



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter - Week 1

June 20-25

Welcome to Week 1

We're excited to begin our CSA season, and we want to welcome our returning members as well as our new members. The purpose of our weekly newsletter is to update you on things going on at the farm - what we're planting, how the season is progressing, anything we think you might be interested in hearing about the farm where your food is grown. We also want to help keep you informed of the issues around sustainable farming, organic vs. factory farmed food (or organic vs. factory farmed organic), the impact of farming on the environment, and nutritional information about the food in your box. We will also provide you with recipes to go along with some of the lesser known veggies in your box. If there is anything you'd like to see in our newsletter, please let me know and I'll do my best to add it. So welcome to week 1...

What's in your box this week?

We don't always put this in the newsletter, because what's harvestable on Monday may not be harvestable on Thursday, so from day to day the boxes may vary in a given week. However, being the beginning of the season when just a few of our many vegetables are harvestable, it's safe to say everyone will be getting the same produce in their box this week. So you can look for Romaine lettuce (red and/or green), kale, European Mesclun salad mix, Rocky Top leaf lettuce mix, green onions, possibly snap peas, and dill. So the first couple of weeks of the season are our salad makings, which leads me to the next topic...

Get your Salad Spinner!

We don't wash the vegetables before they go into your box. They stay fresher for you if they go right from the garden to your box. We may rinse some of the harder produce like potatoes or squash if they're particularly muddy, but never the greens. The best way to keep your greens fresh for a long period of time is to take them home and wash them thoroughly (of course you are only washing off dirt - no chemicals!). Then put them in a salad spinner and spin them several times to get all the water out of them. Store them in a zip lock bag in the fridge, and they're clean, fresh and crisp to use all week long. We do this with all of our greens and they easily last 2 weeks this way - just as crisp as the day we washed them. You can find inexpensive salad spinners at WalMart, Target and I've seen them at Meijer.

Your vegetable box

In the past we've asked our members to return their box each week when they pick up their new box. These boxes are an expensive investment for us and we try to re-use them for several seasons before we have to replace them, and every year we lose several that are never returned. This year, in addition to returning your boxes every time you pick up a new box, we are asking you to take one step further. *Please* wipe your box down with a wet cloth before returning it to us. We decided it's much easier for everyone to clean one box each week, rather than us cleaning 100 boxes each week. So this small step would be a huge time saver for us and greatly appreciated.

Pork CSA

We are very happy to be partnering with Brother Jon's Farm in Woodstock to offer a pork CSA to our members this season. The hogs at Brother Jon's Farm are raised on pasture and are very lean, healthy and flavorful. Their diet is supplemented with certified organic feed to insure purity and they're never given antibiotics. All hogs are Heritage breeds. For anyone interested in joining this CSA we can give you more details and get you signed up, but the specifics of the CSA are as follows:

Full Share: \$350 and includes at least 60 lbs. of meat (approximately ½ hog)

Cuts: 6 shoulders (2-3 lbs. ea.)
8 pkgs. pork chops (4 chops/pkg.)
8 pkgs. sausage (mix & match of breakfast and brats – 4 sausages per pack)
2 hams (6-8 lbs. ea.)
6 pkgs. bacon (approx. 1 lb. ea.)

Half Share: \$180 and includes at least 30 lbs. of meat (approximately ¼ hog)

Cuts: 3 shoulders (2-3 lbs. ea.)
4 pkgs. pork chops (4 chops/pkg.)
4 pkgs. sausage (2 breakfast/2 brats)
1 hams (6-8 lbs. ea.)
3 pkgs. bacon (approx. 1 lb. ea.)

It is possible to switch out some cuts for others and you can do this directly with Anthony when you've joined their CSA. If you don't want to sign up for the pork CSA but would like to purchase organic, pasture raised pork from time to time, we will have order forms with a full selection of cuts that you can order based on availability.

Closed on July 4th

The 4th of July falls on Monday this year, so we will do the Monday farm, Gurnee and Chicago drop offs on Tuesday, July 5th. If you are going to be out of town on vacation that week and will not be getting your box, please let us know in advance. You can also send a friend or family member to pick up your box in your place and allow them to enjoy our fresh produce for the week – just let us know that someone else will be picking it up.

Kale Salad - by Joanna Puciata

2 small bunches of kale, stems removed

3/4 tsp. sea salt

2 Tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil

2 Tbsp lemon juice

Some black pepper

¼ cup pine nuts

¼ cup golden raisins, soaked for 10 minutes, drained and rinsed

Garnish – red peppers, avocado slices sprinkled with lemon juice, goji berries, or anything else that you like. Improvise!

- To remove the stems, simply hold a stem with one hand. Enclose the leaves with the other hand and pull in one swift motion.
- Stack two leaves and roll tightly.
- Cut the kale crosswise into very thin strips.
- Repeat with remaining leaves.
- Add ½ tsp of salt and massage the kale with your hands to soften and make easily digestible. It will take a few minutes. It's a great exercise for the hands!
- Mix the kale, pine nuts and raisins in a bowl.
- Add lemon juice, olive oil, remaining ¼ tsp sea salt and black pepper and toss well with your hands,

massaging the dressing into the greens.

- Garnish with above suggestions and serve in an elegant bowl.

Note: Massaging veggies like kale, cabbage, carrots, and radishes makes them more digestible while retaining all their live enzymes.

Health Counselor's Notes:

According to the Environmental Working Group's 2011 report "Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce," kale is among the 12 foods on which pesticide residues have been most frequently found. For that reason buy only organic kale. It has many cancer preventative properties.

Joanna is one of our new CSA members this year and is a Raw Culinary Arts Apprentice, Flower Remedies Practitioner, and soon to be Certified Holistic Health Coach and Board Certified Drugless Practitioner.

We welcome recipes submissions for our newsletters that involve the vegetables we will be providing this season.

Thanks again to everyone for joining the CSA this season and for supporting local farmers and locally grown food.

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter - Week 2

June 27-July 2

Welcome to Week 2

We hope everyone enjoyed their salad fixins' last week. You'll see much of the same in this week's box as the lettuces and greens have about a week, maybe two before the heat causes them to bolt (flower), at which time they'll start getting bitter. We will have them back in the fall though when it gets cooler again.

What's coming up next? Well, we took a walk through all the fields today and it looks like turnips are about ready, beets, Swiss chard and kohlrabi are all getting close to harvest. So you'll be seeing those coming up in the next week or so. The squash plants have really taken off now that the weather seems to be really summer weather and the rain shows up every so often. They're several weeks away from being ready – probably closer to the end of July due to the cold spring temps, but the plants are big and healthy. I'm also really happy to report that the tomato plants (which I spent the better part of today weeding) are beautiful! They're flowering like crazy and there are even a few small tomatoes on the plants. The smell of the plants as I weeded today was heavenly. Can't wait until tomato season is upon us!

Upgrade half share to full share

We've had several people ask if they can upgrade their ½ share to a full share. The answer is yes! As long as we have shares available, any half share members that decide they'd like a box of veggies every week can upgrade to a full share for the price difference between the two which is \$175. Just let me know and we'll get you switched over.

We need all the friends we can get!

If you are on Facebook or Twitter, please "like" or "follow" us on our Green Earth Farm pages. I try to put farm updates and pictures on both every few days, so it's a great way to keep in touch with what's going on here, and it also helps others to find us.

Learning about lettuce

Seems the right vegetable to talk about since you're getting so much of it right now. We've had members ask us in the past why we don't grow iceberg lettuce – after all, it is the lettuce we all grew up on, right? While I personally love the crunch of iceberg lettuce, that's really about all it has going for it. In the nutritional department, it's mostly just crispy, green water. Romaine lettuce has a higher content of protein, fiber, calcium, potassium, vitamin C, folate, vitamin K, and beta carotene (10 times the amount!). And personally, I think the taste of Romaine surpasses the flavor of iceberg, hands down! So eat up and enjoy.

Herbs – We hope you'll get more than you can use

We've planted more herbs this season than ever before, and we hope to be harvesting more than you can use in a given week. So if that's the case, you can dry them to use in the winter or when we no longer have them for the boxes. Drying herbs is easiest if you have a dehydrator. Just wash the herbs,

lay them flat in the trays and dehydrate for several hours (checking often) until they're completely dry and crumble easily. Then just crumble and store in a glass container. If you don't have a dehydrator, you can bundle them together and tie with a string and hang to dry. First wash them, remove any discolored leaves and pat dry on paper towels. Hang bundled leaves upside down in a paper lunch bag with holes punched in it. Gather the ends of the bag around the bundle and tie closed. Make sure the herbs are not crowded in the bag. Hang the bag in a warm airy room and check every week until the herbs are dry and ready to store.

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Don't forget to bring back your box

Full share members should bring back their empty box this week when they get their new box and half share members should bring their boxes back next week. Please wipe down the inside of the box so it's ready for us to use for the week. Thank you!

Recipes - by Joanna Puciata

In our boxes last Monday there were a lot of lettuces and salad greens! Here is what you can do with them and enjoy every bite with delight:

Breakfast idea

Cream Cheese – Organic Valley, Raskas from Costco, but try to avoid Horizon, which is owned by Deans, and their organic processes are questionable, and Philadelphia, which is not organic, has a lot of puss, and hormones that come not only from cows treated with growth hormone (RsTB – forbidden, by the way, outside US), but from cows milked during pregnancy, therefore loaded with their hormones. You simply DON'T need that in your body.

Cut up the lettuce with a plastic knife (to avoid oxidation), into bite size pieces

Cut up dill and green onion.

Add to it some carrot, some grape tomato, sour pickle slices, green pepper – but only organic, as their thin skin absorbs all that is sprayed on them and passes it to you.

Arrange it all on a wooden board or big plate, toast some good wholesome bread without high fructose corn syrup and processed flour and enjoy this beautiful summer breakfast with a cup of good tea. Soon you will be able to get most of these ingredients from our farm.

Salad Dressings

My Mom's

It was the simplest and best, with the smell of freshly squeezed lemon deeply encoded in my memories. Simply pour some good quality extra virgin olive oil, preferably from a dark glass bottle, over your salad, add to it juice from a whole lemon, some sea salt (rich in minerals, not depleting your body from them), drizzle of honey, or I often use maple syrup instead. Yes sugar is fine too, but whenever you can, replace it with something easier on your pancreas.

Let it macerate for a couple of minutes, tossing gently, adjusting to fit your own taste.

Japanese Sesame Dressing

2 TB ground sesame seeds

½ cup chopped red onion

1 garlic clove

½ cup of soy, shoyu or tamari sauce, if you are gluten intolerant

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tb sugar or honey

½ tsp salt and pepper, or to taste

Mix it all in the blender. Can store in the fridge for up to two weeks. Please use a glass jar. Don't forget to use green onions not only as part of the decoration but for its medicinal purpose (it is antipyretic – temperature reducers, expectorant, anti-bacterial, and anti-fungal. It is effective against colds, headaches, chills to the stomach, indigestion, and also insomnia.)

Tahini Dressing

½ cup tahini

Juice from one lemon

2 tsp shoyu

garlic clove

dash of cayenne or red paprika

1 tsp umeboshi plum vinegar (great for digestion, can buy at Nature's Cornucopia)

Combine all in a blender, adding ½-¾ cup of water and adjusting to taste. Good for 4 days. Don't forget to add any herbs you'll find in your veggie box to your salad, and don't forget the green onion.

We welcome recipes submissions for our newsletters that involve the vegetables we will be providing this season.

Have a great week everyone, and eat your veggies!

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter - Week 3

June 4-July 9

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!

What's going on at the farm?

Potato bugs! It's that time of the season for these pesky creatures to climb out of the soil and begin munching on our beautiful potato plants. We had some when the plants first started growing and we thought we had broken the cycle, but no, they're back with a vengeance. You may have driven by the farm and seen me and the boys walking up and down the field with bucket in hand – we're flicking the bugs off the plants. After about a week of intensive "debugging" the cycle should be broken and no more babies will be born...until next season that is.

While cultivating rows yesterday, Scott came across the first zucchini of the season. That's a good sign since we had to overseed many of our summer and winter squashes after the final May cold snap doomed some of our early plants. But the plants now are growing strong (a little rain would help them grow faster), and flowers are starting to appear. The tomatoes, pepper and eggplants are also starting to flower which is always a good sign for a healthy crop!

Today we adopted 4 new goats – a mom, dad and two babies. These are a special breed called Tennessee Fainting Goats, which have a genetic anomaly that when they're startled their muscles freeze up and they fall over. The effect only lasts for a few seconds, then they jump back up like nothing happened, but it's an amazing quirk of nature to see. My kids however are disappointed to learn that after startling them several times they get used to it and calm down.

Mostly though what's going on at the farm is weeding, and lots of it. While the lack of rain slows the weeds down a little, there's always plenty left to pull. Today it's off to the sweet potatoes to clean those rows up. Then it's on to the watermelons, the onions, the beets.....

Pick up locations and times

There seems to be some confusion on the pick up days and times, and in the past week several boxes were left unclaimed. Please note the pickup days/times/instructions below for whichever location you selected to pick up your box from.

Farm – Monday & Thursday

Between 4:00-7:00 After 7:00 boxes are covered and left in pole barn on table. You can come after 7:00 and just take it from the pole barn, but if you can let us know you're coming late that would be great.

Gurnee – Monday

Between 2:00-7:00 Call Dr. Shaw's office at 847-855-8900 to make arrangements for late or next day pickup

Chicago - Monday

After 8:30 a.m. The street door is left unlocked for access to the lobby after hours. I leave the office around 2:00 and I put what boxes are left under the stairs in the front lobby of the building.

Crystal Lake – Wednesday

Between 2:00-6:00 After 6:00 boxes will be covered and left on the side of the garage.

Important to note about pickups – if you don't pick up your box and you don't call to make arrangements for a late pickup then the vegetables may be donated or given away. I will plan to send out reminder emails the morning of your pickup.

We need all the friends we can get!



If you like us on Facebook or Twitter you can see pictures from around the farm, read about late breaking updates, like “Lottie had her babies” or “the first tomato is ready!” and help to spread the word about supporting local farmers, choosing to eat locally grown food, and working towards a better planet.

Barnard Mill Closing on July 11th

For those of you coming to the farm from McHenry and places south, on July 11th the bridge that crosses the Nippersink, right next to the Grand Old Mill restaurant will be closed for construction. Looking at Google Maps, it seems that the best way to get to the farm might be 120 to Thompson Road to W. Wonder Lake Road, then Howe to Barnard Mill. Depending on where you're coming from you can also just take 31 all the way up to Tryon Grove, and turn left to Barnard Mill. If anyone knows of any better routes, please share! Hopefully this won't be a prolonged road closing.

Turn into a Turnip Fan

Yes, I was one of those kids who clamped the mouth tight when my mom tried to feed me turnips. And it wasn't until we grew them ourselves that I actually tried one. And now they're one of my favorite vegetables. My two favorite ways to cook them are below:

Roasted Turnips and Greens

Cut greens from turnips, wash and set aside.

Peel turnips if large and cut into chunky pieces

Put cut turnips into a Ziplock bag, add a little olive oil, salt, pepper and favorite spices

Seal Ziplock and toss the turnips well to coat with oil and spices.

Turn out into a roasting pan, cover with foil and bake at 350 until tender.

For last 10 minutes of cooking, sprinkle seasoned bread crumbs on top.

While turnips are finishing baking, take washed turnip greens and chop into large pieces.

Sautee in a frying pan with a little olive oil, garlic and chopped onion.

Season to your liking.

When both turnips and greens are done, put greens on a plate and top with the roasted turnips.

Vegetable Casserole

1 C. peeled turnips, cut into chunks

1 C. sliced carrots

1 C. potatoes cut into pieces

1 chopped onion / ½ c. chopped celery

¼ C melted butter or olive oil

¼ C. Parmesan cheese

1 tsp. sugar

1 tsp. salt and pepper

2 eggs, beaten

Mix all ingredients together and place in a greased casserole dish. Brush top with butter or olive oil.

Bake at 350 for 1 hour (or until vegetable are tender).

REMINDER! Closed on July 4th

The 4th of July falls on Monday this year, so we will do the Monday farm, Gurnee and Chicago drop offs on Tuesday, July 5th. If you are going to be out of town on vacation that week and will not be getting

box in your place and allow them to enjoy our fresh produce for the week – just let us know that someone else will be picking it up.

And please note Gurnee pickup members: Dr. Shaw's office closes at 5:00 on Tuesday. If you cannot pick up your box by 5:00 please let her know so it will be there for you on Wednesday to pick up.

Have a safe and happy Independence Day everyone, and eat your veggies!

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter - Week 4

July 10 -July 16

Where's the rain??

What's going on at the farm?

Well, the word of the week is RAIN! And when are we going to get some? As we head into our third rainless week (no rain since June 23rd) we are looking ever skyward for those dark clouds to roll in. We watch the radar every time we come in the house for a break and we're grumpy when we wake up to a sunny morning. Such is the life of a farmer! We go through this every year (past members – you know what I'm talking about). And every year the plants have a different outcome depending on when in the season this little "mini drought" happens. So far, we haven't lost any plants, which makes us very happy. But the plants, in their struggle to survive, spend all their energy growing their roots downward in search of water, and little energy on growing the vegetables. So the tomato plants are loading up with mini green tomatoes, the pepper plants have two inch peppers, the crookneck squashes are forming slowly, as is the Swiss chard, beets and carrots. All healthy, but slow growing. I spent most of my day today watering the peppers and eggplants, Scott spent most of his day watering the sugar snap peas, kohlrabi, chard, kale and leeks. So what's the moral to this story? PRAY FOR RAIN!

Barnard Mill bridge closing on Monday, July 11

For farm pick up members, please remember that effective tomorrow the bridge on Barnard Mill Rd, at the Grand Old Mill Restaurant will be closed for repairs. If you're coming from the Johnsbury area your best bet is to come north on 31, then turn left at Tryon Grove Road. That will take you to Barnard Mill Rd. from the other side. If you're coming north on 31 from McHenry or south, you can take 120 to Thompson Rd., right on W. Wonder Lake Rd. , Right on Howe Rd., left on Barnard Mill Rd.

CSA member shares her sister's artwork



We are honored to share the website of one of our CSA members, Joanna Puciata. She created this website to tell the story of her sister, Kasia, who had Down Syndrome and passed away in 2004. Kasia left behind a legacy of inspiring artwork which is shared on her website at www.vaguememories.com. Some of the artwork is for sale and can be seen here. Thank you Joanna for sharing this beautiful story with us.

Red Tropa Onions

That's the type of onion everyone will be seeing in their box this week. You've had them before, but probably didn't realize that these tasty red onions are supposed to be torpedo shaped! It will never turn into a nice round onion, so we like to use them as our green onions. And speaking of green onions, we've had several questions about saying there would be green onions in the box, only to find small regular onions. "Green onions" can be any variety of onion that is still growing, and so still has the beautiful green stalks – which should be cut up and used like you would an onion. When onions mature, the green stalks turn brown and fall over, and that's when we harvest them to be regular onions. We planted over 4,000 onion plants this year, so hopefully there will be plenty of onions in the weeks to come!

If you "like" us you can see what's growing at the farm!



I've just posted pictures of a bunch of new veggies that are growing (slowly but surely) around the farm. "Like" us and you can see what's growing!

Recipes – Homemade Salad Dressing!

While the greens are still growing we'll keep including them in your boxes. Trying different salad dressings may keep having salads every day from getting boring!

Creamy Feta Vinaigrette

3 oz. feta cheese (preferably French), crumbled

2 ½ Tbl. Red wine vinegar

1 Tbl. Water

½ tsp. dried oregano

¼ cup plus 1 Tbl. Extra-virgin olive oil (preferably first cold press)

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

In a food processor, pulse the crumbled feta with the red wine vinegar, water, oregano, and olive oil until the vinaigrette is smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Note: This is also great as a dipping sauce for grilled vegetables or shrimp.

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter - Week 5

July 17 -July 23

What's going on at the farm?

What a week we had last week! I know just about every CSA member was affected in some way from last Monday's short but powerful storm (I've heard it's called a "derecho"). Many of you were without power for several days, including us. We only had one tree split, and our trampoline flew about 30 feet to the top of our shed, but otherwise we had no damage, and I hope you all fared as well. We finally had power restored Friday night. We spent a couple of our dark evenings, sitting around a lantern, finding the positive aspects of living with no electricity or water. Such as – a lower electric bill this month, the opportunity to clean out the refrigerator and freezer (since we had to throw every last bit of food out), and the chance to show our kids how people lived not so many generations ago. I think the best part was watching my 10 year old, Tomi, play outside from morning until dark, having a great time inventing games and using his imagination, rather than playing on the computer and watching TV, which has motivated us to now set up stricter time limits on the technology.

While we prayed for the rain, and the storm did provide a little relief, I guess I should have been more specific in my request. I should have specified a nice gentle all day rain! So we're back to watching the radar, and I spent almost 7 hours in the field today watering the tomatoes, eggplants, sweet potatoes and peppers. And Scott spent his day in the upper field watering as much as he could. If we get some rain, then this coming week we'll be planting our fall crops of cabbage, lettuces, kale, broccoli and cauliflower. As for the boxes this week...I'm not sure what Scott has planned for this week yet. He's up in the field right now planning the week. I'm sure whatever is ready for harvesting it will be delicious.

Barnard Mill bridge closing delayed to Monday, July 18

Due to last week's storm, the bridge work on Barnard Mill was postponed so the ComEd trucks could get around to fix the downed power lines. But we've heard the work will begin tomorrow and that the bridge next to Grand Old Mill Restaurant will be closed. If you don't know a route to bypass the bridge, Google Maps will show you a couple of alternatives. Hopefully this will be a quick repair job and the bridge will reopen soon. We will keep you posted every week in the newsletter.

Introducing natural, organic, locally made skin care products

We're always excited to promote products that share our philosophy of organic and locally produced. We're even happier when it's one of our CSA members promoting their business or product that is in line with this philosophy. We'd like to introduce Heal'N Glow skin care products, a line of organic, locally produced creams, serums and soaps. Joanne, one of our CSA members will be at the farm on Monday, during pick up time to display her new line and to take orders or answer any questions.

From Heal'NGlow:

Heal'N Glow was created out of a passion for holistic lifestyle and simplicity. While striving for healthier lives through meditation, organically grown foods and healing herbs it is imperative not to overlook the cosmetics we use daily. Human skin is the largest elimination organ in the body.

Heal'N Glow skin care products are based on freshness, simplicity and top quality natural ingredients we can put on our skin.

Recipes

Since I'm not sure what will be in the boxes this week I don't know what kind of recipes to include, but I do know you'll have onions (still with the green tops) and chives, so wanted to include the simple recipe which sound perfect for a meal where you don't want to be heating up the oven! I may send some more recipes out tomorrow once I see the boxes.

Chive and Curry Sauce over Brown Rice

Heat up a bit of olive oil, stir in a handful of chives or the tops from green onions, three tablespoons of good curry powder. Let it simmer for a minute. Add one can of coconut milk, lemon juice and salt to taste. Heat-up. Chop some cilantro and serve over rice.
Great served as a vegetarian dish in the hot summer day!

The weather report for this week calls for severely hot weather, so everyone, stay cool, stay hydrated, and pray for rain! Have a great week.

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – 6

July 31 – August 6

What's growing on at the farm?

We're happy to get back on schedule with boxes this week, and we want to thank everyone for their encouraging emails and Facebook posts. It's hard for us to have to sit out a week – even if the reasons are obvious, but we did finally get the rain and the veggies are growing again. I'm not sure of everything that will be in this week's boxes, but for sure there will be garlic, red Mars onions, red potatoes, yellow crookneck squash or zucchini and herbs. Then we will see tomorrow what else is ready for harvesting.

On the "not quite ready yet" list are the tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and kohlrabi. Hopefully next week we will start seeing those in your boxes. The watermelon plants are vining like crazy with lots of flowers, and hopefully those flowers will begin turning into melons soon. As for the fall crops, the winter squashes are growing beautifully, the gourds and pumpkins have vined and have plenty of flowers and the sweet potato plants are beautiful. We planted more Swiss chard, lettuces, sugar snap peas, cabbage (red & green) and bok choy for the fall crops, and are waiting for those to peek out and start growing.

We are continuing our plan of pulling out all the old drip hoses we have to see what, if any, of it is usable and to lay drip lines on as many rows as possible. This is very hard, time consuming work, so should guarantee us a regular rain showers!

Who is picking up this week?

I want to make sure everyone understands who should be picking up boxes this week – I know it was a bit confusing for our half share members. The easiest way to remember which week you pick up is by the CSA week – not the calendar date. Half share members with last names A-L pick up a box every ODD week of the CSA season (weeks 1,3,5,7...) Half share members with last names M-Z pick up a box every EVEN week of the CSA season (weeks 2,4,6,8...). So since we didn't do boxes last week, we will pick up where we left off and Week 6 will be this week. So half share members with last names M-Z will pick up a box this week. Please let me know if there is still any confusion about this.

Don't peel your vegetables!

Growing up, and as an adult, I peeled my vegetables before eating them. I peeled potatoes, carrots, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, beets, parsnips – if it had a skin, I peeled it.

Can you freeze your basil leaves?

Basil freezes beautifully, but by steaming, drying and freezing the leaves, they will not retain their bright green color. Since we mostly freeze basil to sauté into recipes, or add to soups and stews, a better way to freeze basil might be this:

Puree the basil in food processor with just a little extra virgin olive oil: about 2 tbl. to 1 - 1 ½ cups of basil leaves. Spoon the puree into ice cube trays to freeze. Once frozen, transfer the cubes to a freezer bag. The cubes maintain their flavor longer than the individually frozen leaves.

Who wants turkey?

We will be sending out our turkey sign up forms via email in the next few weeks. It would be helpful to know in advance how many people from the CSA are interested in purchasing a turkey for the holidays. Knowing this will determine how aggressively we will have to market our turkeys outside the CSA. It is looking right now like we will have around 50 turkeys to sell. Even though we won't be sending out the form for a few weeks, if you know you plan on ordering a turkey and could just let us know it would be very helpful.

A word about our turkeys...they are organically raised, free range, and all heritage breeds. This means they are not going to be like the genetically modified broad breasted white Butterball turkeys. The breast meat is a little less, and all the meat is juicy, meaty and delicious. Our turkeys run between 8-13 pounds, with a few in the 15-17 lb. range. The price is \$7.50/lb.

Roasted Potato and Green Bean Salad

3 lbs. red potatoes, cut into quarters
4 tbl. olive oil, divided
3 ½ tsp. salt, divided
½ tsp. ground black pepper
½ lb. green beans, cut into 1 in. length
1 ½ tbl. Dijon mustard
¼ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes in oil
½ cup coarsely chopped pitted kalamata olives
½ cup feta cheese
½ cup basil leaves, but into ribbons

Prepare:

1. Preheat oven to 375. Toss potatoes with 2 tbl. oil and ½ tsp salt and pepper. Arrange in single layer on a baking pan and bake until golden brown, 45 min.
2. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil and add remaining salt. Add green beans and cook until tender – about 5 min. Drain and rinse with cold water.
3. In large bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, and remaining oil. Add potatoes and beans and toss to coat. Stir in tomatoes and olives, top with feta and basil.

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy



The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – 7

August 7 – August 13

Half Share members with last name A-L pick up this week

What's growing on at the farm?

First, we want to welcome several new members who signed up this week – welcome to the farm! The first few weeks of the season brought lots of lettuces and salad greens, and weather-willing, we will have more of our luscious greens toward the end of the season as it cools off.

We've had several great rains – some in the way of blowing storms again...I believe our trampoline is officially condemned, after it blew around the yard for the second time this summer. Hopefully these rains signal the end of our droughty weather, and will keep our vegetables growing strong into the fall.

For all our farm pick up members (and those who follow us on Facebook), you've heard that Lottie, our pig, had her first litter of piglets last week. A dozen healthy, frolicking multicolored piglets are now part of the farm. We have warned Tomi, our youngest, to not name them or to make them into pets. Sometimes farm life is hard to accept for little boys. One of our ducks also hatched a brood of 10 ducklings, with another duck about to hatch a dozen more. So we have farm babies all over the place now.

I don't know what will be in the boxes this week, but I know it will be fresh picked, full of nutrition and delicious. I hope everyone enjoys the week.

Waste not want not

It looks like the tomatoes are about to ripen en masse, so everyone should be seeing them in their boxes this week. Because true, heirloom tomatoes (not genetically modified for long shelf life) ripen quickly and have to be eaten, we try to pick them just in the last stages of ripening, so they will last a few days before becoming over ripe. But if you end up with more tomatoes in your box than you can eat in a week, and it's not enough to start canning, don't let them go to waste...freeze them raw!

Whenever I have a few tomatoes that I see are about to become mushy, I take off the stem, and throw them into my food processor. If I have anything else I'm not going to use right away, like peppers or onions, I'll throw them into the food processor also, and process everything together. Then I pour it all into a Ziploc bag, push as much air out as possible, and freeze. It will taste as fresh as the day it was picked when you thaw it and use it in soups, stews and sauces.

Why are store bought tomatoes so perfectly round?

We love our heirloom tomatoes and our members love our heirloom tomatoes. (I guess you can tell that tomatoes are about to start showing up in your boxes!) The first couple of seasons we always felt like we were apologizing for our "ugly but delicious" tomatoes. Most of us grew up with store bought, perfectly red, round tomatoes; little red baseballs. Then I came across an article in Mother Nature News about the history of perfectly red round tomatoes, and we apologize no more. The truth is, all tomatoes used to look like our tomatoes – misshapen, slightly off color, but nevertheless rich in juice and that sharp acidic tomato flavor.

Then scientists started taking that infrequent round tomato and studied them. They compared the DNA of these tomatoes with the other tomatoes and identified the positions of the “large fruit” and the “round fruit” genes within the tomato’s chromosomes. By manipulating these genes, they learned to grow consistently round, red tomatoes. Eventually they did the same kind of gene manipulation to create a tomato that has a longer shelf life – enabling tomatoes to be picked in Chile and shipped to Chicago and still look firm and ripe in the produce aisle. Of course there is always a give and take when you start messing with Mother Nature, and we all know what that “take” was...taste. Enhancing the aesthetics and longevity, took away from the flavor.

So while our tomatoes may be misshapen and various sizes (although we do get a few amazingly round smooth ones too), you won’t find a tomato in any grocery store that has that rich, mouth watering , acidic flavor of an heirloom tomato.

Turkey signup time!

We received a great response from our CSA members interested in purchasing a turkey. We’ve also been receiving a lot of emails from non-CSA members wishing to order a turkey. So we decided we’d better give our CSA members the opportunity to sign up first before selling outside the CSA. A turkey order form is attached to this email. Turkeys are ready for harvest by Thanksgiving, but you can order one for Christmas or after Christmas also.

Here’s how it works: You order a turkey, specifying the size turkey you’d like, or how many people you will be feeding, as well as the date you’d like to pick it up. Send in that order form with a \$25 deposit, then when it’s time to pick up your turkey, we will harvest it the day before you pick it up. All turkeys are fresh, not frozen, when picked up. The turkeys will range in size from 8 lbs. to 13 lbs, with a few over 13 lbs. The price is \$7.50 a pound. For those of you who have not had a free-range, organic, heritage turkey, this is a special treat. The meat is juicy and flavorful and eats like meat – not the fluffy, mushy meat of a Butterball. (My apologies if anyone works for Butterball.)

We will wait for a couple of weeks to give our CSA members a chance to sign up before selling our turkeys outside the CSA. I hope you’ll try one this year!

Return your boxes

Just a reminder to return your veggie boxes. If you have a couple still lurking around your garage, please wipe them out and return them the next time you pick up a box.

Recipe

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy

The Healthy Harvest

Week 8 - Aug. 14-20

What's growing on at the farm?

What can we say? Apparently farmers are just never satisfied. After a month of praying for rain, now we're praying for no rain...at least for a while! While our veggies love rain more than drought, there is a happy balance between the two. One nice soaking rain once a week would be ideal, then sunny warm - not too hot - temps the rest of the time. But who can argue with Mother Nature? We take what we get and do our best to farm with whatever conditions we're given. We've had several inquiries into what the weather variations do to our veggies. Here are a few of the consequences or in-spite-ofs that we deal with:

Tomatoes: Tomatoes love hot weather, and thrived in the drought conditions we had this summer, even though the fruit grew slower without enough water. But with too much water the tomatoes absorb it into the fruit and cracking will occur around the stem. It doesn't hurt the tomato, but too much water may also dilute the sharp, acidic taste that is the signature of home grown tomatoes.

Carrots: Carrots are survivors. They like a balance of heat and water, and when there is not enough water they will tend to grow long and very narrow, as the roots grow down in search of moisture. But they do keep growing. Because carrot seeds are so tiny, it's impossible to grow them an inch apart, which is ideal for their growth. We plant the seeds close, with our seeder, then thin them out as they grow. So in the beginning of the season the carrots are small, and then as they're given more room to grow, they'll grow larger. One drawback of the drought conditions is that the soil gets so hard we can't even pull them out of the ground without tearing the greens off, so we have to pull them after we've had rain.

Lettuces/Greens: Greens do well in cool wet weather, so we plant them in the spring and again in the fall. They'll continue to grow and produce leaves as long as the weather conditions don't get too hot. But when the summer weather heats up, they will bolt (grow tall and flower) almost overnight. This also causes the leaves to become bitter. This year's spring conditions were excellent for lettuce and greens and we had several weeks of delicious leafy vegetables. We've also planted more Romaines and red salad bowl lettuce for the fall, and conditions willing, we'll end the season with more leafy greens.

Green Beans: We grow bush beans which are much easier to tend than pole beans. As the name implies, they grow on strong individual bushes and each bush should grow large amounts of long tender beans. This year we planted Kentucky Wonder green beans and yellow wax beans. One thing about beans is they love warm soil. So they have to be planted at least 2 weeks after the last frost. In Illinois, the traditional last frost is April 24th, so we planted our beans on May 7. The bushes grew nicely, had beautiful flowers, then the storm that roared through on July 22 blew most of the flowers off of the plants. We had enough beans for one week (and I'm not even sure if all members had beans that week). Happily, we see the bushes are again flowering, so we hope to have beans again in the next few weeks.

Turkey orders

I sent out the turkey order forms this morning - sorry for the delay in getting those out. If you'd like to order a turkey, fill out the form and return with a \$25 deposit to reserve your holiday bird. The turkeys, when harvested, will look just like grocery store turkeys (without the overly large, genetically modified breast), but won't be in the fancy shrink wrap packaging. On the order form you can request the size you'd like and we will try to get you a bird as close to that size. It looks like we'll have a wide selection of sizes, and have about 40 birds to sell. Turkeys are \$7.50 per pound, and range in size from 8 lb. to 13 lbs. with a few over the 13 lb. weight.

Bike Trip Fundraiser

As everyone knows, we (and the veggies) struggled earlier in the season with our 30 day drought. As a small farm, to implement an irrigation system is a huge and costly undertaking which we've never been able to afford. However, after this season's unpredictable weather, we've decided that we need to make installing an irrigation system by next season a priority. In discussing how to work this into our budget, I came upon the idea of doing a fundraiser with a goal of raising \$2,000, which would enable us to purchase 9,000 feet of drip tubing, connectors and a 1,500 gallon water tank. The way we are going to raise funds is by asking family, friends and CSA members to sponsor me on a bike trip that my 23 yr. old son, Matt and I are taking in October. We are riding our bikes from Chicago - the beginning of historic Route 66, to Springfield - along Route 66. This is a trip we've been planning for the past year, and it's a 230 mile ride that will take us 4 days (if all goes as planned). We are going to look for sponsors to pledge a minimum of .10/mile. If we make it the entire 230 miles, that would be \$23.00. Of course people can pledge more, and the maximum miles will be 230. We've figured that we need to raise just \$6.52 per mile to raise enough money to purchase our irrigation system. I will be sending out more information about our bike ride and the fund raising in the next week. Hope you'll decide to be a sponsor and help us get our irrigation system!

Green House Grant

We are very excited to report that our application to the McHenry County Farm Service Agency for a grant to build a new high tunnel house (aka green house or hoop house) was approved this past week. What this means is that we will be given enough money by the county to buy and install a new green house up to 2,100 square feet. That's about a 30'x70' unit. This will be a huge advantage for early planting, as we can plant almost all of our seeds earlier, and keep them longer in the hoop house where it will be easier to manage and monitor their early growth. Some vegetables that are more susceptible to weather variances we can even keep in the green house for their entire growing season. We are researching different green house companies now and hope to order our new house in time to get it constructed before the winter.

Have a great week everyone!

The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 10

August 28 – September 3

Half Share members with last name M-Z pick up this week

What's growing on at the farm?

Another busy week at the farm, and we are still enjoying the incredibly beautiful August is leaving us with. I can only hope it will be this nice for our bike trip in October.

Big Zucchini? Stuff it!

Zucchini...it's one of the fastest growing vegetables on the farm. Once the flower turns into the vegetable it grows incredibly fast. I would love to set up a camera next to a growing zucchini to watch it grow in time lapsed photography. So a squash that is too small to pick on Thursday could be a 4 lb. vegetable by Monday's picking. No joke. And in the past we've received plenty of criticism for putting too large of a zucchini in someone's box. The complaint is that the larger the zucchini, the larger and tougher the seeds. This is partially true: the larger the zucchini, the larger the seeds. We have never found the seeds to be tough or inedible though, and usually slice and grill the larger zucchini's and they're delicious. But if you happen to get a large zucchini in your box, the best thing to do with it is to stuff it. Cut it in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds and bake it on a cookie sheet at 350 for about 25 min. or until just soft (but not mushy). In the meantime, cook some ground beef and spice it however you like. Our family favorite is to use taco seasoning and make taco meat. Once the zucchini is cooked, stuff it with the ground beef mixture and top with your favorite cheese. Put back in the oven for about 10 minutes to melt cheese, then you have a wonderful, large, stuffed zucchini for a main dish. It's delicious, and a sure way to get your kids to eat squash (speaking from experience!).

Irrigation System Fund Raiser

The response to my son's and my bike trip to Springfield and raising money for our irrigation system has been overwhelming and I just want to say thank you SO MUCH for your support! We've already received pledges for almost 50% of our goal, just in the past week. We are so excited to see an upper field irrigation system in our future and are already talking about which plants will be the recipient of the drip irrigation next season. For anyone who wants to make a pledge, you can go to our Facebook event page called "Bike Ride from Chicago to Springfield – via Historic Route 66" or email me. Once the ride is over I will let all those who pledged know how far I rode (maximum 230 miles), then you can send a check for your pledged amount. Thanks again to everyone who has pledged for your support.

Turkey signup

We still have turkeys available for the holiday season. You can send in an order form (attached here) with a \$25 deposit to hold your turkey. We will start advertising our turkeys on various organic, local food websites in a week, once we've given our members time to sign up first.

Recipes

Onion Pie (This is a Mor family favorite recipe, handed down by Scott's father)

4 lg. onions
3-4 tbl. Butter
16 oz. containers of heavy whipping cream
2 tbl. Nutmeg
2 tsp. white pepper
12 eggs – lightly beaten

Slice onions into big chunks about 1 1/2 - 2 inches wide and sauté in butter until they are limp and beginning to turn golden (do not brown), add a half pint of heavy whipping cream. Simmer on a low heat for a few minutes adding nutmeg, and white pepper (if you don't have it, you can substitute with black pepper).

Lightly beat eggs

Pie Dough:

Make the pie dough by kneading a couple cups of flour, a half tablespoon of salt, a quarter stick of butter, a couple of eggs, and a tablespoon of sugar together adding a bit of water at a time until it is nice and workable and can be flattened with a rolling pin into a thin sheet.

Preheat oven to 375.

Grease a 9 x 13 pan and lay most of the dough inside the pan flattening it down to be even, having the dough go up the sides of the pan all the way. Keep some dough to criss cross on the top.

When the dough is ready in the pan, take the beaten eggs and pour them into the onion and cream dish mixing it in, and turn the stove off immediately. Now that the eggs and onion and cream are together, pour it into the oven pan with the dough in it, and lightly fold down the excess dough from the sides to form a border crust on the perimeter about half an inch wide. Take the excess dough, flatten it out, cut long thin stripes about half an inch wide, and lay on top of the pie 2-3 stripes in a crisscross formation like a tick tack toe. Pinch the stripes of dough onto the perimeter dough and put it in to the oven.

It is ready when it slightly browns on top, and there is no movement (the eggs are cooked). It doesn't usually take more than 30 minutes in the oven.

A delicious dish, great warm out of the oven, and great the next day.

French Onion Soup

4-6 tbl. Butter
2 extra large onions or 4-6 medium onions, chopped into big pieces
2 cans beef consommé soup
1 cup water
½ cup red wine
1 tbl. Worcestershire sauce
1/8 tsp. ground pepper
French bread slices - toasted
Grated Swiss cheese

Melt butter and brown the chopped onions. Cook the onions on a low heat for about 30 min. until they are brown and beginning to caramelize but not burn. Add consommé, water, wine and Worcestershire. Let simmer on low heat for about 15-20 min. Pour soup into bowls, top each bowl with a slice of toasted French bread and sprinkle with grated Swiss cheese.

Dill Pickles Fast & Easy

Pickle Brine:

3 cups white vinegar
6 cups water
Salt for a distinct salty flavor

4 1/2 cups Dill Pickles

2 garlic cloves - chopped in thirds, not minced (per 1 qt. canning jar)

Slice cucumbers into about ¼" slices. Pack into 1 one qt. canning jar. Sprinkle pickling spice in jar as you're putting in the cucumbers. Add garlic. Fill jars with pickle brine until cucumbers are covered. Note: These will keep in the refrigerator without processing for 4 weeks. If you want to keep longer, then process (hot bath) and use canning jars/lids etc.

Linguine with Artichokes and Leeks

2 medium leeks, white and light green parts only, cleaned

2 12-ounce jars marinated artichoke hearts in oil, drained

3 tbl. olive oil

1 tbl. lemon juice

3 tsp. kosher salt

1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1 lb. linguine

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan

Halve the leeks lengthwise and cut into 1-inch pieces. Halve the artichokes lengthwise. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat, add the leeks, and cook until soft but not browned, stirring frequently, about 5 minutes. Remove the leeks from skillet and set aside. Increase heat to medium and add the artichokes. Cook about 3 minutes per side. Return the leeks to skillet and toss to mix. Stir in the lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Cook the linguine according to the package directions, reserving ½ cup of the pasta water. Transfer to a large bowl. Add the vegetables to the linguine and toss with half the Parmesan. Add some of the pasta water to moisten, if necessary. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese.

Have a great week and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy

The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 11

September 4-10

Half Share members with last name A-L pick up this week

What's growing on at the farm?

I apologize for not getting a newsletter out for Week 10. Three times a year we cut the hay in the field across from our farm, and when that time comes (we just finished 2nd cutting) then it's all hands on deck as we try to cut, rake, dry, bale, load and store between rains. And as is often the case with old farm equipment, something is ALWAYS breaking just when you need it most. So Scott has spent more time driving to Harvard for replacement tractor, baler and rake parts than anything else. And I spent my time in the field getting ready for this week's boxes – so some of the fun chores, like writing our newsletter had to be put on the back burner. And we didn't exactly get all the hay stored in time. We stored about 120 bales out of 450 before the rain came Tuesday night. But the next few days were sunny and hot, so it dried nicely.

We are still enjoying the incredibly beautiful weather that August left us with. It is still too early to predict how long the season will go, but if the temps and rainfall stay this consistent, we hope to definitely still be harvesting through October. I can only hope it will stay this nice for our bike trip in 4 weeks. We've raised 80% of our goal towards our irrigation system, and we again want to thank everyone for their generous pledges.

We have been scouring the FSA approved dealers in hoop houses for the best hoop house we can purchase with the grant money we've been promised. We hope to have something ordered and installed before the cold weather, so we can actually get it plowed inside and ready for our late winter planting. We're also trying to decide which of our vegetables will benefit from full growth inside the hoop house rather than field planting or transplanting. We'll post pictures on Facebook of the hoop house as it's being built.

Still growing and hopefully ready for harvest soon are the watermelons, bok choy, cabbage and a newly discovered growth of Swiss chard that we thought we'd lost in one of the heavy downpours. I'll be weeding these over the Labor Day weekend, and luckily these are all cool weather veggies, so even as the nights get chilly, they will still grow. You will also start seeing a recurrence of the beginning of the season as our leaf lettuces, greens, Romaine and radishes become harvestable.

Labor Day week pick up schedule

After polling our Monday farm pickup and Chicago members, the overwhelming response was to keep the pickup day on Monday. So our Monday farm members will pick up as usual between 4:00-7:00. Realizing that some of you may be coming back into town after the holiday, if you need to pick up after 7:00, that is fine. We will leave any remaining boxes in the pole barn on the table, covered with another box. You can come however late necessary to get your box. Chicago members – I will be bringing the boxes in Monday morning as usual. Scott will be coming in with me (to help move office furniture), so if you come in early enough you'll get to meet your farmer!

For our Gurnee members, we will deliver the boxes on Tuesday by 2:00 and Dr. Shaw's office if open until 6:00, same as Mondays (I think I had said 7:00 before).

For Wednesday Crystal Lake members and Thursday farm members – no change in your pick up schedule.

Storing root vegetables

We have had a bumper crop this year of potatoes, onions, garlic, and hopefully winter squash (although they're not a root vegetable, they are perfect for storing and eating throughout the winter). Obviously you can't eat 3 lbs of potatoes every week unless, like us, you have 4 boys at home to feed. So here are some tips for storing your vegetables so you can enjoy them long after you take them home.

Potatoes: a) Don't wash before using b) store in brown paper bag, burlap bag or plastic bag with holes c) store in cool, dark, dry place, ideally 45-50 degrees but NOT the refrigerator d) do not store with onions, as together they produce gases that will spoil both e) mature potatoes should last up to 2 mos, and new potatoes 1-2 weeks.

Onions: The important thing on storing onions is ventilation. Onions can last up to 6 months when stored in a cool, dry place in ventilated bags. Mesh bags are perfect and I've heard that a lot of people store in brown grocery bags. I also read on-line several times about storing in panty hose, tying a knot above each onion, so they don't touch, then just cut the bottom onion out when ready to use. Ideally, if you have an attached garage, hang them in a mesh bag from a hook (so they're not sitting on the floor). If onions start growing a stem, they are still good to use and you can even use the stem like a green onion. Depending on how many I have, I will also just chop them and store in Ziploc bags in the freezer.

Garlic: As with potatoes and onions, garlic should be stored in a way that it gets air circulation. One difference is that storing it in a dark place will promote sprouting. I keep mine on the window sill over the sink and just pull off a clove and peel and use as necessary. We cured (dried) them before you got them in your box so as long as they get air they should last a long time. If you lack space to leave them sitting out, you can peel, chop in a food processor, fill a sandwich size Ziploc bag, and pressing as much air out as possible, flatten the bag so you have a "sheet" of chopped garlic. You can freeze it this way, then when you want to use some, just open the bag, break off a piece to use, reseal the bag and put back in the freezer.

Winter Squash: You will be seeing a variety of winter squash in your boxes throughout the remainder of the season. We have delicata, butternut, acorn, banana and buttercup. Winter squash are different than the summer squash in that they each have their own unique flavor, and a more dense "meat" to it. They also have a thicker, harder skin which makes them perfect for storing and enjoying through the winter. Properly stored, winter squash can last up to 6 months – a welcomed treat when all we have available is store bought produce or frozen veggies. Store your winter squash in a warm, dry area with good air circulation. Acorn squash do better in a slightly cooler and moister environment.

2012 CSA Sign up

Turkey signup

We've had a great response to our turkeys, but still have some available for the holiday season. You can send in an order form (attached here) with a \$25 deposit to hold your turkey. We've begun advertising our turkeys on various organic and local food websites, but still have enough for anyone who would like to sign up.

Volunteers needed for farm inspection

Every year, in order to renew our Certified Naturally Grown certification we must have our farm inspected to make sure we are growing by the CNG standards. We can either work with two other CNG farmers, each one inspecting another's farm (two farmers cannot inspect each other). Or we can ask non-farmers to do the inspection for us. If we go this route we have to do three independent inspections. Normally we do our inspections with other farmers, but one of our "trio" has moved from the area which leaves just Green Earth Farm and one other local CNG farmer. So we are soliciting

volunteers from our CSA members to spend about an hour with us, walking around the farm and checking off from a list to ensure we are in compliance with CNG regulations.

If anyone would like to volunteer to help us with our inspections, let me know and we will arrange a time that works for you.

Thank you Monsanto for Super pests

Monsanto, in their wise ways, created GMO corn which as we know is genetically engineered to avoid pests. However, the lure of genetically abundant crops has allowed Mother Nature to win against man-made foods. Studies now show that Monsanto farmers who have planted corn more than 3 years in a row are being infested with Super Bugs. This is happening because farmers are having so much success with the GMO corn (high yield=high revenue) that against Monsanto's warning they keep planting the same type of seed year after year, even though this gives the worms enough time to learn how to survive. So now, because Monsanto had to screw with Mother Nature, and because the agri-corp farmer was enticed by the high-yield profits, the consumer will pay the price in higher food prices due to lower yield of corn due to the Super Bug infestation. On the positive side....this should motivate more people to buy locally grown, non-GMO food!

Have a great week and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy

The Healthy Harvest 2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 12

September 11-17

Half Share members with last name M-Z pick up this week



"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them."

Taken from Laurence Binyon's poem, "For The Fallen"

What's growing on at the farm?

Well, it has been a difficult week here at the farm on several levels. First, as many of you saw in my Facebook post, we lost our dog, Mikey. He wasn't feeling very well late Thursday and looked as though he had eaten something bad. Friday morning we discovered he had died during the night. Mikey was a rescue dog and one of the sweetest dogs we've ever had. As our farm pick-up members may remember, we was a leaner. He loved to welcome our CSA members by leaning all over them, looking for a few pats on the head. Being a large dog (Great Dane/Dalmatian mix) that leaning didn't always go over so well with the smaller children! He will be greatly missed.

We also struggled this week a bit with the vegetables. In July we had unseasonably hot weather and no rain which stopped many of the veggies from growing. We bounced back once the temps cooled down and we got some consistent rain, although we lost a few crops that couldn't recover from the heat, such as the melons, kohlrabi, Swiss chard and kale. Now, as we enter September, we're being hit with unseasonably cool weather – temps we should be seeing in October. So again, some crops have stopped producing (or producing very slowly). The summer squash (zucchini, patty pan, crookneck) should still be fairly prolific, but are kind of just sitting there wondering what to do in this cool weather. The tomatoes, which thrive in the heat have also slowed their ripening. We still have a lot of beautiful green tomatoes on the vine, waiting for some hot weather again. Green and wax beans are still producing flowers and beans, but growing slowly. We have lots of eggplants, but they too look for heat to grow.

So as you noticed this past week, the boxes were not quite so full, and the next week or so may be the same as we look at the 10 day forecast which doesn't show much of a chance of rain or temps much above 70. On the positive side of the cooler weather, the lettuces, turnips and bokchoy are growing nicely and we hope you'll see those in your boxes soon. The cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower are also growing and are cool weather vegetables, but we had to plant them a week or two later than we would have normally, waiting for the heat in July to subside. So we hope they will produce before the season ends. We planted hundreds of sweet potato plants, and they look beautiful, and we'll dig those up as the potatoes wane out. As always, we will fill your boxes with everything that is harvestable on the day of your pickup.

The Chicken or the Egg?

And if weather and veggie growing issues aren't enough, our chickens are either becoming really good egg hidiers or are coming to the end of their egg laying cycle. We have 12-15 new hens who should start laying soon, and we just ordered 50 chicks who will start producing by the beginning of the 2012

CSA season, but whereas in March and April we were collecting 3 doz. eggs each day, now we're collecting 6-8 eggs. For those of you who paid in advance for your eggs, I am keeping track of which weeks you do get eggs and which you don't and we will just extend the weeks that we owe you eggs until you've received everything you paid for. Several of you are on a list for getting eggs, and I have the list and as the eggs are available, you're the first to get them. As always, we like to find the positive in any situation. So we now have soup hens available for sale. Our normal young chickens we sell for \$4.50/lb. and the soup hens are \$3.50/lb. What "soup hen" means is that these chickens are still delicious eating, but they are the most tender and tasty when slow cooked until the meat falls off the bone, then the meat is used in soups or stews (or pot pies...my favorite). If you're interested in purchasing soup hens, just email me your order.

Onions

Despite all the weather struggles this season, it has been the year of the onion. We planted over 3,000 onion plants in the spring, knowing that we would lose a percentage to either pests, weather, or unknown factors. However, it seems the onions this year were up to every challenge, and were our prolific producer of the season – as evidenced by the number you've received every week almost since the beginning of the season starting with green onions. And we will be digging up the last row this weekend. So for those of you who do not use onions in every meal (like we do), they will either keep well in a cool, dry, well ventilated storage area, or if you want them to last into the winter, simply chop them into the size you would normally use them, stick them in a zip lock bag, push out as much air as possible and throw them in the freezer. Then you can just open the bag, take out what you need and put the rest back in the freezer for later. They won't be crisp to use fresh as in salads, but are perfect for sautéing or using in soups and stews or any cooked dish. And they will taste just as fresh as they do now.

2012 CSA membership is open

While we anticipate several weeks remaining of this season, it's time for us to start thinking about the next season already. As you know, the membership fees are not only our income, but our working capital to order seeds, make repairs to our equipment (which takes a beating over the summer) and to afford any upgrades to the farm. Next year we will need to order new boxes as the ones we used this season have gone through 2-3 seasons and are showing their age.

We hope to see all of you back with us next season. We feel like we've been so blessed this year with a wonderful group of members who have been very supportive and involved, and who really understand the concept of Community Supported Agriculture. The word is out and more and more people are looking to buy locally and organically grown produce, and I hope you will pass our name around to your friends and family who you think would enjoy what we offer.

For the first time since we began the CSA, we will be raising our membership fee in 2012. A full share will be \$475 and half shares \$300. However, we would like to offer to our current members, if you sign up before the end of the year, you can sign up at the current fee of \$450 (full) or \$275 (half). As in past years, you can sign up with a \$100 deposit, then make monthly payments until the fee is paid before the season begins.

You can sign up on line at our website and pay online through PayPal or with a credit card, or you can mail a check. We would love to show you the benefits of the irrigation system we plan to install thanks to your pledges to support my 230 mile bike trip from Chicago to Springfield in 3 ½ weeks. We are also excited to see the benefits of our new hoop house that we will be installing this fall (as soon as Scott has time to leave the field long enough to order it!).

Turkey signup

We still have turkeys available and I have attached a flyer here that you could print out for friends, family or co-workers if you know anyone who might be interested.

Have a great week and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,

Scott & Kathy

The Healthy Harvest

2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 13

September 18-24

Half Share members with last name A-L pick up this week

What's growing on at the farm?

I love statistics. I could spend a whole day just looking up interesting stats (anything but sports, that is). So when I woke up Thursday morning, Sept. 15th to see a light frost on the ground, I turned to the Internet to see how often a mid-September frost has occurred in this area. Knowing that in this region our typical first frost date is October 15th, I was curious to see the trend. What I found was that in the past four years, we've been pretty consistent with October 28, 28, 11 & 19 as first frost dates. I also learned that Sept. 22, 1995 was the earliest recorded freeze in Chicago's history, with an overnight low of 32. A "freeze" is when temps dip below 32 and a "frost" is when they dip below 36, and I couldn't find a stat on the earliest recorded frost. But you get where I'm going with this right?

This is the coolest September we've had in 87 years (and I don't mean groovy). The frost we had last week was about a month earlier than the norm for this region, and of course it was of great concern to us. After doing a walk around the fields, it looks like the only vegetable that was affected from the frost was our sweet potatoes. On Wednesday when I was picking, the plants had beautiful, large purplish green leaves with lavender flowers. Thursday morning the leaves were black and curled up as though a fire had rushed through. The sweet potatoes themselves are unharmed, since they're under the ground. But once the leaves are dead, the potatoes won't grow any larger. Which means we can harvest them any time now. So you can look for those in your box by next week.

With the cooler temps (not necessarily frost), the cucumbers have finished for the season, but we're happy with their yield this year. The summer squash was a bit of a disappointment, and we may find a few out there this week, but if so it will be their last week. In past seasons our zucchinis and crooknecks have been more than enough for members to grate and freeze for winter enjoyment, but this year, not so much. The tomatoes have had a good run this season, and we are pleased with the yield, although you can never have too many tomatoes in my opinion. Our plants are still loaded with beautiful green tomatoes, but whether they will ripen at this point or not – only Mother Nature knows. One of our CSA members gave me a great idea last week when she told me she had a recipe for Green Tomato Bread. I went online and found several recipes for this, and have printed one of them at the end of this newsletter. So if the tomatoes don't ripen, we will probably give everyone a couple of green tomatoes so you can try this recipe (or any of several other green tomato recipes you can find online). And although I've never personally tried this trick, but another member told me that if you wrap green tomatoes individually in newspaper and store them in a cool cellar-like condition, you can take out 1-2 at a time, put them in your window sill to ripen, and enjoy them throughout the winter. So depending on how many green tomatoes are out there, we will continue putting them in your box for you to do with as you wish.

On the positive side of cool weather...lettuce is growing nicely, bok choy will be in your boxes this week, turnips will be ready this week or next, and we're still keeping our fingers crossed on the broccoli and cabbage which also thrive in the cooler weather.

So, as always, we will continue to watch the radar for rain, the predictions for temps, and work the best we can with whatever Mother Nature sends our way.

We have honey!

This year we had a beekeeper place two hives on our fields to help pollinate our plants and hopefully to make a few jars of honey. It seems as though the hives were hugely successful, as Anne was able to get over 20 lbs. of honey from our two hives! We have purchased this honey from her and are happy to now offer it to our CSA members. This is organic (Certified Naturally Grown), unheated, unprocessed raw honey. What you normally buy in the store is pasteurized honey, which in the heating process destroys much of the honey's natural nutrients. Raw honey is high in antioxidants, and has a low glycemic index, meaning your body absorbs it better than regular sugar. It is also good to use as a topical healing aid on external wounds, as honey's glucose draws fluid out of the wound lessening the chance of infection. But best of all...it tastes great!

We are selling our CNG Raw Vegetable Honey for \$5.00 per 8 oz. jar. For farm pick up members, you can buy it at the farm when you pick up your box. For our drop off members you can let me know you'd like to buy some, and I will deliver it with your box and you can just mail me a check. We also have beeswax lip balm (\$2.00) and soap (\$1.50) – all made from our hives. If interested, just email me.

2012 CSA membership is open

Thanks to so many of you who replied to last week's newsletter your intent to sign up again for our CSA next season. Your support and faith in us means so much to us and makes all the hard work worthwhile. Hopefully Scott will have the website updated this week for people to sign up on line, but I have also attached our 2012 sign up form here, which you can also use. As I said last week, anyone who signs up before the end of the year can join at the current membership fee of \$450/\$275. After January 1, the fee will be \$475/\$300. I hope you'll join us again to see what the new season brings with our two big enhancements of an irrigation system and a large hoop house, plus the new veggies we will try next season.

Turkey signup

As we have in past years, it looks like we will sell out of turkeys again this season. We are down to our last 10 turkeys, so if you are interested in a heritage turkey for the holidays, you may want to let me know via email so I can put you on the list, then mail in the order form and \$25 deposit. All turkeys are fresh, not frozen (unless you request to have it frozen) and are harvested according to the day you would like to pick it up. All birds are fully harvested and ready to go into the oven. We include 2 heritage turkey recipes with each order, and you can find others on line by searching for "heritage turkey recipes."

The bike ride to Springfield

It's almost here, and thinking about it still makes me a little queasy! Matt (my 23 yr. old) and I are very excited about the trip, and made a final drive to Springfield last weekend to know exactly which towns we have to make it to each night, and to see exactly where the hotels are and make our reservations. I am taking my bike into the bike shop today to get it "tuned up" and Matt and I are going over final lists. We have raised about 85% of our \$2,000 goal, and we hope to get all the way to 100% before our trip on October 5. So if you'd like to be a part of sponsoring us for our new irrigation system, we would welcome you! If you would like to sponsor us, you can do so on our Facebook event page, "Bike ride from Chicago to

Springfield – via historic route 66”. You can also just send me an email. But in any event, we hope you’ll follow our adventures on Facebook.

Green Tomato Bread

Read more about it at www.cooks.com/rec/view/0,164,158191-249196,00.html

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3 eggs

1 1/2 c. sugar

1 c. vegetable oil

1 tsp. salt

1 tbsp. vanilla

2 c. grated, drained, green tomatoes

3 c. flour

1 1/4 tsp. soda

1/2 tsp. baking powder

3/4 c. raisins

1 c. chopped nuts

Beat eggs well. Add sugar, oil, salt, vanilla, and tomatoes. Sift dry ingredients together.

Gradually add to tomato mixture. Stir in raisins and nuts. Pour into greased bread pans and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Makes 2 loaves.

Have a great week and enjoy your veggies!

The Healthy Harvest

2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 15

October 2-8

Half Share members with last name A-L pick up this week

What's growing on at the farm?

This is the time of year where we are taking a daily inventory of what is still growing out in the fields and how the weather on a daily basis affects the harvest. Beginning with next week's newsletter we will notify you on a week-by-week basis if there will be boxes that week. What usually happens is once we no longer have enough produce to put in boxes, we will send out a weekly notification if there is anything we can share, we will have it in baskets in the pole barn and members can just come to the farm and fill up a bag of whatever is available. But we anticipate that next week (week 16) will be the last "official" week of boxes.

This cool weather has been good for several of our vegetables, such as the lettuce and bok choy, turnips, radishes and daikons, which are some of the vegetables we normally finish out the season with. So those along with winter squash, potatoes, onions and garlic will be in some of the final boxes.

We did have a catastrophe on the farm this weekend, which we have to report to you, although even writing of it makes me sick to my stomach. As our farm pick up members know, we have 12 baby pigs who have constantly found fencing to get through no matter how many times we patch up the fence. Many times you come to the farm to pick up your box and they're wandering around, eating the acorns. Well, they somehow found their way through the horse pasture and into the back field by the barn where they totally decimated the two rows of sweet potatoes we were going to plow up this weekend. A preliminary survey doesn't leave us much hope of finding anything left, but we will still go through with the plow and see if anything remains. Other than apologizing profusely for only having one week of sweet potatoes, I don't know what else to say. Scott and I were devastated when we discovered this and wish we had a way to fix it.

Bok Choy

Like the daikon radish, this has been our first year for bok choy. And again, another vegetable I had never eaten until we grew our own. Bok Choy is mostly known as a Chinese cabbage used in stir fry and soups. But like Swiss chard, spinach and kale, it can be eaten raw in salad or sautéed with olive oil and other veggies for a delicious side dish.

Bok choy has become more popular in recent years because of its nutritional value. It's a good source of calcium, low in sodium and high in Vitamins C and A. Both the stalks and the leaves can be eaten. This will be a regular vegetable in the future here at the farm.

On my way to Springfield!

After a year of planning and plotting, the time has finally arrived. Matt and I will leave for our bike trip to Springfield this Tuesday morning, and if all goes well, will arrive at our State's capitol on Friday afternoon. Our plan is to ride approximately 57 miles per day, starting at the beginning of historic Route 66, downtown Chicago at Jackson and Lake Shore Drive, and riding along Route 66 to Springfield. We will be stopping in Joliet the first night. Pontiac the

second night, McLean the third night, then Scott will meet us in Springfield around 5:00 on Friday.

We've been watching the weather forecast, and we're keeping our fingers crossed that the current forecast for sunny and low 70's will stay with us. We will be taking pictures along the way and posting them to Facebook, so if you want to follow our adventures, friend me (because I think everything goes to my personal FB page, not the Green Earth Farm or bike ride event page).

Thanks again to everyone who is sponsoring us on this ride which will help us purchase 9,000 feet of drip line and a 1,500 gallon water tank to create an irrigation system in our upper field. For those not familiar with our farm, the upper fields are far from the house and even farther from the well, and we've not been able to easily water those fields in the past. It was a serious problem for us this year with the 30 days of no rain in June/July. We are very excited at the prospect of this upgrade. We haven't quite made it to our \$2,000 goal, but it's not too late to be a sponsor. Just send me an email with how much per mile if you'd like to be a sponsor. Either way, I hope you'll join us on line to follow our trip!

Other CSA Notes

We like to talk!

We would love to fill our 2012 membership as early as possible so that 1) we can concentrate on the business of farming, not marketing, and 2) so we have income. Most of our new CSA members come via word of mouth. And one way we enjoy marketing our CSA is by doing presentations to talk about the farm and CSA, organically grown food, and sustainable farming for the environment. We have done talks in work places, holistic health centers and neighborhood recreation centers. If you'd like to help us spread the word and think your co-workers, neighbors or friends would be interested in our CSA, let me know and we can work together to set something up.

Holiday Heritage turkeys

We still have a few turkeys available for the holidays! Our heritage turkeys are a special treat and we hope you'll try one this season. Birds are \$7.50/lb and can be ordered by filling out the attached order form and mailing in with your \$25 deposit.

Have a great week everyone and enjoy your veggies!

The Healthy Harvest

2011 Season

Green Earth Farm's CSA Newsletter – Week 16

October 9-15

Half Share members with last name M-Z pick up this week

As this year's CSA season comes to a close

As we finish up this year's CSA season, we do so with mixed emotions. Scott is ready for a well deserved rest. From March until the end of the season he is working non-stop from sun up to sun down. Now he can take a few months rest (well, except for plowing under the fields, planting the cover crop, building the new hoop house, taking care of the animals, harvesting turkeys and splitting firewood). On the other hand, we love seeing our CSA members each week, seeing your kids running around the farm, sharing ideas and thoughts, and just visiting. It's what makes all the hard work so worthwhile. And over the past four years we have developed a wonderful group of members – people who understand the uncertainty of Mother Nature and who have shared our frustrations and our elations as we work to produce the best vegetables we can under whatever circumstances we're given.

I know by the end of the season many of you are ready to stop the weekly trips to the farm, the washing of vegetables, the cleaning of your veggie box, and the dilemma of what to do with a daikon radish or patty pan squash. But I also know that by around February, we are all craving home grown organic vegetables once again and can't wait for the season to begin. Those frozen vegetables and grocery store produce will have us feeling like we're really missing something!

I hope we will see all of you back with us again next season. We can pretty much guarantee that some of what didn't produce this year will produce next season, and vice versa. As those of you who have been with us for several seasons know, we always have winners and losers each season. In the past, some of our great producers have been Swiss chard, melons, kale, and beets. This year we had an abundance of onions, garlic, potatoes and leeks. Luckily these are all staples that when stored properly will last a long time. Our disappointments this year were the cabbage, celery, Swiss chard, melons, zucchini, pumpkins and watermelons. (I'm not ruling out the broccoli yet because they're still growing.) It's a higher number of non-producers than we've ever had before, but given the difficult weather challenges, we're grateful that this is all that failed us.

The season started out with the most abundant boxes we've ever had, full of Romaine lettuce, red and green leaf lettuce, European salad mix, radishes, sugar snap peas and green onions. We also had the most success we've ever had with our herbs. Oregano, thyme, basil, chives, parsley, lemon basil and dill thrived in the new raised beds that Scott and our farm helper Steven built this spring. Sweet potatoes would have been abundant...but don't get me started on that. Our garlic was the best we've ever grown, and we kept all the largest heads of garlic to replant this fall as we build up the size of our garlic (planting a larger clove will produce a larger head). We're perfectly satisfied with the taste, now we are working on the size. The onions were also a winner this year. From the green onions that started the season, to the big daddy's we tried for the first time this year, we were able to offer our members every size for every need. The big surprise for us this season was actually the cucumbers. When we originally planted them they sprouted just as we had one of the final late spring cold spells and all the

plants died. We reseeded all the cucumbers, not sure if they would do anything, being planted so late. But they persevered and gave us a good crop this year.

So while we always have something we wish had grown better (or at all), or better weather, or less challenging, overall we've been happy with this year's harvest and hope you have been also.

How we will end the season

This week will be the final "official" week of the 2011 CSA season. We will be pulling everything out of the field and filling bags (instead of boxes). Please bring back any boxes either to the farm or your drop off location this week. And if you could take a few minutes to clean out the box, it will save us a huge job this fall of having to wash them all down. When I say it's the last "official" week it means that we will not have our regular pickups on Monday and Thursday or our drop offs at Gurnee, Chicago or Crystal Lake after this week. However, anything that is still growing out in the fields (i.e. broccoli, cabbage, kale....cold weather veggies) we will continue to nurture, and if they become harvestable, we will send out an email of what is available, and anyone who would like to come out to the farm to fill a bag, is welcome to. **IMPORTANT:** Farm pickup members, please bring a grocery bag with you to take your veggies from the box to your bag, so you won't have to worry about bringing this week's box back to the farm.

Bike Trip to Springfield

Most of you have already heard the news on Facebook...our bike trip was a success! My son Matt and I made it from Chicago to Springfield in four days, and coasted up to the state capitol at 5:00 p.m. Friday, just as planned. Matt did a fabulous job of mapping out the entire route (yes, we were on Route 66, but 66 actually splits off in different directions for different years of the road being built). We knew exactly which towns had places to eat and sleep, so knew exactly how far we had to make it each day, and when we had to buy extra food to make it between diners/fast food stops. The weather was perfect, we had a great time, and we raised almost enough money to purchase our entire irrigation system. And while we complained the whole time about our aching joints and sore rears, we're so happy we took on this challenge (and lived to tell about it)! Thanks to all of you who followed us on Facebook and kept us motivated with your comments and well wishes.

End of Season Survey

We will soon be sending out a VERY short survey – maybe 4-5 questions about this season. I hope everyone will take a few minutes to complete this survey. We really want to be the best we can at what we do, and your honest feedback is integral for us to know how we can improve. We are happy to accept constructive criticism. We'll want to find out things like what your favorite/least favorite vegetable was, what there was too much/too little of, is there anything you'd like us to grow, and your favorite/least favorite thing about being in a CSA. So stay tuned for an email link to our survey page.

Farm Inspection

We do still need to do our farm surveys, and will be getting in touch with the folks who offered to come help us very shortly. We've just been so busy with the season that we haven't had time to do this yet. But we will be reaching out shortly to set up a time to get this completed.

Have a great week everyone and enjoy your veggies!