



Where the Land, Food, and People Come Together!

March 2011
Vol 5, Issue 1

Our 5th season--a small milestone!!

Greetings from the snow covered fields of Three Rivers Community Farm in Elsah, IL! Welcome to all new farm members and welcome back to all of you alums. Yes, I said "snow covered!" We've been asking ourselves "Is it spring yet?" "Or winter?" "Or summer?" All three, really, if you look at our weather during the month of March. We've never seen such wild swings. Snow to start the week, then 83 degrees just a few days later. Then the next week starts out in the low 80's, but finishes with three inches of snow. How's a farmer to react? In the spring, we always feel like we are pushing the envelope by getting in the fields as early as possible so that the first few weeks of CSA pick up can start with a bang. Sometimes it pays off; other times we pay; always there is a Plan B! On March 21st, when it was in the low 80's, we planted out all our kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and swiss chard and seeded 4000 feet of peas, not expecting snow by the end of the week. All of these crops deal fine with cool weather, but we are asking a lot from barely established transplants--a week of cold nights and heavy snow cover. Plants have a strong will to survive, however--they are a lot hardy than we give them credit for. We checked in on them Monday morning, and they have pulled through just fine, but we always have a back up plan in case they don't--reseed and replant it all ASAP!!

We've been very busy this winter and spring with numerous infrastructure projects, hiring of interns, ordering seeds and plants, adding compost and soil amendments to our fields and much more! In early March we expanded our deer fence to include another two acres--a project that Segue completed almost entirely on his own. In April, we will be installing a nice walkway (stroller friendly) leading up to the barn. We purchased a storage shed as every year farm tools mysteriously multiply. And we've been fortunate to work with a sustainability class at Principia to explore other electricity options to power our cooler and are currently deciding on just the right one--hopefully no more loud, gas-guzzling generator!

Our most expensive and long-term improvement to the farm will be planted the second week of April--rhubarb, raspberries, and blackberries. We purchased over 300 rhubarb plants, 300 raspberries, 200 blackberries,

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The chickens and guinea hens are settling in to their new surroundings while Diego is getting busy rebuilding the farm's many small engines!



We have started a Facebook Page!



We've always thought of our CSA members as friends; now you can make it official!

As requested by many of you, we have started a facebook page. Our hopes with this page is that the content will be mainly posted by you all! We encourage you, as the season starts and rolls along, to post your comments, recipes, questions, photos! Let's keep it positive!! If you have any issues with the farm, please contact us through our farm email (info@threeriverscommunityfarm.com) or most preferrably, by phone: 618-374-9470. We will do our best to post updates to facebook as often as our work schedule allows, but we hope, you, our members, will make it your own!!

Update from Live Springs Farm, Carrolton, IL



Hi! From Alex, Bobbi, and Rowan:

Again this season we will be working with Bobbi and Alex from Live Springs Farm in Carrolton, IL. Bobbi and Alex had a very successful season last year and will be expanding their outlets and offerings to accommodate the growing demand for their fine meat and egg products. This year, their farm will also include 200 laying hens, many more pastured poultry sales, and potentially grass-fed beef in late Fall. **Live Springs will be at the farm Friday, May 27th and Friday, June 10th during CSA pick up hours** to sell pork and possibly eggs and chicken. Certain weeks that they don't visit the farm, they will be taking preorders through their website, which can then be picked up at our farm either Tuesday or Friday during CSA pick up hours (look for future emails concerning the preorder system).

For those who live in St. Louis, Live Springs will now be attending all the markets we do: Schlafly in Maplewood on Wednesdays from 4-7PM and the Tower Grove market on Saturday mornings from 8AM-Noon. In addition, they attend the Ferguson farmer's market on Saturday mornings. So look for them at the markets (maybe we will be neighbors)!! Please visit their website (www.livespringsfarm.com) or their Live Springs Farm facebook page to learn more about their farm and get on their mailing list. They can also be reached at 217-942-5060.

One last thing we would like to mention about Live Springs Farm is the inspiring model of financing that has made their farm possible. This movement is called "Slow Money" and takes its cues from the "Slow Food" movement. The main goal of this movement is to encourage folks to invest 1% of their assets in sustainable farms and local food systems. There is a local St. Louis chapter being started by Kelly Childs of Slow Food St. Louis and we are working with this group to see what alternative forms of financing might be available for our farm. For more information or to get involved please visit www.slowmoney.org or email Kelly Childs at kelly@slowfoodSTL.org or kellychilds@gmail.com.

What We've Been Reading this Winter...



Everyone asks "What do you do all winter?" Among the many responsibilities are tax preparation, creating field plans, ordering seeds, tools, and supplies like row covers, rubberbands, and quart containers; but we also have some down time to get caught up on the latest literary and educational materials about the organic farming life. **Here were some of our favorites:**

The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love by Kristin Kimball: A truly inspiring look at Essex Farm in upstate New York--a "whole diet" CSA where every Friday evening, all year round, a hundred people pick up their weekly share of most food staples: beef, pork, chicken, milk, eggs, maple syrup, grains, flours, dried beans, herbs, fruits and vegetables. This is the CSA farm of the future, we think, and would love to take Three Rivers more in this direction!!

The Organic Farming Manual by Ann Larkin Hansen: If you took a class on organic agriculture in college, this would be your textbook! This book spans every consideration: from organic farming's roots, to the controversy surrounding "certified organic," to profiles of close to thirty working organic farms in the US. Also covered: finding land, building healthy soils, organic vegetable, orchard, and livestock production, marketing, and everything else! There is a lot of practical information in this book and will be a resource we turn to often during many seasons to come.

Meat: A Benign Extravagance by Simon Fairlie
Do you believe there are only two ways of thinking when it comes to meat consumption: full-on carnivore or veganism? This book provides the most thorough research favoring small-scale, holistic, integrated farm systems--that include free-range livestock--as the definitive answer to how the human race is going to feed itself in the years ahead. It is the most thorough, research supported book I've read on this topic.

The Food Matters Cookbook by Mark Bittman
This cookbook is perfect for any CSA member with over 500 recipes for easy, delicious foods that are as good for you as they are for the planet. I have spent the winter testing out many of the recipes in this book--plan to see lots in our monthly newsletters.

About the FOOD!

Unusual Varieties=Exceptional Taste!

Deciding on varieties is a little like writing out a Christmas wish list. We try to grow a mix of productive hybrids and traditional heirloom varieties. Here is just a sampling of the new, quirky, and downright bizarre vegetables that we will be trying out this season:

jumbo italian flat-podded green bean
kermit thai eggplant
orion fennel
king richard baby leek
mascara red oakleaf lettuce
boris banana peppers
sunburst patti pan summer squash
toma verde tomatillos
red cardinal spinach
sakura honey cherry tomato
carmen red pepper
tomato berry garden cherry tomato
sugar ann snap pea
lemon gold cherry tomato
honey orange melon
moonglow heirloom tomato
yugoslavian red butterhead lettuce



Farm Events

see you there....

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!

April 30th, Saturday, 9-Noon: Spring Planting Day: Want to get your hands dirty and help us plant flowers, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant? Come see the farm at the height of spring!! Pizza lunch provided for volunteers. *Rain cancels the event.*

May 14th - 21st: The **first week of pick-up**, Tuesday and Friday from 2-7 PM at the farm, or Saturday and Wednesday at various drop off sites in St Louis; with Mother Nature's cooperation of course!



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which will hopefully give us copious amounts of berries and rhubarb for at least the next decade or two or three!

Our interns for this season are stellar! We are happy to have on the farm for the full season, Helen Yane. She currently works for Mayor Francis Slay as his environmental coordinator. She is exploring the viability of small scale vegetable farming as she contemplates returning to her own family's homestead back in Indiana. Helen brings to our farm the right balance of experience and interest, also a fun, laid-back attitude. Our second intern is Emma Master, currently a student at Warren Wilson College. She will be with us for the summer months and we are excited to have her youthful energy and enthusiasm. We are also fortunate to be partnering with Principia College again to host five students as Spring Quarter interns--look for Emily, Erin, Eric, Hayden and Cristi around the farm in April and May!

The season has started rolling down the track, not too fast yet, but by May we will be holding on for dear life. Our final destination is your dinner table with beautiful, diverse, healthy vegetables, fruits and locally sourced meat! As Kristin Kimball writes from *The Dirty Life*: "The season is never the way you think it will be. Not as perfect as you hope or as scary as you fear." Wise words to keep in mind here at the beginning! Thanks for joining and supporting our farm--here's to a great 5th season!!

Amy, Segue, and Diego

