

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

## **WEEK 2 - Full Share members only pick up**

Dear CSA friends,

Well we made it through Week 1 of the CSA, so we are officially on our way with the season! The first week is always the most stressful for us because we are in that in between stage of "almost enough for a box" and "just enough for a box" so we have to make the call of holding off for a week to let a few more things grow up or jumping in with what we have. This year, since we were starting the season later than we normally do, we decided to just go for it. But we are happy with the harvest last week provided and we hope you all enjoyed your produce.

### **My yearly salad spinner speech**

Something that I forgot to mention in last week's newsletter (and I can't believe I did since I'm kind of a freak about it): A Salad Spinner is your greens' best friend! If you don't own one, you should invest in one - I recommend the pump style vs. the turning handle. When you get greens from us, whether it be leaf lettuce, head lettuce, or salad greens, when you get your veggies home you should wash them in cold water, tear them up into salad size pieces and put them in your salad spinner. Spin them until you get all the water possible out of them then store them in gallon sized Ziploc bags. This way your greens will stay fresh and crisp for a couple of weeks, and they are ready to be taken out of the bag and used when needed. I would also do this with beet greens. Cut them from the beets about an inch from the top of the beet (otherwise the beet will bleed all over). You can also do this with your kale and Swiss chard. It really makes a difference!

### **What do we wash or not wash?**

As a rule, we do not wash the produce before putting it in your box/bag. To build a washing station would be costly and to set aside enough time to wash all the vegetables and let them dry before packing would mean we'd have to harvest the day before. We are proud of the fact that the produce you receive from us has been picked the morning of the day you receive it. You won't get that at the farmer's market or a co-op, and of course certainly not at the grocery store. But that being said, if we pull something out of the ground after it has rained, like carrots, beets, radishes - any of the hard root veggies, then we will wash them because we don't want to put muddy food in your bag. Green onions we will never wash even if they are a little muddy because it will compromise their quality. So it's really a call we make as we are harvesting. We want everything to look beautiful, but we also want it to be of the highest quality when you get it home. And of course that being said, there will never be anything to wash off your produce except good organic dirt. So if you were eating the sugar snap peas in the car on the way home, good for you!

### **How we donate our produce**

I mentioned in previous emails that we donate produce to the New Horizon's veteran's transitional housing in Hebron. I want to explain how the process works so you will know what it means when it comes to your own box of produce. When people ask us to donate their box in a particular week, we don't donate that exact box of produce. We just keep record of who is not picking up a box that week then at the end of the week we pick fresh produce for that number of boxes and put it all together with any extra abundance we have. Because there are about 20 men at New Horizons, taking one box over at a time wouldn't really do them much good. But adding up the number of boxes people tell us in advance that they can't pick up, **a)** keeps us from picking produce that may go to waste and **b)** allows us to put together a nice fresh large box to take over and feed the whole group. So please mark your pick up day on your calendars so you won't forget to come and get your produce, and please let us know a day in advance when you know you won't be able to come pick up.

### **If you want to upgrade to a full share**

For our half share members, if at any time during the season you decide you want to move to a weekly full share, just let us know and we will prorate the cost based on where in the season we are.

As always...thank you for your support, and we hope you enjoy your veggies! Have a great week. See pictures below for what is growing in the garden!

Yours in health,

Farmer Scott & Kathy

## **WEEK 3 - Full & Half Share members pick up Week of July 18**

Dear CSA friends,

Rain! It was very exciting to wake up this morning to the sound of thunder and rain. We have needed it badly for over a week and it was a welcome sight. Even though we have drip line irrigation on most of the rows of produce we don't have it on everything. Also, while irrigation keeps the plants alive during a drought spell, rain water makes them thrive! You might think that water is water, but it's not exactly true. The irrigation water, which comes from our well, is full of minerals where rain water is more pure and lacking in minerals. This makes rainwater better at pulling nutrients off the soil so they can be used by the plants. And rainwater falls at about 20 mph, so it hits the soil harder and penetrates better where the drip line irrigation just drop by drop slowly goes into the soil. Also rain is saturated with oxygen so it aerates the roots of plants much better than irrigation water. Rain also provides a natural dusting of the leaves so more sunlight is absorbed into the leaves and plant. That's not to say our irrigation system isn't worth every penny we spent on it. It really does keep the plants growing and producing during the dry spells. But there is nothing like a good steady rain to really make the fields and the farmers happy!

### **How great is Swiss chard?**

We had a good week of produce last week for our second week of the season and hope our members enjoyed seeing Swiss chard added to your bag. Swiss chard is part of the beet family (you'll notice how alike the Swiss chard leaves look to beet leaves), except with chard we only eat the stems and leaves. Chard is considered a "super food" because of all its health benefits. It's full of antioxidants and is an excellent source of calcium, Vitamin K and magnesium. It's also known for its cancer preventative properties due to a high content of fiber, chlorophyll and phytochemicals. It's great for healthy blood, hair and eyes being also high in iron, biotin and lutein. Swiss chard can be used in any recipe that calls for spinach. We eat it raw in salads or saute it in olive oil, garlic and/or onions or put it in soups and stews. It's great in lasagna! And the nice thing about growing Swiss chard is that when we harvest it we just cut the leaves and stem from the plant, a few inches above the ground, then the plant produces new leaves and continues growing. So a good crop of Swiss chard should last all season long!

### **Sadly, still no eggs**

We've been trying to find 15-20 laying hens to replace the dozens that were wiped out by a family of raccoons who dug their way into our chicken coop just before the season began. It was a heartbreak for us as we had a beautiful, large, well-producing flock and thought we'd be able to supply eggs to all members that wanted them. We will keep you posted and will hopefully find some new hens very soon.

### **The "C" in CSA**

As you know, CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. We provide our community with fresh, organic produce and the community supports a local farmer. But also as a part of our community we like to help support our CSA members in any way possible. So we have always offered to put short personal "ads" in our newsletter to spread the word about your family owned business, offering or looking for a job, selling a home, etc. If you have something you'd like us to put in the newsletter, just write it up and send it to me and if it falls within what we believe is the realm of helping our community of members, we will happily add it to the newsletter. Please see below for one such addition to this week's newsletter:

**Looking for a Quality Problem Solver?**

Frances Blosser has over 25 years of manufacturing quality experience and is an ASQ Certified Quality Auditor and Inspector. As a Quality Systems Professional she works in the automotive, medical, and defense industries with assembly, die cast, stamping, and molding. She is a Quality Engineer/ Manager / Trainer. If you are interested in contacting Frances she can be reached at [248-892-4680](tel:248-892-4680) or [fab8850@aol.com](mailto:fab8850@aol.com).

Thanks again to everyone for your support! Have a great week and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,  
Farmer Scott & Kathy

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## **Week 4 - Full Share members only pick up Week of July 25**

Dear CSA friends,

Well last week's word of the week was "rain." And we got some! This week's word is...HOT! And it sure was! With the humidity, we had a heat index of over 100 degrees several days in a row. Weeding was miserable, picking was not very pleasant and done as quickly as possible, and the shade trees around our house were a welcome respite at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, one of the side effects of this kind of heat is the bolting of the spring veggies. We'll see tomorrow how they are faring when we start harvesting for our Monday members, but lettuces and snap peas are usually the first to fall prey to unusually hot weather. The snap peas can turn brown and fibrous and the lettuces can turn bitter and flower out (sprout their seed stalks). We will taste several of the lettuces and snap peas to make sure they are not fibrous or bitter before we put them in your bag. We will try our best to not let a less than perfect heat damaged veggie find it's way into your produce. And that being said, even the good greens will wilt very quickly in this heat. They may look fresh and crisp when we put them in your box/bag, but within a half hour of picking they will start to wilt. Just wash them in very cold water when you get them home and spin them dry in your salad spinner, then refrigerate until ready to use. They will perk up and get crisp again very quickly.

### **Zucchini & summer squash - it's not summer without these!**

They're almost here! We saw the first of the summer squash last week, and I believe everyone had a sampling of either zucchini, patty pan squash (looks like a spaceship) or yellow crookneck squash. They're not abundant...yet...but they will be very soon. There are thousands of bright yellow flowers out there, bees are flitting from blossom to blossom, and now with this weekend's rain (thank you Country Thunder!) they will start growing quickly. Zucchini is the most popular and well known of the summer squashes, but they are all basically the same in taste and can be used interchangeably in recipes that call for zucchini. Summer squash is a good source of potassium and Vitamin A, and the skin and seeds are a good source of fiber.

Zucchini is a very fast growing vegetable, and if one is too small to pick on a Thursday for our Thursday members, it could easily be 3-4 lbs. by the time we pick for the Monday members. But PLEASE do not be put off by a large zucchini! Just because you only see small zucchinis in the store doesn't mean that is the only way they are good to eat. We've had zucchinis as large as 6-7 lbs. and the only thing different about them is that the seeds will be larger and maybe a little tough. But a large zucchini is perfect for shredding for zucchini bread (you can get about a thousand loaves from one huge zucchini!), just scoop the seeds out before shredding. Also, one of our favorite summertime meals is to take a huge zucchini, slice it in half, scoop out the seeds and stuff it with either taco meat, topped with cheese or chicken salad for a lighter meal. Just bake the two halves for about 20 minutes, then stuff with your favorite meat, rice or veggie filler, pop back in the oven for a few minutes, and you have a beautiful, delicious summer meal.

### **Gurnee / Crystal Lake members - Returning your bags**

Please remember to bring your empty bag from your last pickup and leave it when you pick up your new bag of vegetables. And *please* don't let your pets use your empty bag as a bed! We had a couple of bags returned last week that were covered in pet hair, which we just have to throw out. We can't spend time cleaning the bags that are returned and we would not put our fresh produce in a bag that has pet hair on it. Dumping out any dead leaves or dirt from the inside of your bag before returning is also greatly appreciated!

### **Carrot Tops - To keep or not to keep?**

Every year Scott and I discuss whether or not to leave the carrot tops on your carrots when we put them in your box/bag. In past years we had requests to remove them, as they were perceived to be just "fillers" to make the bags look more full, and when we did remove them we had more requests to not take people's carrot tops away! So we no longer remove the carrot greens, and they are totally edible, so I hope our CSA members will give them a try before tossing them out. They are great to chop up and add to your salad, or you can throw the whole greens into a soup or stew and then take them out before eating (using as you would a bay leaf). But I've also included a couple of recipes below to turn your carrot tops into a tasty addition to almost any meal or appetizer.

### **Recipes for Carrot Tops**

#### ***Carrot Green Pesto***

1 bunch greens  
1/4 c. olive oil  
juice of 1 lemon  
2 cloves garlic  
Salt to taste

Cut greens into smallish pieces so they will fit into a food processor. Add olive oil, garlic and lemon juice. Blend in food processor until smooth. Add a little extra olive oil if needed to get a smooth consistency.

#### ***Carrot Green Chimichurri***

1 large handful of cilantro  
Carrot greens (from about 4 carrots)  
1 jalapeno or Serrano chili pepper, stem and seeds removed  
2 cloves garlic  
Salt & pepper to taste  
Juice of 1 lime  
1/4 c. olive oil

Pulse the garlic cloves and chili pepper in food processor. Add carrot greens, cilantro, salt, pepper and lime juice and process while pouring the olive oil in a steady stream. Blend until the mixture is well combined and to the texture you would like.

### **CSA Members - Business Postings**

#### **Mike Milliken - General home and building repairs / remodeling**

18 years experience as a contractor and sub-contractor primarily focused on residential / light commercial carpentry and residential electrical. My goal is to satisfy one customer at a time, no job is too small. Here is a link to some photos [mikesinsidejob on Photobucket](#)  
I have great references and will offer free estimates. Fully insured.  
Call [630-659-8737](tel:630-659-8737).

#### **mikesinsidejob on Photobucket**

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Preview by Yahoo

Everyone have a great week, stay cool, and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,  
Farmer Scott & Kathy

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## Week 5 - Full Share members only pick up

Dear CSA friends,

Well this newsletter almost didn't make it out the door today...we spent almost all day in the field pulling onions (white Spanish and reds) and then had to pick all the summer squash for tomorrow's members, because literally, they could grow another pound overnight. So we picked the larger ones today to keep from giving you 5 lb. zucchinis tomorrow! We also spent a lot of time this weekend planting the fall crops...yay! We planted bok choy, daikon radishes, French breakfast radishes (our first crop completely fizzled on us), turnips, mustard greens, head lettuces, snap peas and I think there are a few veggies yet to plant. The other fall crops are doing great...Brussels sprouts, pumpkins, winter squash (butternut, spaghetti, buttercup and acorn) are growing well in spite of the heat we've had.

Looks like the tomatoes are turning color faster now so everyone should be seeing these heirloom beauties in their bags for the coming weeks. We pick the tomatoes just as they start turning. So hopefully when you get them there will be a little bit of color and still green on them. This is the best way for you to get them home in good shape. Just set them on the counter for a day and they will continue to ripen. Once the coloring process has started, which is the natural ethylene gas in the fruit causing the coloring, it will continue even if the tomato has been picked. Ethylene is called "the ripening hormone." Apples also contain this natural gas. Sadly, the tomatoes you buy in the grocery store are picked when they are still completely green, long before the natural ethylene has begun its coloring process. So grocery store tomatoes are sprayed with a synthetic ethylene gas to artificially ripen it. That's why they last so long in your fridge once ripe, while ours will only last a couple of days. Sigh...when humans think they can manipulate Mother Nature it never turns out in the best interest of the humans. Grocery store tomatoes are also genetically manipulated to have a long shelf life, but it comes at the cost of the flavor. And the cherry tomatoes are just about to start ripening so you will begin seeing those in your bags also!

### **Zucchini and Tomatoes - a delicious combination!**

Our favorite way to eat zucchini is to cook it with tomatoes and onion. I just saute in olive oil the onion until it's soft, then add the zucchini and cook that until it becomes soft, then add a large chopped tomato and cook that down. It's a fast side dish that livens up zucchini and gives you one more recipe in your zucchini arsenal!

We look forward to sharing another delicious week with you and maybe enjoying some cooler temps! Have a great week everyone.

Yours in health,

Farmer Scott & Kathy

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## **Week 7 - Full and Half Share members pick up this week**

Dear CSA friends,

We've laughed about it, we've cried about it (well, sort of), we've rolled our eyes and said what the heck? And we've watched helplessly as a promising range of clouds moves ever closer to the farm only to dissipate around the northern McHenry County area, leaving us rainless, and then to watch on radar as the clouds move back together and continue their trek eastward providing other more fortunate counties with rain. That's what happened to us again this week. We've Googled it, looked it up on The Weather Channel and Intellicast and see others blogging about the same thing in their own towns - saw a lot around Houston, TX - but no one has an accurate reason for this weather phenomenon. Many of our long time members have had conversations with us about this, and we've talked to many veteran farmers who just laugh and say, "yep, the McHenry Bubble." Apparently it's been going on for decades where when the weather comes in from a certain direction (seems to be Northwest), that more often than not, we won't see any rain from what looks like is going to be a direct hit. We even had flash flood warnings this past week for rain, and still we got nothing! Bottom line...the irrigation continues, the radar watching continues, and we continue to pray for rain! Oh, and a break in the heat would be awesome too!

The tomatoes are in full production now and you will be seeing lots of those this week. Scott had to pick five boxes of tomatoes over the weekend just to keep them from rotting on the vine. There will be that many again tomorrow! Last year we had so many tomatoes that we opened up the field to any members who wanted to come out and pick the very ripe tomatoes for canning. It was great for both us (who got the tomato vines cleaned up of all the over ripe tomatoes) and our members who had plenty of tomatoes for canning. I spent the weekend canning salsa and marinara sauce, and this was just the first canning session of probably at least three that I'll do this summer. The end result is that we will have enough salsa (makes my college boys very popular in the dorms) for the year and enough marinara also to last until next year's tomatoes come in.

The summer squash (zucchini, yellow crookneck and patty pan) are also in full swing and you will be seeing those in your bags for the weeks to come as well as whatever abundance we have that will be left out for members to take as much as they want. For our Gurnee and Crystal Lake members we will bring an extra box of squash and leave it with the bags so you can take extra if you'd like. All the summer squash can be used interchangeably in any recipe that calls for zucchini. And if you have more than you can use in a week, you can grate it and freeze it for later use in soups, stews and zucchini bread!

You should also be seeing the start of the cabbage this week - one of my favorites! I will send out a couple of cabbage recipes during the week - one for my favorite coleslaw and another for quick and easy sauerkraut.

We hope everyone has a great week!

Yours in health,

Farmer Scott & Kathy

## **WEEK 9 - Full and Half Share Members Pick up**

Dear CSA Friends,

First of all, my apologies for not sending out a newsletter last weekend. I flew out of town last Sunday for a week long work retreat and wasn't able to get it written on Saturday before I left. And it looks like I missed a week of ground quenching rains, normal temperatures and abundant vegetables. So I hope everyone who got veggies last week enjoyed!

The fields are looking good and the summer crops are still growing nicely while the fall crops are getting bigger. The summer squash is slowing down but we have the best crop of Butternut squash that we've ever seen. It won't be ready for a few weeks, hopefully just as the summer squash phase out. The spaghetti squash are almost ready to pick, although we hope the plants will stay alive for a few more weeks to allow them to get a little bigger. Other fall crops looking great are the Daikon radishes (look like a white carrot), kohlrabi, mustard greens, 2nd planting of beets and carrots and 2nd planting of Rocky Top lettuce mix.

The tomatoes are still in full production and this year we staggered the planting which seems to have really worked well for us, so that we don't end up with everything coming ripe at once, but evenly placed over a number of weeks so you'll have a longer season of tomatoes. The cherry tomatoes - an heirloom variety that is a little larger than your normal cherry tomato, were harvested for the first time last week so we hope to see those every week for a while. And this is definitely the year of the pepper! We have bell peppers, the small heirloom sweet peppers, jalapenos, hot wax, banana and some new varieties that are just beginning to ripen. Peppers are one of the easy to store for future use veggies, so you shouldn't have anything going to waste. The easiest thing to do is just wash, seed and cut into pieces, put in a ziplock bag and freeze. They will be good all winter long. I will also send out some canning recipes for peppers that are great for other uses during the winter.

So all in all...the season is still looking good and going strong. The rain we had last week really helped move things along, and if that trend continues everyone should be happy...especially your veggies!

### **Labor Day change in delivery/pickup**

Because next Monday, Sept. 5 is Labor Day, we will not be doing the Gurnee delivery or farm pickup. We would like to do the Monday folks on Wednesday that week. So Gurnee members would pick up at Dr. Shaw's office on Wed. Sept. 7 and farm pickup would be on Wednesday Sept. 7 between 4:00-7:00. I have to confirm this with Dr. Shaw's office and will let you all know well in advance.

## **WEEK 11 - Full & Half Share members pick up**

Dear CSA friends,

It definitely feels like fall is in the air! The shorter days, cooler nights, and beautiful clear days all herald in the coming autumn weather. It's my absolute favorite time of the year. Not just for the cooler weather and beautiful fall colors but also the fall veggies are my favorite of the whole season. We dug up the first few feet of one row of sweet potatoes and are very happy at what we're finding. We hope to dig the rest up this week so that we can cure them in the small hoop house. A couple of weeks in a hot and humid environment will enhance their sugar content and give us that sweet flavor that makes them so yummy. The Brussels sprouts are still small but growing nicely and we hope to get another week or so of cabbage soon. The Daikon radishes are almost ready to start pulling - you may even see them this week, and the turnips, kohlrabi, pumpkins and mustard greens are also looking beautiful and loving this weather.

In the meantime, there are still plenty of summer veggies who look like they'll keep going for a few more weeks. The zucchini and yellow crookneck squash, however, are not among those. We may have seen the last of those, but the patty pan squash is still growing nicely. Tomatoes, peppers, Swiss chard, potatoes, onions, beets and carrots are still hanging in there. You'll see the first of the winter squash in your bags this week - a CSA favorite - spaghetti squash! Spaghetti squash was always my least favorite of the winter squashes, and I could never understand how it was everyone else's favorite. Then I did some research on cooking it, and discovered the secret to a perfect spaghetti squash. Now it is one of my favorite winter squashes and I use it always as a healthy alternative to pasta and it never fails in taste!

Of the six varieties of winter squash we planted this year, three came out great and three never made it above ground. We have a good quantity of spaghetti squash - not as much as in past years where we were begging members to take as many as they could - but enough for a few weeks. We will make sure we only give them out on the weeks where half share members also pick up so they everyone will receive whatever we have. The butternut squash - another CSA favorite - is very abundant this year. Probably the best crop we've ever had. So once we start harvesting those you'll see them for several weeks. The jumbo pink banana squash did pretty well, and for our first time CSA members, this may be a treat you've never had before. It's a huge squash that we cut into large chunks for people because they can grow up to 25 lbs (and I think we've had some even large than that in the past!) Unfortunately, the delicata, acorn and buttercup squashes never grew. We'll have to start with new seeds next year, as these are usually prolific and acorn especially is a disappointment to not have.

### **The Perfect Spaghetti Squash**

As I mentioned above, for years I stayed away from spaghetti squash because I thought it to be a watery, flavorless squash that never really came out in "spaghetti strands" like it was supposed to. Then I found out that the final cooking touch is to **let it stand for 10 minutes once you take it out of the oven**, so that all the liquid can absorb back into the squash. SIMPLE! And it made all the difference in the world! The other change I made in cooking winter squash is that I no longer cook it cut side down in a pan of shallow water. Now I halve it, take out the seeds and wrap each half entirely in foil. Then I bake it, cut side up, wrapped in the foil, at 350 until it easily moves when you push in the sides - up to an hour depending on the size. Once done I take it out of the oven, let it sit for 10 min. (cut side up and still in the foil). Then I unwrap, use a fork to scrape the "spaghetti strands" out, and season. I actually cook all my winter squash like this now, wrapped in foil rather than cook cut side down in water. I think the flavors are stronger and the flesh of the squash is firmer and tastier.

### **Can't use all your peppers? Freeze them!**

2016 has been a great year for peppers. We've had the largest bell peppers ever, and the new little red bells are sweet and tasty. The banana peppers are always prolific and the new hot was peppers proved to be the same way...and yes, hot! I've heard many members saying that they are trying to eat all their peppers every week so as not to waste anything. But you don't have to ever waste peppers, because they freeze incredibly well. I just cut them in half, seed them chop them into quarters, then throw them into a Ziploc bag and freeze. I use them all winter long in anything I'm cooking. As with most frozen veggies, once thawed they're not good to put into a salad or eat raw, but when cooked, you would never know they had been frozen. So stock up now while we have them and enjoy them into the winter!

### **2017 CSA Signups - Join now for discounted price!**

It's hard to believe we are already looking towards next year's CSA when we still have 6-7 weeks to go of this year's season, but it is that time again. The CSA signup for the 2017 season is open! As our long time members know, the early signups are very important to us because that's what gives us the capital to get ready for the next season. We spend the winter getting all the farm equipment upgraded, repaired and maintained, we purchase all our seeds, planting supplies, and tools. Most of our working capital is actually spent long before the season begins. So we open the next year's membership in the fall so that in the spring we are ready to plant as soon as Mother Nature allows.

To encourage those early signups, we'd like to make the same offer to our returning members that we made last year. Sign up and pay before the end of the year and pay the 2015 price of \$500 full share / \$300 half share. Next year's price will remain at \$540 and \$325, but early signups can pay last year's price. You can sign up online or when you pick up your veggies. You can pay in full or

with a minimum \$150 deposit, and you have until Dec. 31 to pay the balance. Then you will be set for the 2017 season. We hope to see all of you back next year and we hope you will sign up early!

**If you have extra bags...**

It's that time of the season again where we start running low on our CSA reusable veggie bags. If you've forgotten to bring yours back a time or two during the season, please look around and if you find them bring them back so we don't have to order more before the season is over. Once the season is over, you'll keep your bag from your last pickup of veggies, but extras we could use back again. Thanks!

As always...thank you for your support!

Yours in health,  
Farmer Scott & Kathy

## **CSA WEEK #12 - Full Share members only pick up this week**

Dear CSA friends,

We spent a beautiful weekend out in the fields, trimming the tops off the Brussels sprouts, pulling up dead plants (no more green beans ☐) and digging up sweet potatoes. This week in between our picking days we'll start pulling out all the summer squash plants and we'll start picking the winter squash and you'll see butternut squash in your bags this week. We are thinning the turnips which look great, our next planting of beets may be ready this week and the kohlrabi and bok choy are coming along also. We hope to still have at least five weeks left of the season - maybe more if the weather holds out. As the summer crops give way to the fall crops we will pull those dead and dying plants, plow the ground where they stood, spread a layer of manure and it will be ready for the winter. Our next big project is getting a new layer of plastic for the large hoop house where we lost the entire covering this past spring during one of those several wind storms we had. We also have to get one last cutting of hay done so we can feed the animals over the winter...there is never a shortage of farm work to be done!

Thank you to the several members who have already signed up for the 2017 season! This helps us so much and we appreciate your continued support. We hope many more of you will also take advantage of our discounted price for returning members who sign up and pay in full by the end of the year! And if you have friends and family who have not been members of our CSA but would like to join, we are extending an offer to new members who sign up by Dec. 31 and pay in full at the time of signup to get a \$25.00 discount off the price of their membership.

### **The honey came in, but the bottles didn't**

We have orders for half of our year's supply of honey already! Thank you...you're going to love it! However...our order of honey bottles got delayed in shipment and won't arrive until Tuesday. So the Wednesday and Thursday members are ok, but I won't have the jars for the Monday farm pick up members and the Gurnee members. If any members really want their honey tomorrow, I'm happy to put it in a canning jar - it won't be a full jar, but it will still be one pound. Just let me know. Otherwise, I will deliver the Gurnee honey orders next Monday. If you want to leave your money at the front desk in Dr. Shaw's office tomorrow you can do that or you can wait and pay it next week.

### **Harvest moon, blue moon, blood moon...so many moons!**

It's hard to keep up with all the different moons we get to enjoy, but no matter which one, there is nothing more beautiful than a full moon on a clear night. We were at Tomi's football game on Friday night - the night of the Harvest Moon eclipse but it was too early to see the eclipse and fairly cloudy. The Harvest

Moon (according to the Old Farmers Almanac, is attributed to the Native Americans because it marked when their corn was ready to be harvested. And the harvest moons are brighter than a normal full moon so farmers can even work late into the night by the light of the harvest moon (no, we don't do that!). The harvest moon is also a sign of the end of summer.

A blue moon is when there is a second full moon in one month. Normally each month has one full moon, but about every 2 3/4 years one month will have two full moons, and the second one is a blue moon. So when someone tells you something happens "once in a blue moon" now you know why it doesn't happen very often.

The blood moon is when there are four total lunar eclipses in a row - and the last one seen in the U.S. was September 28, 2015 and we won't see another one until January of 2018. The moon takes on a red glow during the eclipse which happens when the sun, earth and moon all line up in a row with earth in the middle, blocking the sun's light from the moon. The eclipse casts the earth's shadow on the moon.

Of course there are also just good ol' full moons where all kinds of happenings get attributed to the moon through folklore passed down over the ages, including babies being born, dogs howling, people going mad (thus the term "lunatic"), and crime going up. Whatever your take on the moon....be sure to enjoy its beauty and mystique!

Have a great week and as always...thank you for your support.

Yours in health,  
Farmer Scott & Kathy

## **WEEK 13 - Full and Half Share members pick up**

Dear CSA friends,

As we head into the 13th week of the CSA, we spent the weekend clearing fields of plant no longer yielding vegetables, plowing the rows, storing the irrigation hose until next year and weeding the upcoming fall vegetables. Turnips and Daikon radishes are getting bigger by the day, we pulled up all the butternut squash, jumbo pink banana squash and the pumpkins are ready for harvesting. We have probably one more week of potatoes left, just as the sweet potatoes are ready (you'll be seeing those in your bags this week) and the onions are about done also. Bok choy and beets are out there, still some carrots - and we're hoping the new planting of carrots will be ready soon and the peppers just keep on coming. We hope everyone has been enjoying the veggies this season and we look forward to seeing what the remainder of the season brings us!

### **Lots of honey still available!**

We still have many many pounds of honey now bottled up and ready to sell. Gurnee and Crystal Lake members just email me if you want me to include honey with your veggies. Farm pick up members we will have the honey out with the boxes, so you can pick up on Mondays or Thursdays.

### **It's not a carrot, it's not a parsnip...it's a daikon radish!**

Daikon radishes are a staple in Asian cooking. Unlike traditional radishes, the daikon is delicious cooked as well as eaten raw in salads or by itself. In salads you can julienne cut them (like match sticks). You can also make a cold kimchi, substituting the cabbage for the daikons. Cooked, daikons are great in any stirfry, adding a not too spicy but flavorful addition to your vegetables. They are also delicious in soups and stews, and are a good substitution for any recipe calling for turnips. Here are a couple of daikon radish recipes below.

#### **Do Chua (Vietnamese pickled Carrot and Daikon Radish)**

1/2 lb. carrots, julienned or cut into math-like strips  
1/2 lb. daikon radish, cut like the carrots  
1/2 cup rice vinegar  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tsp. salt

In large bowl, mix vinegar, sugar and salt. Stir until salt and sugar are completely dissolved. Add carrot and daikon strips into the bowl the mix well. Transfer to sterilized jars. Seal and refrigerate for at least overnight before eating. It should last about a month in the refrigerator.

#### **Daikon Radish Chips**



Daikon radishes, washed clean and sliced thinly (like a quarter)  
3 Tbl. olive oil  
Paprika  
Salt and pepper

Turn oven broiler on and mix the daikon slices with the oil and spices in a bowl. Lay the slices on a cookie sheet in a single layer. Cooking time will vary, so watch the chips closely once you put them in the oven so they don't burn.

Have a great week everyone and enjoy your veggies!

Yours in health,  
Farmer Scott & Kathy

## **Week 16 - Full share members only pick up**

Dear CSA members,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for participating in our farm CSA this season. I usually leave the newsletters and writings for Kathy, but thought it would be nice to share with you some of my thoughts as the end of the season approaches.

Altogether, I am pleased with the produce that our land has provided this year, some things were awesome like the tomatoes and especially the peppers which were really abundant and also delicious. The variety was definitely something I feel we improved on this year having a real surprise on what filled the boxes every week.

This was not an easy season for us to tackle with mother nature giving us many challenges. Spring started late, we had periods of way too much rain, and the temperatures in general were completely off. The pests in the fields seemed to favor these conditions more than the vegetables. Hence, the potatoes were a bit smaller than usual, the cabbages were almost completely demolished, and even the squash plants struggled quite a bit.

But even though we had these challenges, we still managed to not skip a beat (or a delivery or pickup), make it through 16 weeks of plentiful and delicious veggies, and more than anything else, be there for you, our community, which we appreciate greatly. No words can express how special it feels to provide you with real qualitative food that simply would not be there without our partnership.

Moreover, every day, we get to serve our community, support our family (you), and hopefully contribute something good for the benefit of society. You should know that in a world in which people are mistrusting and separated in so many ways, your commitment to the CSA in support both financially and in every other way is something beautiful.

I promise to continue to give all I can to provide you with the best produce possible in every way. I hope you let us grow your food for you next year as well.

Thank you very much, and I'll turn this back over to Kathy for a few final notes for you.

Farmer Scott

I've often told Scott he should be writing the weekly newsletter, but I at least appreciate the end of season letter he writes every year. And I earnestly second everything he said. But now, back to CSA business.... ☐

So this week, Week 16, is the last "official" week of the season. Full share members only will pick up this week. And although this is the official end of the season, that doesn't mean you won't be hearing from us a couple or even a few weeks from now if some more of our fall veggies are ready for harvesting. What we've done in the past is if and when that happens, we will send all our members an email and invite everyone to the farm to share everything that we pull out of the field. I know there are still Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, carrots, greens and of course kale growing. It won't be enough to justify the weekly boxes, but it may be enough to offer it to our members as our final harvest of the year. I'll keep you posted weekly with a short email.

We will continue to sell honey outside the CSA as long as we have it. So just email or call me if you'd like to stop by and pick some up. And we hope many of you will decide to join us again next year for our 10th year as a CSA. It would be our honor to be your farmer again. And if you are going to join us we hope you'll sign up early and take advantage of our discounted price.

Thank you again from both of us for sharing our harvest and for supporting you local farmer!

Yours in health,

Farmer Scott & Kathy