



# FARMER TO FARMER

podcast



## **EPISODE 130**

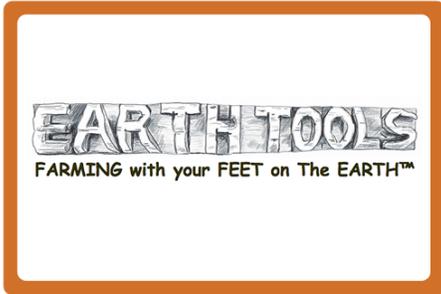
**Chad Wasserman of Chad's Organics on His Solo Operation in Hawaii, No-Till Farming under Cover, and Making Vermicompost for His Farm**

**August 3, 2017**



SHOW NOTES:

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Chris Blanchard:

It's the Farmer to Farmer Podcast Episode 130 and this is your host Chris Blanchard. My guest today, Chad Wasserman, owns and operates Chad's Organics in Hilo, Hawaii on the west side of Hawaii's big island. After farming up to an acre outdoors Chad recently moved its entire farm indoors focusing on 5,000 square feet a production under plastic and provide himself a living from the herbs and vegetables that he markets to stores, restaurants, and a very small CSA.

With over 80 inches of rain each year and no frost or even cool weather to kill off or slow down pests and diseases, why it can be a challenging place to grow vegetable crops, and add to that the cost of bringing fertility inputs over 2500 miles from the mainland and you've created a situation that could try the best of farmers. Chad discusses what he's done to ensure that his farming operation succeeds in the face of these challenges.

We get into how Chad has developed a market for his products, since he started his farm in 2010, dig in to how he has changed his production in response to



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business growth, market development, and weather and discuss how he's developed a worm based composting system that brings in 50 to 60 pounds of compost each week with a minimum of effort and off farm inputs.

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Chad Wasserman: Thank you, Chris. It's an absolute pleasure to be on your show. I've always listened to and it's just an amazing honorable opportunity to be with a show with you.

Chris Blanchard: Thank you so much for joining us. I'd like to start off like we usually do with, how do you tell us about Chad's Organics there in Hilo, Hawaii? Where is Hilo? How much do you grow and what kinds of things are you farming and how are you selling it?

Chad Wasserman: Sure, well. We're on the big island of Hawaii, I know what side in Hilo, and it's the only city of significance. Most people think of Honolulu which is on Oahu, and they have about a million people. The big island, you could take all the other islands and multiply it by two and a half times and that would give you the size of the big island.

We only have a population of a 140,000 so it's not very population dense, which I particularly like myself. We have a four and a half acre property actually on the upper slopes of Hilo, and we're at about 1200 feet elevation and it's a unique climate because as you go up the volcano it cools off quite a bit, and also it can be more moisture. The big island has 12 of the world's 14 climate zones, so the topography is quite diverse.

My farm is on a fairly flat piece it's got some slope to it. I actually only have an acre or actually even less, that's about a three quarter acre that has been farmed. Now, I've actually moved my entire operation indoors into four high tunnels. There are two structures but they're gutter connected to make two-into-one buildings.

I have 5000 square feet of indoor space in these high tunnels that my current operation is all of its production is doing now. I've actually converted my outdoor fields and the cover crops now, and I'm actually at a point now where I made, build another high tunnels someday, or I may do something else with that outside space, but I've just found enough production inside to maintain my business that, well for a whole host of reasons why I've moved indoors.



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Chris Blanchard: Is your farm business a part-time venture for you? Or is it a full time operation?

Chad Wasserman: It's becoming full time. My wife we have three children and they're all small, they're starting to grow up now, but I was the main stay at home parent and that's how I got into farming actually, believe it or not, because I like gardening and I would share vegetables with friends and they liked them enough that they'd said, "Hey, well we'll buy these from you if you can supply us weekly," and I started out selling to basically, we have like a mom's group or we would get together weekly and there would be a weekly email of where we'd meet up.

I would send out an e-mail saying, "Hey, I've got carrots and broccoli and or whatever I would have available. I can bring it to the mom's group." And I started out real small and then I started to CSA and moved on to selling to the restaurant, and now I actually sold me with the health food stores. I'm still the stay at home parent but I've managed to make it into a full time business, just through having some additional childcare. It's been a challenge to manage both because not only with our farm but also managing the acreage in Hawaii with non-stop growing and mowing the lawn, and maintaining everything.

It's a challenge but I guess the way I would say it is, my business I'm only putting in about maybe 30 hours a week and the rest goes to maintaining my property. Some weeks, I even work less just because I don't have the time where I decided we have other family obligations, I just went to the mainland. I like to keep a balance between life other things outside of farming, and in the farm itself. I'm actually working a little bit less than I used to, because I feel like I've reached a maturity point where all the beds are formed, I moved into a no-till system for two years now. I kind of matured my market I think with my customers.

I like where I'm at because I feel like when I'm working I'm making money, I'm not rolling the dice to see hopefully it all works out. I've kind of focused and specialized into the crops that I grow.

Chris Blanchard: Now, with having moved indoors, essentially, that 5,000 square foot space, why did you choose to do it? You said there were a lot of reasons but what were the primary reasons behind that?

Chad Wasserman: My first high tunnel was in a USDA equip grant that I was luckily to get to the USDA and they paid a fair amount of the cost and additional I made up. I noticed that my yield, the quality, was just so much better than what I could do on the outside and not only that one big limitation of farming in Hawaii or especially in the windward side is, we can have some really intense rain.

We at Hilo average is about 120 inches a year on a good year, I would say at minimum about 80 a year and we are up slope so we get even more. It's challenging when you get that much rain to maintain quality and not only that I guess the comfortability of working indoors is just so much more pleasant. I never have to worry about the weather. When it comes to weed management and crop turnover and pests, and actually probably pests would probably be maybe the first thing to talk about because being dead in the tropics, we have just immense pest pressure because there's no winter- kill and we're humid.



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We have just every pest you can imagine. We also have a health risk with slugs. They carry a rat lung parasite that can be a problem if you eat raw produce, and for all those reasons I decided to just go purely indoors and I've actually sealed my greenhouse off to the outdoors, and I've literally I've taken composite wood and I buried in the soil and connected that to the insect screening that I used outdoor trim, stainless steel screws. Nothing's getting in, unless they can, like mites or something might be able to get in. I've basically drastically increased my pest prevention moving indoors, it just took away so many headaches.

Chris Blanchard: I would think that farming indoors in Hawaii it would just be hot, hot hot, hot.

Chad Wasserman: That's what a lot of people think and it depends on your design on your greenhouse or high tunnel. I went with a really high walls, so my first tunnel is six feet high and the sides are just insects screening. You get really good airflow through that insect screening. My second high tunnel I actually made even higher, the centers go up to 16 feet and I actually raised up the columns with slips. The higher you make a structure, the cooler it's going to be because that airflow is going to be constantly moving, and my poly covering on my new structure is glacial, I think they call a glacial ice or something, so it actually blocks some of the more damaging UVs and it actually is cooler inside than the outside. It's really good technology to use.

I guess the combination of my locality and my greenhouse design haven't had a problem with heat so much, and I'm even growing like spinach and salanova lettuce on the inside. Now, these warmer months I am starting to experiment with using some shade cloth inside the high tunnel using like those low hoops bending EMT. Somewhere to what people might do on the outside having your low tunnels with remade except I'm using shade cloth on the inside to get those temperatures down, and I've been really happy with the result of that, that using that shade cloth in these hotter months for that purpose.

Chris Blanchard: Now, what kind of crops are you specializing in? Because I imagine that having shifted from outdoors the indoors you've probably changed your crop mix quite a bit.

Chad Wasserman: A lot, a lot. I used to have a much bigger CSA where they, I mean I say big CSA but 25, 30 members it wasn't that big but now I'm down to just 15 members down to three, and it's a much smaller package that I'm offering now with more limited selections. I used to try to do a lot more stuff and I don't miss those days, honestly. You're trying to grow so many different crops, they all have their ins and outs and you have to buy so much different seed and I didn't feel like I was totally utilizing all the yields because I was selling it to the CSA, but yet I didn't have another outlet at that time to sell to the stores. I also sell to restaurants, so I have that to some extent.

I started to have a lot of success with the health food stores here and I started to specialize about two years ago, when I decided to start bringing stuff indoors. I mean actually it's been within the last year that I move 100% indoors. As far as crops I grow, I grow a lot of basil, a lot of fresh basil. That's becoming one of my most profitable crops, Salanova lettuce is probably my number two crop, and



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sometimes I sell more of that than basil. Along with the salad greens to make a mix so I'll grow tatsoi, mizuna...

Let's see where it goes, spinach, cherry tomatoes and I do like a petite baby kale as well indoors. I was pretty big in the cucumbers, I cut back a bit but I may get back into that a little bit more but I've really cut it down to those four or five crops to simplify my life and I've just found them a lot more profitable when I compare the amount of input and labor versus my return. I used to grow a lot of carrots and there's great demand for carrots. I can sell every single carrot, but it required a lot more space and it was a lot more work to grow them, and process them and wash them.

I compared the amount of space that I needed for carrots and the amount of labor versus like basil, and I mean basil just blew it away in terms of profitability. I've really specialized to make my life easier and I guess when you find your niche and you find what customers wants, and you develop your customer base, and the demands that good for those products, and they turn over time as quick. For all those reasons, I've been pretty happy with my crop selection I mean, I used to grow more like zucchini and corn and just some more outdoor crops, but I eliminated a lot of stuff just more just to do with my schedule.

Like I said I'm not working full time at it. On the rare week I might, but if I need to utilize my time to its maximum efficiency and profitability, and I've found the crops that I mentioned to be the winners that, maybe I can make money off of squash or carrots and that kind of thing but it doesn't measure up to those other four or five crops and I'm growing indoors. When you analyze your return and the cost and input, just hands down, it just makes sense for me to grow those other very crops on the outside or inside. Been really happy with it.

Chris Blanchard: As you shifted away from the CSA both shrinking it and eliminating some crops from that crop mix, where you found a market for your produce?

Chad Wasserman: There's a great health food store chain here called Island Naturals, and they have three stores on the island. I live about eight miles away from their Hilo Store, and that's their flagship store and they sell the most of my product but they do have two other stores, and they have this great service they offer farmers that if you have products that the other produce managers want, they'll deliver it for you on certain days. I have my schedule set up based upon those delivery days, so for example, for Kona, I just dropped off a big basil order because they're going to deliver it tomorrow.

It's been a great partnership because I'm not delivering, I'm not driving. It takes about an hour and a half to actually go to their store, it take me about two hours one way. I mean, not to say, I wouldn't do it if I had to drive, but I sure am glad I don't have to. They save me a lot of time and money, and so there's another health food store, Abundant Life, they sell some, but not like the Island Naturals stores have been for me. They're very busy store and I mean just through those stores alone, I've really been able to increase my sales through them and to phase back the CSA, and I was actually going to drop it altogether but I had some just old time hardcore customers convinced me to keep it going.



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I do want to have a little diversity in the mix, it makes me all the risk to deep out on one store. I am looking into maybe of approaching some other stores selling basil and salad greens. At this point, I've been really happy with the amount of business I'm getting from them.

Chris Blanchard: When you talk about dropping off a big order in that situation, what does a big order look like on your farm?

Chad Wasserman: I'll drop off like a \$200 order of basil, I sell them in clamshells like a compostable clamshell, and there about a five ounce package of fresh really beautiful large leaf basil, and I've started to do a smaller ones to offered customers, you may not want such a big portion size. Yeah, that will be like 30 large containers along with the 20 smalls. I make my day through scheduling it to which store, but also I can drop off whenever I want to. The other stores I have to align it with their delivery days, and then I just matched up with my schedule.

Like I said, I'm a stay at home dad, so I'm often picking up my kids with my orders in the back of my minivan and I am taking it with me to drop off the orders after school, and then we're coming home and then I'm doing the whole stay at home dad thing, and honestly I don't know what other job I could do or I could do that or I'd have to hire childcare to pick up my kids and take them to their activities and do all the things that you have to do as a parent.

Chris Blanchard: Now, are you the only person working on your farm?

Chad Wasserman: I am my wife, she is not interested and she works as a nurse at the hospital here. I've had a couple people that kind of intern but honestly Chris, I like working for myself, I don't really enjoy managing people. I used to be a manager at OfficeMax store, I didn't really love it. I guess at some point I may have to hire somebody but somehow I've made it work, the working part-time and just making things efficient through tools or equipment, or just like we're talking about before picking the products that are the most profitable that I feel like I don't have to hire people.

At this point, it gets more complicated because you have to get a worker's comp. You have to train these people and at this point I'm just not ready to ... I probably could and I probably could afford to hire somebody at least part time, but at this point I just don't want to.

Chris Blanchard: No reason to do it if there's not a reason to do it.

Chad Wasserman: Yeah, I don't know. Some people are perplexed that I don't, but I like working independently. I like to work out my own schedule, I don't really want to have to train people and manage them and have personnel issues. A lot of people do... what's popular here as they have woofing, which I'm sure they have in the mainland where you, someone lives on your farm and then their labor is what pays their stay.

I've heard some bad stories about that and then they're living on your property, and that's a little more intimate with your family. It may not be really that motivated to work as they're not getting paid cash or a paycheck. I've steered



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clear of that. Even though I've actually had many offers and people that want to come and work and learn. You know what, I just haven't been able to fit that into my schedule and I'm selfish with my time, I want to do whatever I want to do on that particular day and I don't really want to have to work that out with an employee honestly.

Chris Blanchard: What do the economics of farming in in Hawaii look like? How does that work out? I've always thought of Hawaii as being a fairly expensive place to live, and of course I mean some of that is because supplies are coming from the mainland. Can you talk to me a little bit about what those economics look like for you?

Chad Wasserman: Sure, yeah, it's true. It's a very expensive place to live. Land here is pretty expensive, I mean the Big Island has the most affordable land. The other islands it's really bad, if you're starting out farming you have to either leased land and I think you can probably find some land where you could lease it affordably but even that, that creates problems in itself.

[00:25:30] I don't know how I would farm the way I do and not live on my land because one big issue here I've heard of is, there's a lot of ag theft, a lot of farmers, they get a lot of their produce stolen or equipment stolen. It's nice to live on your farm to be able to oversee everything and just, I wouldn't want to commute to my farm that's why I want to farm because I want to live where I work and not have that hassle of having to drive to farm.

Yeah, equipment is, we definitely pay a premium, supplies, inputs. We do a big agricultural distributor, a fertilizer inputs, crop production services, and I mean actually I've compared the prices to the mainland and it's actually not too bad. We maybe pay a 10% premium or a bag of oyster shell, or composted chicken manure, or whatever input you want to talk about. That's not too bad. A lot of products you might want to order online, you have to finagle and say, "Hey, you have free shipping but you don't include Hawaii, so can you work a deal with me?"

The cost of building your farm is definitely expensive but the cost of produce is also higher. That's what sort of interested me in the economics of it, because I was looking at all these products that were shipped in from California and Mexico. My thought was, "How do they make the economics of that work?" Because you can't put that on a ... I mean some things you can put on a ship, you can put melons or whatever. When you're talking about solid products, fresh products that spoil fast and basil.

I had a feeling I could compete because if I can get the same price that the store is ... or you know the wholesale price that they're maybe they're paying or just even do the CSA to make it seem like a good deal because if you buy that organically you're going to pay a lot more. The retail price is pretty high so that does help to offset those higher costs that we have living out here.

That gives me a market advantage honestly, because those that California and Mexican organic produce, they have to airfreight that. That's a really, really expensive. I think sometimes they don't even make money on it, it's just because they have to offer it. As I was saying that the local health food store



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here, they do support local farmers and I've been able to get good prices from them and have a good steady demand. I have been able to make it work financially, but it's definitely been real challenging.

It's taken me a while to get to where I'm at for sure, just to find out what works and find your niche and develop the methods and techniques and get the market for that product that you can make profitable. It's definitely been a journey. There's been times where you wonder, "Why am I doing this? I'm paying a lot more than I'm making." Those first few years are, those were difficult.

Chris Blanchard: When did you start farming?

Chad Wasserman: [00:29:30] Well, I officially started in 2010 and it was very small like I said it was just this very small CSA, and that was sprung up through this mom's group that we belonged to with our kids. My kids were really, I just had one child at that point and we've added two others. It was very part-time at first, and it got a little bit easier as I could maybe afford to hire a babysitter and my wife's schedule got a little bit better, so she was able to help out with the child care a bit.

It technically has, I'm technically on my seventh year I guess but it was far from full time in the beginning.

Chris Blanchard: How long did it take you to develop your farm into something that was a profitable venture?

Chad Wasserman: Well, at first my main goal was to, we didn't want to use any of my wife's income to put into the farm. I pretty much had to reinvest everything that I was earning. Just to give a year exactly what it, I guess it was around 2014 when I would say I got to a point where my income was above the investments that I was making into the farm.

Now, I would say really actually until 2015, where I was contributing to our household and paying for bills and childcare and the mortgage and all that. It took a while to, and maybe I probably went a little bit overboard on my equipment purchases, so be it.

The way I look that is, I don't want to hire people but if a tool or a piece of equipment would make my job faster and easier I was going to buy it. The way I did that was instead of getting some kind of loan or something like that I just took a 0% interest credit cards where you get 12, 18, I even have ones that were like 21 months, and that you have 0%.

I tried to make a big purchase for an implement or my greenhouses or whatever. I would put it on my, these 0% interest cards and then just knowing that I'm going to pay it all off before it's going to become prime interest. You have to have good credit to do that, but that really help to finance a lot of stuff.

Chris Blanchard: For managing your four and a half acres, what kind of equipment have you invested in?



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Chad Wasserman: I have a BCS tractor, 853, a whole bunch of implements. I've got to finish mower, but I don't use anymore. I've got a tiller I don't use anymore, a power harrow, R2 Power Harrow . I've got a rotary plow and a flail mower, and now the thing that I use the most actually is my Caravaggi. In 2015, or actually was late 2014, I bought a John Deere Sub-Compact Tractor, 1025R, 24 horsepower, that's got a really nice powerful mid-mount deck. I do a lot of my main mowing with that.

It's nice it's got a backhoe on it, and a loader. That's how I maintained most of the land. I also have a riding John Deere residential mower just for getting through these small spaces along the fence line and really tight spaces. The John Deere Sub-Compact Tractor is my main way to upkeep my property, I honestly don't really use it a whole heck of a lot on the farm business except for maybe moving stuff or moving some materials or compost or moving crop residue or something like that around ... the loader' s primarily what I would use it for on the farm, so I have a fair amount of equipment when it comes to that.

Chris Blanchard: You moved your production indoors, how did your production change? You say you weren't using the tractor in your field outside in any case, so and you've talked about making this change to doing a no-till version of farming. Can you talk to me a little about how you got that set up?

Chad Wasserman: Sure, that's kind of an interesting story. I used to tell, like I said I had the rotary plow. With our heavy rainfall you have to have raised beds. You can farm without them because you need that water to drain through your walkways.

I did do all that traditional tillage, I made all my fields, I've made my beds and I was tilling, and I realized, I pulverizing the soil here and there's getting a lot of press about the power harrows, so I did get one of those the R2 power harrow, from Earth Tools. While that is a good implement and it is certainly way less tillage. I still found that it was harming my soil light, because I would make a pass with it and I would see a bunch of earthworms bouncing up and down and the birds come. It was like a smorgasbord for them.

I'm going off on a tangent, but we had an El Nino event in 2015 in Hawaii where we had some really extreme weather in a matter of about five months, the summer of 2015. My elevation, we literally had 200 inches. We would have 10-inch rain days, one week he might cumulatively get like 40 inches. You can't tell when you have that kind of rain, your soil will literally, it'll just wash down. I was forced to for that weather event. My system crashed honestly. Everything was going really well and suddenly we have this just intense weather event where with the rainfall and we had some really intense heat for Hawaii.

I noticed some pathogens, root-knot nematodes that I hadn't been seeing before. I just did a lot of research and just went back to the board and looked into a lot of these no-till systems. I started to learn about the soil food web from Elaine Ingham and understanding the complexity that exists in the soil and how tillage really destroys your soil organisms, and actually promotes the pathogens that you don't want in your soil. A few others I refer to Gabe Brown, a really fascinating farmer that has a no-till system for many, many years.



Now, some other sources Singing Frogs Farm, they were all successfully doing no-till and that was really interesting to me because just from a logistical point of view, I couldn't till because I was going to lose soil if I did. I started experimenting with that and definitely it's a learning process. It's not just going to magically happen all at once to make no-till work.

[00:38:30] I started doing it on the outside and on the inside, and I noticed that a lot of small improvements that were really helping. The big improvement was just not losing soil when it rained, that was a huge improvement. I started seeing a lot more worm life and less weeds, a lot less weeds actually because I guess I wasn't turning them over to expose all those fresh weeds to expose into the air to germinate, and everyone thinks you have to rotate to avoid the past and diseases and the nutrient, lack of nutrients from going to same crop.

I found actually if you have a good healthy soil or have a good set of healthy organisms in your soil to function properly, rotation becomes irrelevant actually because like I said with 5,000 square feet that's not a lot of space really, and so not having a lot of crops to grow. I work mainly on transplants, I do some direct seeded stuff but mainly transplants. The no-till has really been able to make my system work with the limited space and the limited crop types because of the soil health, because of the lack of diseases that you would probably experience in a tillage system. Not only that you just, when you till your soil you really are just destroying that aggregate.

Where I live, I actually have really good soil. I'm really blessed at it, it's a pretty heavy clay soil but just to have soil is actually rare on the Big Island. A lot of places just are pure a lot of rock. I noticed that the past became much less of a problem with the no-till system. There's just a lot of benefits actually if you can make a no-till system work. Like I said it does not happen overnight, and it takes time to transition to that.

I've been really, really happy with it. If I didn't discover no-till I don't know I would be farming in the way that I am because the ability to, the fact that I don't have to drag even a walking tractor into my greenhouses is just very beneficial. You don't have the fuel, you don't have the exhaust when you take it. I used to take a BCS tractor the high tunnel to till, but it really maneuvering the machinery around there, and then when you do that, you've destroyed your ... If you have your bed, kind of permanent bed system and you're tilling, you're never going to keep that nice shape. A lot of soil is going to fall off the sides and you're going to get a hard pan below and it's just worked out well for me.

I do use landscape fabric in the system just for weed management, actually I find it good for soil health because you're always keeping it covered. It's a good way to cover up your soil with the landscape fabric and I burn holes through it to put my lettuce through or basil through, or whatever, cherry tomatoes. I've even experimenting and finding quite success in using white ground cover with black underneath, burning holes and they kind of melded together. The white is real beneficial because it keeps your soil temperatures cool, it bounces that light off. It seems, any insects that would get in your high tunnel they get really confused by that because they're all the sunshine bouncing back up.



[00:43:00] I found that that is a good deterrence actually to any type of insect issue. When I turn over my crops and I pull out the lettuce stem core in the bottom, because I like to pull it out. I keep there as much root mass as I can, but I want to turn that over right away. I'll pull out all the, whatever plug was in there, the soil backlog and I've got a perfectly fresh clean bed. No weeds and that works well in no-till system because you can ... If your soil is good, you can direct seed right into that or you need add amendments... then you put your landscape fabric back over it, to go into the next crop and so you can really grow a lot of crops the same space continuously. That's how I'm able to maintain a pretty high production level at a small space.

Chris Blanchard: Are you doing any bare soil production that falls into that no-till category?

Chad Wasserman: Like I said, so say if I turn over a lettuce bed, or basil, or whatever that had the landscape fabric. I've got a nice clean bed and I do baby greens such as baby kale or tatsoi and mizuna , and I'll direct seed right into that because that's a quick crop, I don't have a lot of weed pressure inside but I'm sure if I kept them uncovered stuff's going to blow in because I'm not... with the tropics and we have these trade winds that are constantly blowing weed seeds all over the place.

I'm sure I would have more weeds if I didn't keep them covered. I will do a direct seeded bed of baby greens, but with the brassicas if there are any weeds, they outgrow on and you won't even see them until you make your first cut and it's pretty minimal. Once in a while, I might have to just because I don't want anything to go to seed, and I might go through there and nitpick it. I don't do a lot of weeding, I would say I do maybe thirty minutes a week weeding. I don't like weeding, that's just not something I'd clearly enjoy, and you have to do it.

I find prevention is the best method for that. I do a little bit of flame weeding too, but not very much not very ... If I'm in a situation where I can still flame weed it, then I might go and do it, but I don't do a lot. I don't do a lot of that.

Chris Blanchard: It's interesting you talk about the high tunnels is actually keeping the weed seeds out, that's not something I would normally think of.

Chad Wasserman: Well, because like I said I've kind of barricaded them where every, there's no open access. I've used, it's a pretty expensive insect screening. It's like a mesh, I don't know if it's nylon or what it actually is but it's extremely resistant to tearing or anything like that. I've had my first high tunnel as five years virtually no tears at it and there might be a little bit of blowing through, I'm sure some gets through.

The screen seems to block a lot of those weed seeds from blowing it, because there's not much you can really do about wind borne weed seed. I'm on the edge of Hilo, I'm not like right in the city but there's enough stuff around me that I'm sure there's a lot of weed seeds blowing in the wind. Going indoors has really helped that situation because you can control the moisture and there just seems to be less soil disturbance that I definitely prefer indoors versus outdoors.



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Chris Blanchard: With that, Chad, I think we're going to stop here, take a quick break, get a word from a couple of sponsors and then we'll be right back from Chad Wasserman of Chad's Organics in Hilo, Hawaii,

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The podcast is also brought to you by Store It Cold's CoolBot way back in 2000, which was the year I started Rock Spring Farm. The manager of the local food, complained that the lettuce from local producers lasted for days and her cooler while the lettuce from California lasted for weeks. What's that about 2,000 miles fresher? I later found out that none of the local growers had a walk-in cooler, 17 years later this is still the number one complaint I hear from produce buyers. You have to get your produce cold.

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We're back with Chad Wasserman of Chads Organics in Hilo, Hawaii. Chad, Hawaii, I went to Hawaii a couple of times and I was young and I don't remember eating a whole lot of vegetables and especially the kinds of thing you're talking about. It seems like a very mainland crop mix. What is the market like there for organic vegetables, both on the buying side as well as on the production side, is there a lot of market farming going on in Hawaii?

Chad Wasserman: There is a lot of small farmers. There's not a lot of big organic farms, and in fact there's really no real big organic farm, so there's a lot of small producers, there's not a lot of certified organic vegetable farms. There's a lot of certified organic coffee farms or some other fruits because what we're well-known for papayas, pineapples, pretty much out of business except for some local markets.

A lot of produce is imported here which I think is kind of a shame because we're so far away. That's what kind of motivated me to look into retailing at our food stores, because a lot of it was imported. I knew that I was talking about before at the cost of importing those products and having to airfreight them. I knew I could compete as long as I could get similar pricing to what they're paying for the imported produce.



[00:51:00] I would say it's changed a lot from probably when you were here. There's definitely a local food movement, a lot of people are really into their health, there are a lot of people that have moved here, they want to eat healthy. They want local produce. I think the demand is there. Now, the logistics of making a business work where you can produce a product that's profitable is definitely not easy to do. My island is a bit limited because our population is kind of small.

The other islands, maybe like Ohau has a million people on it and they're importing a lot of produce. The big farms that they do have are certainly not organic and they're supplying the stores and some of the restaurants. I would, I don't know what the ratio would be but it is becoming more local, but for me, I've tried to create my own brand so I make my own labels.

My background was I'm a Bachelor of Fine Arts, I went to art school at the Art Institute of Chicago and I did web design for a while, so I knew how to do graphics and so I was able to make my own color labels to get that USDA organic label on it. People associate that with a brand and I found that when I put my own label on my products that really increased sales as opposed to just having something generic, or no label at all. That allowed me to add on other products of my brand, I think that creates kind of customer loyalty that you can keep strong sales going and I've even developed relationships with the produce managers and even just employees that work in the produce department.

I see them on a regular basis and I have a really good rapport with them and they even tell me that they recommend my products to their customers because they know, it's a good quality as opposed to making a more of a commodity product really matter, it comes from or no name. That's not the kind of farming I want to do because I want it to be unique, stand out for its quality something that people can remember when they go back to the store to go buy. That's worked out well for me, I've actually never done like a farmer's market even though we have a really well-known farmers market in Hilo.

I found that a lot of people are just selling the same stuff and maybe the people that go there they might find a vendor they like or whatever, but the prices weren't that great. I found and then you're competing with all these other people and you're spending your time sitting there at the farmer's market when I'd rather be farming myself, or doing something else besides being at a farmer's market.

That is why I started the CSA because I wanted to farm, I didn't want to stand at a farmers market, or having to worry about the marketing aspect to it. In the beginning, the CSA worked out good for me because I could get prepaid and that the logistics of them picking up was pretty easy. I can do it all in one day or even sometimes just half a day where the CSA would be dropped off by, say, lunchtime and then I'm pretty much done.

I guess if you can find your customers that are willing to be loyal and seek your products out, I think you can make it work. It's taking me a while to find that niche and develop my skills and just all the different, the type of skill sets that farming requires to manage your business to make a good quality product that



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people want to buy. I mean there's so many nuances to that. I don't know, I mean I guess it's like maybe anywhere else as far as like there's quite a big demand for organic healthy produce.

I guess through me making my own brand, my own label, that people identify with that I've gotten that customer loyalty where the sales have remained really well, and sometimes at certain times a year I can't meet that demand because maybe it's because there's enough through it, like in the wintertime it is just slamming busy.

It's slowed off a little bit this summer but not much. In fact, I don't even mind because I want to work on other projects. It's been good for me. I've seen other people struggle where they, I think they get excited to farm here because you could idealize what that might be like because we don't have frost. We don't have a winter and but yet, we have a whole other slew of issues that you might not experience on the mainland.

I think people get disgruntled fast because they're trying to do too much at one time, and they're encountering way too many problems and so they give up. I've seen a few people do that just personally and I've heard a lot of other stories about people trying to make a farm visits here and they decide not to do it, because it's just there's just too many problems that they're encountering and it's not profitable and they do something else.

[00:57:30] First of all, there's quite a bit of past pressure without our winters. We have every insect under the sun, like for example, just like growing cover crops, if you seed your bed, how these birds come in, they will literally eat most of your seed. Where you might get 10%, 15% germination because the birds have eaten the rest of it. I found a way to overcome that is you've got to put some cover on it, so I'll put the insects screening on top of the soil. That's just one example but insect pressure, disease pressure, crop failures, heat stress. A lot of crop failure. There was one particular friend who he was going at it really ambitiously and he just had so much crop failure that it was just so, he was so disgruntled by it but he so he just quit, because he wasn't getting enough return on his input into the business and it just wasn't working.

I think maybe, too, people don't want to have a market ready. They kind of go into it and start doing some things and maybe they sell the farmer's market or they're trying to sell the restaurants. It's tough to do that because you're going to be putting a lot of time into it, and your return on that labor isn't going to be so great in the beginning at least. Restaurants, there's definitely a market there and I used to work with a big restaurant here Hilo Bay Café. They worked well for me for a while because they had a really good chef that really pushed local products, and I really like working with them, and then now he moved away and then they had a new chef come in who kind of nitpicked at the prices and was always trying to negotiate with me to lower the price.

I just said that's enough, I'm going to get good price for the health food store, I'm done picking your charge in 30 a plate, why are you down size the price by \$2 a pound or whatever the way it was, finding that market is key, and I think maybe going at it a too big to think you're going to suddenly get all this income without any problems.



Well, that isn't going to happen if you don't have the experience in established market. I think one reason why I was been able to make this work is because I went into a very small and made incremental changes to gradually accommodate more demand. It was never too big where I could handle it or had problems or I couldn't manage that to still make an income from farming. I don't know maybe I love doing it so I just kept at it and I don't know what to say about that.

Chris Blanchard: We talked earlier about the challenge of getting supplies in Hawaii and I think you know one of the things that I would think would be the hardest would be getting things like fertilizers and soil amendments it's because they're heavy and if they aren't heavy they're bulky. What are you doing for fertilizers and soil amendments there?

Chad Wasserman: That's a really good question, and that's a big challenge here because we have to pay more expensive freight charges, we're 2,500 miles away from the West Coast. I did it. I did do some cover cropping on the outside and even for that I had to repay ridiculous prices. I would pay more for the shipping than the cost of the seed often. That was one way, I don't rely on that anymore. I do purchase inputs whether it be like oyster shell, we do crab meal, Azomite.

I guess I'm on a smaller scale so and the profitability of my products are such that I can purchase those inputs and still have a positive cash flow. One of the biggest improvements that I made in my farm was being able to make my own worm compost. I got really interested in making compost when I learned about the soil biology and how much of a critical role that play is into preventing diseases and pest and improving your fertility. You can't purchase commercial compost here, like there's no truck deliveries, there's really no one making it to purchase it commercially. With our rainfall I can't just have an open compost pile because you get a lot of leaching, you're having rain and we also have like these fire ants here that are attracted to compost piles.

I wanted something really contained and I looked into vessel composting and that was really expensive to have that kind of structure purchased here without even thinking about the shipping. I really got into learning about vermicomposting, and I purchased a Worm Wigwam and use that in our carport in a covered structure. I produce about 50 to 60 pounds a week of worm compost that's really, really high-quality worm compost. That gets used in my seed starting mix, as well as directly into all the beds into my high tunnels. That actually has reduced my input costs at least by 50%, and I think I incrementally having to reduce that even more actually, or the input cost of buying off-farm input products to using more worm compost, because of the advantages as with your traditional compost pile, you have to turn it, you have the aerate it.

You have to let it reach a certain temperature and then you turn it, and then you have to wait certain amount of days. The beauty of worm compost is the worms are doing all that turning an aeration for you. They'd be little willing workers on your farm and they're always reproducing, I'm amazed when I do go through my worm compost and I sift it through and geez, there's like all these baby worms and there's cocoons. They're really productive. Through trial and error I've developed a system where, I do use coconut coir. I do buy that but



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that is relatively inexpensive compared to what it would cost for me to buy a bag of worm compost. I would have to do the math for you, but I go through a bale of coconut core maybe every other week or something like that. Then I take all my farm waste, kitchen waste. but mainly farm waste from cold leaves and stems and crop residue.

What I do actually is I shred that in a BCS Caravaggi Shredder, and on a regular basis say I guess maybe five times a week, I put a small layer of that shredded fresh vegetable waste along with a coconut coir. I keep on layering that and the worm population has grown where they've eaten through everything within a day or two. It is astonishing how rapidly they will consume the organic matter if it's prepared properly. I've actually even changing the system now where I'm going to pre-thermal compost, some of that material and then feed it to the worms, because you do get a bit of a thermal heat effects if you apply enough of that.

You don't want to overdo that. You can cause a lot of problems, so in small amounts it's okay but I'm actually start experimenting where you go through a thermal heat process. Once it's cooled down then you feed that material to the worms, and then they process it all of that into their worm compost or worm poop to like a turning tumbler compost that I'm constructing on my farm with using wood post and basically just garbage bins and I'm using a metal pipe to turn it.

[01:07:00] That's a new thing, and I've had pretty good success just feeding it this raw vegetable material with the coconut coir. At the bottom it has a winch that you turn and you collect all your material at the bottom, and it is just super rich that just deepest darkest smells like the forest floor. All the microbes those that worm compost has is rich diverse than the stuff you could buy doesn't have that because they're using like dairy manure and one feed source. For my seed starting mix, I use though the worm compost and like just Sunshine Mix Number Three.

Maybe like at a 15% ratio of worm compost to the potting soil. I do use a little bit of like the powdered basil mite just to get of a kind of mineral spectrum, and make sure I've got all my minerals available. My transplants are just uber, uber healthy especially when I compare it to what before I had the worm compost. The lettuce starts I have are just, they are just bulletproof. When I go to transplant it's a quick turnover because I've got this beautiful healthy transplant from my worm compost that allows my system to have a fast turnaround and a very healthy plants.

The healthier you can make here your plants, it just makes your job easier because when you're processing and you're going through your leaves and I'm a perfectionist. If I see one little munch of a mite or something, or whatever on a leaf I discard it because I don't want customers to, they're paying a premium so I won't want that to be in their mix. I've noticed with the worm compost I culled so much less and that makes your job easier when you're processing and washing and sorting your vegetables and packing.

When you don't have much insect damage it just makes it easy, it makes it more profitable because you're pulling less product and you're selling more. You have



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this healthier product that has very little or no insect damage on it, no disease. I think the customers notice that and that's why I've been able to establish a good market and demand, is because my products are, they're tasty. There's not the insect damage, and there's a certain level of quality that I think lacks in the imported products or my competition.

I don't I don't want to brag or anything but I feel like the key to that success has been the no-till system and the worm castings. Those two things have really provided my system with the uber healthy, visually beautiful product that is going to out sell the imported product or the local competition. I've even I've had times where the produce manager tells me they had some of their imported salad mix go bad, because no one was buying it next to mine.

I think that goes a lot into taking that attention to detail and having the healthy product that doesn't have any insects or it has a good flavor to it. Customers know that and taste it when they buy those products.

Chris Blanchard: Absolutely, so I'm really interested in the system that you're using for producing the worm compost. You talked about the feedstocks that you're using, the farm waste and shredding those and then using the coconut coir along with that. You mentioned this tool the Worm Wigwam and I'm familiar with these because I happened to have one on my farm during the last few years that I was farming, and I failed with the Worm Wigwam. I'd like it if you could tell us like what is a Worm Wigwam and what does it look like and how does it work? Why that over another system for vermicomposting?

Chad Wasserman: It's a flow through worm composting system as opposed to a kind of a closed in system. The idea is that you're adding your feedstock to the top and the worms are always rising to the top to feed on that new material. Over time, the finished castings are going to go to the bottom. And the nice feature of the Worm Wigwam is it has a chamber on the bottom that is accessible just through a panel that you take off and that's where your finished worm castings are going to end up. It's got a winch with just a handle that you turn and it literally just shaves off the finished worm compost at the bottom.

[01:13:00] It's a really well designed unit. They have more expensive units that you can get where they have like electrical winch that will shave all the worm castings for you. Those are a lot more expensive. They take up a lot more space and I like these Worm Wigwams because I only have one now, but I actually am going to be buying a new one surely and maybe even two. I'm getting a lot of worm castings like I said about 50 to 60 pounds per week.

You do need to really know the ins and outs of worm composting. There are certain things that you don't want to feed them when you establish your worm population in the beginning, unless you can buy enough worms. We have a limitation in Hawaii we can't import worms from the mainland. We have to either buy them from someone you know or you got to get your own worms. That's exactly what I did as I ... In the beginning, I just went around into a pile of cut grass or something rotting or actually one of the best things was in bananas when they rot after you've cut your bananas down, in the core, there's going to be a whole bunch of worms on the inside because all that material on the inside is rotting and it's moist it's the perfect environment for them, so I would go and



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open these cores of cut banana, I guess the stock I mean stem of the plant. It would just be there's just pounds of worms inside. I went around and collected as much as I could. Even palms, if you go underneath them like a dead palm frond, you'll find underneath as that rots. There's a whole bunch of worms inside there that I don't ... it's amazing they can do this, they somehow climb up the palm tree and they live in there.

You can open them up and then I'd find a bunch of worms in there. I went around and collected as many worms as I could or maybe like a month or two and kept on adding them to my worm wigwam. One big thing to be careful of is, you never want to overfeed them too much in the beginning, and a lot of people make that mistake because if it overheats they'll leave, they'll let you know that this isn't working out for them because if you put too much material in there, and there's too much thermal heat they just can't breathe so they will exit your system.

You have to start out slow and then incrementally add more food feedstock as they're able to process that material, and even in the instructions it says, it's going to take about five months before you can start harvesting your worm castings from the Worm Wigwam, because you have to build those layers up and the population has to build where you've got it near the top of the unit. At the bottom, if you've done it right you can start harvesting your finished castings on the bottom.

You got to be careful what you feed them, you don't want to feed them too much acidic, items like orange peels or onions, minimize or avoid completely ... I find that they like stuff shredded up because it breaks a lot of the cellular walls of vegetable matter, or even like egg shells or whatnot. It blends everything up together, and did I say about the shredder? It's not going to make like a liquid. It just shatters it in its small bits. Those quickly become available for the worms to eat, but you wouldn't want to use a blender to make like a smoothie or something for your worms, because that's too much liquid and that's going to overheat and be too anaerobic.

There's definitely some finesse to it to learning about it. It's probably more difficult than like traditional thermal compost, but once you learn how to do it, you have a good unit like the Worm Wigwam it becomes really easy. Honestly, I spent maybe 10 minutes every other day shredding and putting on my Worm Wigwam and adding some coconut core and then I'm done. It's really fast so you have to make sure your worm population is sufficient to handle the feedstock that you give it. Also, critically important is balancing your carbon to nitrogen ratio so you want to make sure you can even go put more carbon than nitrogen more browns to greens than you might in like a thermal compost, because they need that aeration and that material that is going to balance out the high nitrogen green matter that you feed your worm bin.

Keeping the balance of the carbon to nitrogen, and not overfeeding them and having a sufficient worm population is I would say the key to making a worm bin work. That's not the only worm, I actually have some garbage bins that I've converted into a worm bin, and they're actually working quite well because I have material that I don't really want to feed to my worms or go to the seed starting mix or my high tunnel. Now, I use them on my fruit trees, and so I have



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these alternate kind of worm bins and as long as you don't overdo it and you make sure there's enough carbon in it, and actually it's interesting because they were originally like thermal compost bins, and the worms just found their way in from the outside and they just traveled up there.

Now, if I go to and dig out the material below I mean there's a really good worm population there. When I do go to start a new Worm Wigwam, my idea is I'm going to sift through and pole this huge worm population out of these alternate worm bins, and I'll start my new worm bin with those worms to have a sufficient population to really get that going, because the way I look at it is, I cannot make enough of this stuff.

It really is just an amazing fertility tool that it just makes everything healthier and I don't know if you've heard of Elaine Ingham in the soil food web, but if you listen to some of the lectures they'll show you how to use a microscope and look at that worm compost and you can see the protozoa and even fungi. If you have a powerful enough microscope bacteria, and even some like fungal- and bacterial-feeding nematodes, and all of those organisms. They're going to make your soil just all the more healthier and cycle through nutrients and then off diseases and pass.

Every farm has like a whole different I guess the game-changing things that improve their system to make their farm work or more sustainable. That's been a really big one is the worm composting it's just a way to manage your waste and produce your own compost. The more that I can produce like I was saying the less off farm inputs I have to buy. That really helps sell your pocketbook when you don't have to buy all these off farm input. I like a saying that Gabe Brown uses that he likes to sign the back of the check, instead of the front of the check.

I think that's the way to go, the more you can produce your own inputs and stop writing checks for these expensive inputs, you're going to make your firm financially sustainable. Not only that it's just I guess like from ecological point of view it's just nice to know you're recycling your waste and making it into really the most valuable input on the farm.

Because you've got to control your costs, I mean that is like, I think that's what we were talking about before or why a lot of people get disgruntled and like farming here is that, and we're talking about the cost of farming it in Hawaii, and you look at the cost of all that machinery and inputs, the cost of land. It turns off a lot of people I think because you got to be in the black somehow.

Chris Blanchard: With that Chad, we're going to turn to our lightning round right after we get a word from one more sponsor.

Chad Wasserman: All right.

Chris Blanchard: This lightning round as well as granular support for the Farmer to Farmer Podcast is brought to you by Vermont Compost Company, makers of Fort Vee and Fort Light Potting Mixes for organic growers since 1992. Founder and owner Karl Homer got his start as an organic vegetable core, where he learned the



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quality transplants really mattered and the quality transplants home from quality potting soils.

Just like the donkey in their logo, Vermont Compost Company potting soils aren't glitzy or glamorous, they're steadfast and consistent, stubbornly making certain that your transplants can get everything they need from a few cubic centimeters of soil, and part of that is exactly what Chad was talking about today. You really want a compost that is rich in diversity rather than just a large quantity of somebody's waste products.

Vermont Compost makes their compost from a wide array of feedstocks selected what they bring to the compost and to the potting soil made from it, rather than just taking what they can get or just using what they've got on the farm. When good transplants can make such a huge difference in your farming system, why would you settle for anything but the best? [Vermontcompost.com](http://Vermontcompost.com).

[01:24:00] Hey Chad, what's your favorite tool on the farm?

Chad Wasserman: Yeah, you know I thought about this already and I don't know if this applies but I was going to go with my computer. That's something I just absolutely cannot live without when it comes to farming. I don't really have another tool that I like as much when it comes to... just I've learned so much from the internet and like your podcast, and a lot of other lectures and all that kind of thing. I would say that the computer has been the most beneficial tool for me because I've been able to learn about farming, farming organically, learning about soil biology and about all the different tools and techniques.

I've gotten so much out of like listening to like J.M. Fortier's lectures about market farming, like the Curtis Stone in the Urban Farmer. So many other lectures, I think you interviewed him once, Bob Cannard, really just totally different thinking about farming, and I was talking about Gabe Brown, just the ability with the internet and having so much information available to you and being where I am, I'm thousands of miles away.

I felt like I've been able to get almost like a college degree in organic farming from learning all this information for free basically, and I don't know what I ... I wouldn't be able to do what I'd do without having been exposed to all that diverse information and kind of picking and choosing from whether it be leaning on the soil scientist to different farms and their techniques and tools, and trying to put all that together into a system that makes sense for your environment and situation.

I'm just learning by example and trying out a new technique and before you make a big purchase on some implement or some machine or tool, just go to YouTube and seeing what other people are using it for and what their experiences are. You can learn so much, I mean just your podcast, listening to all these different other farmers and how they got started and how they found their markets.

I think I could do without my tractors, I don't know what I do about mowing the lawn but being no till I don't need a tractor, I could do without a lot of my equipment I think, temporarily, at least but it would be really hard to be without



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my computer. Not only just for the information aspect to it, but when you put all your sales into a spreadsheet it really helps you analyze what your most profitable crops are, so you can eliminate the things that aren't profitable and you just can't do that without a computer and to keep all that information centralized, and being able to analyze that and reflect on what your best sales are and what your input costs are into that crop, and to make it profitable.

I absolutely, I have to have my computer. I use my computer more than I do my tractor by far. I've learned so much and I've decided to change my system of farming based upon what I've learned from other farmers and other ways of thinking.

Chris Blanchard: Chad, every farmer has made mistakes as they've grown their farm, what's the mistake that you made that you've learned the most from?

Chad Wasserman: I think the mistake that a lot of farmers make is trying to do way too much all in the beginning, and getting disgruntled about it and having crop failures from trying to do way too much. I think having a CSA and you want to please your customers with having a diverse set of vegetables in their baskets that, I think I spread myself way too thin in the beginning. I made it a lot hotter myself than I needed to, that I would think that would be my biggest mistake is just being too ambitious and trying to do ... In the beginning I was doing like asparagus and I was trying to do melon, and all these different type of squashes, and I felt like I was having some success.

Some things would be successful and some things wouldn't but it was really stressful, just having so much space with so many different things and I think that was just really problematic as, with the CSA it's hard to analyze the financials of each crop because everything it's thrown into a basket, which is one of the reason why I moved away from the CSA. I guess I would put it that just trying to do way too much in the beginning, we had egg layers too in the beginning, I mixed up because that became not very profitable and just too much work.

[01:30:30] I think I got a little bit burnout from time to time by just trying to do way too many crops and offering too many things, that hurt my financials because I was buying all these different seed and that you're putting the inputs into all these different diverse crops. It's really hard to make the numbers work when you're doing too much.

I would say that's one of the biggest mistakes I made was just being too ambitious and trying to do too much.

Chris Blanchard: What's your favorite crop to grow?

Chad Wasserman: My number one crop favorite to grow is definitely basil, in terms of the labor, it's really, really by far most the most profitable crop for me. I love the aroma when I processing it, I actually don't really eat that much basil myself, but I might put some soups or flavor some things up a little bit, but I'm not a big pesto person, but I love the aroma I love the ... It's just a beautiful luscious crop that, I mean it's a fresh crop that you can't really ... It's hard to import basil, so I've been able to establish a good market for that.



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I mean, one problem is you get the basil downy mildew, but I've been able to find ways to avoid that, and I always cycle through and do new planting, so I constantly have a replacement up ahead. With our humidity here it can be a problem, but I've been able to circumvent that through healthy farming practices, the soil biology.

Chris Blanchard: Finally, if you could go back in time and tell your beginning farmer self one thing, what would it be?

Chad Wasserman: [01:32:30] I would say keep it simple and focus on quality over quantity. You can't really focus in on quality if you're growing too many different things always, my experience has been that you can't, if you're growing too many different crops. It's really hard to focus in and really develop a very high quality product, and so I would say keep it simple and really hyper-focused in on the quality over quantity. Then once you've found your winner, and for me that was like the basil, the Salanova lettuce. Then I've been able to scale up on those crops that are winners because I've managed to develop you know a threshold of quality that is very marketable and profitable. I guess that would be the number one thing is focus on quality over quantity and keep it simple.

Chris Blanchard: Chad, thank you so much for being part of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast today.

Chad Wasserman: Oh, it's been my pleasure, Chris. It's been my pleasure. If you ever come up to the big island you have to come for a visit and love to have you out here, and I really enjoy your show. I've learned a lot from it and keep it going.

Chris Blanchard: [01:34:00] Thank you so much. All right so wrapping up here, I'll say again that this Episode 130 of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast, you could find it for the show it [farmertofarmerpodcast.com](http://farmertofarmerpodcast.com) by looking on the episodes page or just searching or Wasserman that's, W-A-S-S-E-R-M-A-N. What does that mean, find the notes for the show? I take all the links for tools that guest mentioned, and I get a summary up there? We've got links to the transcripts, so the transcripts for this episode is brought to you by Earth Tools, offering the most complete selection of walk-behind farming equipment and high quality garden tools in North America. By Rock Dust Local, the first company in North America specializing in local sourcing and delivery of the best rock dust, and biochar for organic farming.

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Finally, please let me know who you would like hear from on the show, through the suggestions [farmertofarmerpodcast.com](https://farmertofarmerpodcast.com). I'll do my best to get them on the show.

Thank you for listening. Be safe out there. Keep tractor running.