



Where The Land, Food, and People Come Together!

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Final Newsletter

Field Walk...

It seems that the cold weather has finally settled in; just in time as Segue and I lifted up the last of the tomato stakes last week, took down the chicken fence, and piled all the equipment, harvest containers, and picnic tables into the barn for the winter. The farm is officially put to rest for the season. The soil is covered by a nourishing cover crop of oats and peas and we are nourishing our body and mind with some much needed change of pace and down time. We hope all of you find a little of these comforts this winter!

At the end of the season, we like to write a short review of the past twenty-six weeks. During the harvest season we have a spreadsheet in which we record the quantity of produce harvested everyday. Here are the total numbers for our fifth year:

We had 200 CSA members, attended two farmers markets and grew on five and a half cultivated acres. No pigs this year, but we did raise fifty laying hens which toughed it out alongside us during the hot summer. Our experiment of guinea hens didn't pan out and they probably ended up traumatizing the chickens, so no more guinea hens for now. It was fun trying our hand at something new though!

Our intern program was a success for the third year in a row. In the spring, five Principia students helped us get the farm off to a good start. Segue and I were also lucky to have two interns, Helen Yane, from St. Louis, who was with us the whole season. Emma Master, also from St. Louis, joined us during the summer months and has now returned to Warren Wilson College. There was a lot of laughter in the fields this year, which helped the miserable summer feel a little less so. They all got their hands dirty in every aspect of the farm, from seeding in the greenhouse, to planting, weeding, harvesting, tractor driving, and attending farmer's markets. We couldn't have done any of it without them.

At this point we are usually interviewing new candidates for the intern positions for next season, **but we are happy to announce that we have all our intern positions filled for 2012. Josh and Stephanie Mueller** will be joining us starting in April. They both graduated from SLU in 2009 (Josh in finance and Stephanie in nutrition) and last season worked on Ten Lakes Farm, a CSA farm in Montana. They moved back to St. Louis, hoping to settle somewhere here in the Midwest and begin their own farm in 2013. They come already with a lot of experience, passion and dedication, and are avid bike riders. We can't wait to teach them everything we know about growing in this crazy St. Louis weather. **In addition, we are thrilled to have Helen come back for round two next year.** She will be filling Emma's shoes, and interning on the farm just during the summer months. Segue and I feel so fortunate to have such a great team already lined up!!

For number lovers in our group, **the total production for 2011 was 79,878 pounds**-(that's close to 40 tons of produce picked by just four strong backs)! It is almost eight thousand pounds more than last year, which accurately reflects our CSA expansion and the good growing weather in the spring and early summer; but also the difficult time we had during the summer through early fall.

Averaged, each member ate 530 pounds of organic vegetables, about 20 pounds a week (less in the spring, more in the summer), with an average cost then of \$.96 a pound (half total poundage if you were a 13 week member). **We also did a farmer's market comparison and if full share members had bought the equivalent of their share at the market, they would have spent \$860. If you have ever wondered if CSA is a good deal--here is the proof!**

In 2012 we will be expanding our CSA by 40 more members--so please help us spread the word about the variety, quality and excellent value of our CSA. If you know of an individual or family that loves to cook (and has time!), wants to eat healthier, and support local farms, please pass our information along. We appreciate it!!

This winter will be spent doing our bookkeeping, taxes, seed ordering and field planning. For the farm to run smoothly in June, a lot of meticulous planning and problem solving happens this time of year. We will be working closely with a new soil/CSA consultant from Midwest Bio-Ag (the same company that has provided most of our organic fertilizers in the past) to pinpoint ways to improve our soil structure, bring our nutrient imbalances into balance, and understand the source for all the disease pressure we faced this last season. After a several year break from organic farming conferences, we will be attending the Southern Organic Farming Conference in Little Rock, AK in January and see who and what is new in our field.

Finally, Segue will be quite busy with lots of infrastructure projects: we will be rebuilding our hen house (to accommodate 125 chickens), installing a new walk-in-cooler, and building two top bar beehives to get us started out in beekeeping.

That's a brief look into 2012. Segue, Diego and I wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and we will see you again in May!

A Few More Fun Farm Food Facts:

--did it feel like you were swimming in zucchini and summer squash this year?--You were! We grew 8900 pounds. That's over 50 pounds of zucchini and summer squash per member for 15 out of the 25 weeks!
--a lot of crop yields increased by 30%: potatoes, beets, cucumbers, and carrots. Other crops saw less production: peppers, watermelons and winter squash. Many stayed even with last year.
--tomatoes were very tasty this year and very abundant. We doubled our yield from last year--10,100 pounds!
--Fennel--our new crop for 2011 did great--410 pounds--and will be on our permanent list thanks to your overwhelmingly positive response.
--Diego loves broccoli and we had plenty to feed him this year. Our broccoli harvest was 2400 pounds all together; we had broccoli for eight weeks this season--four in the spring and four in the fall.