

# Longmont Conservationist District recognizes Red Wagon Farm as 2021 Conservationist of the Year



*Wyatt Barnes stands inside one of Red Wagon's high tunnels chalk full of tomato plants*

Wyatt Barnes and Amy Tisdale have owned and operated Red Wagon Farm for nearly two decades.

Wyatt and Amy describe themselves as accidental farmers. After moving to Boulder from Pennsylvania, Wyatt took a job on a farm in Boulder County in the drought of 2002. In 2004, Wyatt and Amy became the farm owners. The early years were a struggle combating weedy fields, no proper equipment, and little profit, despite selling large quantities of produce at many farmers markets and their farm stand. Wyatt and Amy persevered, and over time they have improved

all aspects of their operation.

Today, Red Wagon manages 85 acres of property in Boulder County –



*Ewes and lambs graze at Red Wagon Farm*

70 acres of Boulder County Open Space and 15 acres of private property off Valmont Road. When Wyatt and Amy received the lease from Boulder County in 2010, they immediately began amending the soil and converting the old dairy and hay farm into a thriving vegetable farm. For the past two seasons, Red Wagon has leased a portion of their property to another local farm for sheep grazing. The sheep are

reinvigorating a worn-out hay field. The animals rotate through the pasture using portable electric fence.

Wyatt understands you can't just take from the soil. He explains that happy healthy soil leads to happy, healthy plants – and fewer disease and insect problems. They have used compost and cover crops to improve the soil health. One cover crop mix includes vetch, rye, peas, and crimson clover. Red Wagon successfully turns wood chips into rich compost on the farm using worms. Wyatt and Amy plant flowering plants for beneficial insects as well as flowering and fruiting trees. They often see bobolink, dickcissel and horned larks adding to the diversity of the farm. Red Wagon has invested in extensive infrastructure improvements including drain tiles, irrigation improvements, and high tunnels to improve efficiency and the use of property's natural resources.

Red Wagon plants weekly successions from April through October; well over 100 varieties combined. They have provided the community fall entertainment with their pumpkin patch. Several alpacas and chickens also call Red Wagon home. The farm faces the same challenges as many in Boulder County such as staff turnover, heavy clay soils, insect pests, and extensive food safety requirements. Red Wagon proudly serves 550 CSA customers and sells fresh produce and herbs to a dozen local restaurants. The Longmont Conservation District is proud to name Red Wagon Farm as the 2021 Longmont Conservationist of the Year.



*Wyatt points to several species in a thigh high cover crop mix*

## *Congratulations!*