

Farmer/Tree Farmer Wanted

A farmer or tree farmer to transition into eventual ownership of a conserved farm in southeastern Vermont. The farm is Elysian Hills in the Town of Dummerston and is currently owned and stewarded by Mary Lou and Bill Schmidt.

Elysian Hills is a scenic hill farm that's approximately 100 acres wooded and 38 acres open with southern exposure and ponds. It's ideally located off a dead end town road five miles north of downtown Brattleboro. The primary agricultural crop for the past 30 years has been Christmas trees on some 20 acres. There is also an acre of heirloom organic rhubarb, a sugarbush, and managed forest with timber for wildlife and harvest. Marked trails network the property. The farmstead has four buildings -- two houses one of which is a 1791 Cape, a barn (which has 10 box stalls and space for more), and a farm office/shop/garage.

The Christmas tree business is well established and has an excellent clientele in retail, business, wholesale and until this year mail order customers. The rhubarb bed has been developed over 25 years with sales primarily to supermarkets and two wineries. It currently is in need of renovation. The sugarbush is leased to a local sugar maker and has considerable expansion potential. An onsite sugaring operation could be established with the construction of a sugarhouse. There are additional agricultural and forestry possibilities for the land as well. Among others are vegetables, small fruits, specialty crops, a farm sawmill, and ongoing timber production.

The bottom line is that Elysian Hills is now and must continue to be a working farm into the future. The conservation easement, which is held by the Vermont Land Trust, calls for this through a provision that requires the property to be sold at farm value to a bona fide farmer or someone who comes up with a clear and workable farm business plan. The Land Trust will participate with the Schmidts and future owner in the preparation of a transition plan and purchase and sale agreement for the property.

The kind of person/family wanted as a successor owner is someone who is self-motivated, hardworking, land stewardship minded, and committed to a life in farming and forestry, has some training/education and experience in at least one of them, and has a sound financial outlook and plan for the property. The person/family could live at Elysian Hills in an almost new doublewide mobile home and help with Christmas trees and other farm work as the Schmidts' lives wind down. He/they could phase in additional crops if they're workable. The connection with Elysian Hills would likely require at the outset a full or part time job off the farm. He would be "settled" family wise with respect to the relationship of his work and career to family desires, needs and interests.

Some photos of the farm and descriptive information on the Christmas tree business can be seen on the farm's website at: www.elysianhillsfarm.com. For more information and an application form contact the Schmidts at Elysian Hills, 209 Knapp Rd., Dummerston, VT 05301. Telephone: 802/257-0233. Email: elysian@sover.net.