

Dear CSA friends,

We will be starting the CSA this week! I know we're a couple of weeks behind when we like to normally start, but Mother Nature didn't play so nice this spring and we had to wait longer than we'd like to put seeds in the ground, and it took longer for the veggies to grow in the cooler weather. But we've been working around the clock during the past weeks weeding, cultivating, watering, fertilizing (organic fish kelp!) and debugging the potato plants (by hand) - but it is all paying off as the fields look great and everything is healthy and growing. We could easily wait one more week to start and have a few more veggies ready for harvest, but we think it's time to get going, even if the first week of bags are more of a sampling of what's to come. We never know exactly what we are harvesting for the week at the time of the newsletter because a lot can grow between now and picking day, but we are planning right now on kale, beets, green onions, garlic scapes, probably a head lettuce, maybe carrots, maybe a pepper or two and hopefully sugar snap peas. The "maybe", "hopefully" and "probably" are those things that are growing and we hope will be ready for harvest in a couple of days. Either way...whatever you find in your bag this week it will be organic, fresh picked that morning and delicious.

For our new members

We welcome all our new members who are giving our CSA a try for the first time this year. We hope you'll join us for many years to come. So here is a quick run down of how it all works. First of all, after I send this newsletter I will send a follow up email to members of each pick up group (Gurnee, Crystal Lake, Monday Farm and Thursday Farm), confirming your pick up location and giving you specific instructions for picking up at the location you selected. If at anytime during the season you cannot pick up, we hope you'll send a friend or family member in your place so they can enjoy a week of our fresh picked produce. If you don't have anyone to pick up for you, please let me know at least a day in advance so we don't pick veggies that won't be picked up. If you don't pick up your bag on your assigned day, we will email or text you to remind you and find out when you can come. If we don't hear back from you we will donate your box to New Horizons in Hebron. This is a Transitional Living Services location for homeless veterans trying to rebuild their lives. We also donate excess produce to them during the season when we have it available.

How are your veggies packaged?

We will again this year be packing your produce in a reusable grocery bag, donated by Dr. Jill Shaw, the owner of our Gurnee dropoff, JBS Wellness. Crystal Lake and Gurnee members will pick up a bag this week, then bring their empty bag back with them each week (or each pickup day), drop it off and take a new bag filled with their week of produce. Each week you'll just swap out the empty bag for a full bag. Farm pick up members will see their veggies packed in a produce box on our front porch. We will give you a bag when you

arrive, then you just pick out a box that looks good to you and transfer the veggies to your grocery bag. Then just bring your bag with you each week to refill with your new week of veggies. And thank you again to Dr. Shaw for being our Gurnee dropoff for the past nine years and for generously donating the CSA bags!

How will we keep you informed?

Every Sunday I will send out an email CSA newsletter (and I promise to not be too wordy). We will share information on what's going on around the farm, what we hope to be harvesting, food keeping tips and recipes. We also put each week's recipes on our website and a lot of previous years' recipes are also on the website. We're working to get all our past recipes posted, but it's an arduous process for my son who is our webmaster to get them all typed in. I welcome all suggestions if there is something you'd like me to address in the newsletters so please feel free with all suggestions!

We hope everyone will visit the farm this season

We believe one of the most rewarding parts of buying your produce from a local farmer is that you get to know your farmer and see where and how your food is grown. Your kids can run around on a traditional working farm, feed the animals, play on the swing tire and see their food in the field. We have members who have been with us since the beginning and we've seen their children grow up, knowing that part of their summer includes a weekly (or bi-weekly) visit to "the farm" to pick up their food. It's an experience they will always remember. But we also want to make locally grown produce available to those who can't make it up to Richmond on a regular basis, which is why we offer the Gurnee and Crystal Lake drop off locations. But we hope our members who don't pick up at the farm will at some point during the season come out for a visit. We'd love to show you around, so you see the process of growing your organic food. If you decide to pick up at the farm one day, just let us know a day in advance so we can switch you on the spreadsheet. If you want to come out on a weekend, just set it up with me to be sure we are here.

Thank you again to all of our members for your patience and your support of local farmers, traditional and sustainable farming, and Green Earth Farm. We are honored to share our produce with you this season!

Yours in health,
Farmer Scott & Kathy