines –blueberry, plum, apple, cherry and others.

Fermentation Tanks – not one but many – are essential to wine production. And each one, costing \$1,500 or more, is expensive. The Local Farmer Award helped fund an additional tank of a much-needed size.

The wines are produced in the Raven Hollow winery built near the Kosinski Farm market. Patrons typically



Gene Kosinski with fermentation tanks

come for wine tasting events. Others stop by in the fall after apple picking or a hayride. These activities are part of Agri-tourism. "It's big," said Gene. "The public always wants something to do, and we give them that." Raven Hollow wines also sell briskly each year at the Big E and other area fairs.

Adaptive cultivator to save a "ton of labor" (2024)

The **Adaptive Cultivator**, which attaches to a tractor, is designed for weed control. It helps lower annual costs for herbicides and manual labor. Attached to a tractor and equipped with a sensor, it efficiently scans and removes weeds. Gene anticipates with joy the "ton of labor" it will save.

Beyond the tangible benefits to the farm, the Local Farmer Awards mean a great deal to Gene and Sue Kosinski: "When we apply and make a case for something our farm really needs, we feel we have a friend out there saying, 'Go for it!'"