



Cascade Farm Ploughshares

Local, Healthful, Sustainable

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Share the Harvest

While it seems as though Old Man Winter has not fully packed his bags and moved out for the season, it is still time to look ahead to our fast approaching summer season and preparations for planting are in full swing here at the farm. We look forward to nicer, warmer weather and the chance to really get out working the fields but in truth we have lots of in-greenhouse planting to fill up our days. In addition to maple sugaring and seed starting we are also still very much in the planning phase for the upcoming season...trying to figure how much to grow, how many shares we will end up with by the start of harvest, and trying to plan events at the farm for everyone's benefit as well as enjoyment. It is a busy time for sure!

Speaking of share signups, we decided, as we told you a couple of issues back, to discontinue our drop-site in West Harlem, NYC this year. This decision was made for a number of reasons including the cost and logistics of delivery, the lower profitability of the program, and a desire to make more of a local impact. This decision also means that we still have a significant number of openings available for new share signups this year. We usually experience a surge in signups in April and May but if you know of anyone looking for a CSA or anyone who might be interested in being part of a local farm please direct them to us. Please help to spread the word that a healthy food source is right here in the middle of your community. That reminds me, if some folks feel that the farm is too far out of the way, we are offering an alternate pick-up location in Southeast this season at the Tilly Foster Farm just down the road from the intersection of Rt. 312 and Exit 19 on I84. This is very accessible to folks who live a bit further south or for those in Connecticut who are looking to be part of a community farm.

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What's Happening...

CSA MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP

Now is the time to sign up and reserve your shareholder membership. Annual membership for a 20 week season will be \$525. Come by and fill out a membership card or call us for more information.

FARM BREAKFAST and OPEN HOUSE Saturday April 4th and Saturday May 2nd

Come to our **Farm Breakfast and Open House** from 8:30am to 11am. Come enjoy our farm breakfast and bring your friends, neighbors, and anyone else who might be interested in the farm. We will be there to answer questions and sign up new members as well as welcome back previous members. Our breakfast price will remain same as last year with all you can eat pancakes, homemade bread, coffee, tea, or juice (however to keep our costs down we can only provide single servings of other breakfast items). Suggested donation for breakfast; \$7 for adults (\$5 for new or former members) and \$3 for children.

FARM SCHOOL in the Spring

School groups will be visiting us in the spring to learn about planting and growing vegetables in our greenhouse and in our fields. If you know groups that may be interested in our farm school let them know how to contact us. We welcome new groups as well as returning groups to join us at our farm school.

Share the Harvest... continued

I mentioned that we want to make more of a local impact with our work and I am referring to our “Matching Share” donation program which we told you about in our last newsletter. We have a number of emergency food programs in the surrounding communities who are all experiencing a rise in demand at the same time as they are experiencing declining resources due to the economic crisis. To respond to this very real need we have decided to match any full or half share donation that is made for this program which will distribute fresh produce to local food pantries this summer. This is a win-win for all involved...the food programs are given access to healthy food which would otherwise usually be unavailable, the donations are fully tax deductible as we are a 501 c3 Not for Profit corporation, and each food dollar donated is effectively doubled making it a real gain to those in our community who are in a time of need. We have received a number of donations to date and hope to receive some more in order to make a significant difference in our local communities. Please consider, if you are able, making this program an effective outreach of the farm. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us here at the farm.

Sorry this was so long-winded but these are important issues and we are sincerely asking for your help. Spread the word! Cascade Farm is open and ready to be your source of local, all-natural and safe food! Stop by and see us, we are always ready to listen...as well as to find ways that each of you can help us be a force for positive hope and change in our community and beyond.

Ruminations



In 2008, mandatory spending on farm subsidies was \$7.5 billion (compared to \$15 million for programs for organic and local foods (according to the House Appropriations Committee)

It has been more than sixty years since a vegetable garden has been planted at the White House

The organic food industry is actually only roughly 3 percent of the overall food and beverage business.

Source – NY Times March 21, 2009 – Is a Food Revolution Now in Season?

Weather or Not...

Did someone say spring was here? It sure seems so with the early change-over to daylight savings time this year. The warm sunny days seem to bring new hope and new life to the farm as the earth stretches and yawns, waking up from her long winter slumber.

And of course I shall choose to ignore the 11:00 News weatherman who stated last night that winter was “slated to make a comeback later this week!” Hopefully by the time you read this I will not have been proven wrong...for as you all well know, the weatherman almost never makes a mistake...right? Anyway, happy spring to all, goodbye to winter, were on our way to summer!



FROM THE FARMER'S FIELD... ASHLEY

Is it really spring?

Sitting in the greenhouse feeding the fire for our maple syrup evaporator, hearing the sound of wood burning, smelling maple syrup, sifting soil into flats to prepare them for seeding, feeling the hot sun coming through the greenhouse plastic while seeding this seasons vegetables- this describes almost every day at the farm during March.

With our animal babies being born, working hard collecting and boiling sap to make maple sugar, seeds starting to sprout in the greenhouses, and with the forsythia and daffodils ready to bloom, we see the evidence that spring is here. With lots of wood to still be cut to keep the barn and greenhouses warm and for our syrup production, there is no lack of work here at the farm this time of the year! This has been a great maple sugaring season. We used buckets this year instead of tubing, which meant that we had to collect almost every day so that the buckets would not overflow. We were able to tap nearly 100 trees giving us a large amount of sap to boil. Our delicious maple syrup is available for purchase at the farm.

Along with the maple syrup, eggs and honey are also currently available in the barn. The eggs we are selling will not be from our farm this year, as it is too late in the season for us to buy chicks and have eggs to provide for the summer. We will be selling local eggs (from two farms on Harmony Rd.) which produce Organic and Farm Fresh eggs.

We have started to seed some of our crops for this upcoming season such as parsley, collards, kale and onions. As the weeks come, there will be more and more to be seeded. Our greenhouse is filling up quickly. Changing to a more local seed supplier and buying available organic seed, should yield very promising crops for this upcoming season.

There are 5 new kids and 6 new lambs (3 of which were born on Valentine's Day!)- all happy and healthy. The animals know when spring is here. They start to run around and play more, and they begin to browse in the grass and woods for the food they have been waiting for since the fall. They all can't wait for the grass to begin to grow, and the bushes to start showing some growth!

Every month has something great and different to offer. March provides us a time where everything is still bare and the memories of winter and snow are still with us, but also leaves us with the excitement that in a few short weeks we will start to see growth and feel the warmth of April!

Farm Funnies

Why do bees hum?

Because they've forgotten the words!

"Quotable Quotes"

"When we tug on a single thing in nature we find it attached to everything else."

- John Muir



FROM THE FARMER'S FIELD... JOSH

Though it has been a long, cold winter, spring has come (yes, though it doesn't feel it, the calendar said it was true!). With spring's coming, we are preparing to put to the test all that we have learned this long winter. Though many believe there is little to be done on the farm during the winter months, we have been quite busy researching ways to improve soil and crop health and to reduce the pressure we experience from weeds and insect pests. We learned that much of this can be accomplished by changing our equipment. For example, our heavy reliance on the rototiller for secondary tillage (preparing a seedbed) and for weed control has strained our soil's structure (which is intimately related to its health) and created a hardpan (an impermeable layer of compacted soil). To alleviate this, we will be switching over to a chisel plow for primary tillage and disc harrow/field cultivator for secondary tillage. We will use a subsoiler, set to run about two inches below the hardpan, to allow water to penetrate deep into the ground. These implements should lead to better drainage and consequently moisture retention, a healthier soil structure, more biological activity within the soil, and a greater preservation of valuable nutrients present in the soil.

To limit the strain on our backs, and to preserve our workers morale, we have borrowed a cultivating tractor, which, outfitted with cultivator shanks and seeders, will keep the weeds from reducing crop yield, and should help us seed straight rows! Straight and evenly spaced rows are key to mechanical cultivation because if the rows are not straight, weeding tools will end up smothering both weeds and crops. The cultivating tractor is also outfitted with a tine weeder, which uses spring steel tines (a much heavier version of the metal lawn rake) to disturb to top inch or two of soil within the beds. If used when the weeds are in the white-thread stage (barely emerged from the soil and not readily visible) this tool will bring the weeds to the surface and expose their roots, where they will dry out and die. Though we currently have limited equipment for flame weeding, we plan to experiment with flame-weeding for slow growing, weed sensitive crops such as carrots, to further reduce the weed pressure.

We have also learned much about long term crop rotations and have begun the process of designing a system that works for our farm. It appears to be far from a simple task! It is, however, one of the main tools organic farmers use to interrupt life cycles of insect pests and weeds, to encourage valuable bacterial and fungal life within the soil, to add nutrients such as nitrogen, and to maintain levels of organic matter, all of which are necessary for healthy vegetables. As part of caring for the soil's health we have learned more about composting and plan to focus more attention on properly preparing and incorporating it.

Though there isn't enough room to discuss here all that we have learned, you will certainly see us using new techniques on the farm, so feel free to ask if you have any questions.



The Lure of Cascade Farm

How can an eight minute drive be so transformative?

I anticipate my afternoons at the farm with pure excitement of a child. I throw off my school clothes and jump into my work clothes, practically running to the car and rarely tying my bootlaces. Still in the fast pace of school mode, I drive out of the village of Pawling. Then I turn onto Harmony Road (of course it would be named that); the serpentine road forces me to slow down, in all senses. I downshift into third gear and begin to relax into farm mode. The asphalt ribbon winds under a blazing canopy of trees. I pass rock walls, red barns, white farmhouses. Shafts of sunlight electrify the autumnal foliage, and the hillsides are painted a fiery wash. As each week passes, green swaths of fields become carpeted with golden leaves. I add layers of clothing as Indian summer fades. A flannel shirt one week, a sweatshirt the next. By mid November, I am cozy in my lined Carhartt pants and a wool hat.

The farm provides a stark contrast to my school obligations. For those couple of hours, my thoughts focus only on the day's chore. With my feet planted firmly in the dirt, the only sounds are the afternoon breeze rustling and drying cornstalks, geese honking overhead, and the cackle of goats in the brush. I feel at peace. The sixteen acres of fields lie in a small hollow, hidden from public view, cradled by sloping hillsides of sugar maples and oaks with an open sky above.

A number of students and several faculty members have joined me on these excursions to the farm this autumn. Groups of five or ten volunteers at a time have helped with whatever jobs Ashley and Josh need done. The boys fall into the rhythm of the task at hand, steadily harvesting the rows of plants, hauling firewood, splitting logs, or stacking hay bales. Of course they engaged in cherry tomato warfare at the end of one golden afternoon, and they heaved rotting pumpkins high into the crisp October air just to hear the rewarding "splat". Hot peppers dangling from the bushes proved irresistible and within minutes, several boys' mouths were afire with cherry bombs and habaneros. Why? Why not?? An upper West Side kid delighted in splitting hefty chunks of wood. Two boys who were renowned back on campus for their video game addiction proved adept at lashing tree trunks together for the tractor to drag from the woodlot.

At the farm, the boys chatter amicably, their laughter rolling freely across this open terrain. In spite of the physical labor – or maybe because of – they become more open like little kids, enjoying the same energy and excitement that I feel. We are playing outside. As we drive back to campus smelling of sun, wind, and dirt, our conversation flows. The demands of school seem distant.

Every time I go to Cascade, I learn something new. I know how to empty and prepare a field for winter, and I have spent hours on my knees planting garlic. Frost-blackened zinnias need to be uprooted, wilted herb beds need to be cleared out. Before the snow flies, I hope to hike up to the sugarbush on the hillside and walk the saplines strung among the maple trees, ensuring they are ready to go for winter. I happily do whatever task is needed, for on a farm, nothing is mundane.

I look at my work gloves. The once soft deerskin has become stiff and conforms to my hands. The yellow leather is now blackened with plant residue, tree sap, and dirt. I can detect a lingering aroma of basil and pine. Yet these gloves are a talisman, a testament to my afternoons at the farm. I'll keep them on the backseat of my car this winter, a reminder of the sanctuary over the ridge, just an eight minute drive away.

Maria Buteux Reade

November 16, 2008

(Maria is a long time supporter of Cascade Farm and serves on the faculty of Trinity Pawling School. We are so grateful for her help and support.... Thanks.)



FOR SALE...

Now ready, our **pure maple syrup** produced locally right here at Cascade Farm in Patterson New York.

We now have **farm fresh eggs** and we just bottled some more **honey** from the fall so stop by and stock up.



In the News:

The internet is buzzing about the current 'Food Safety Modernization Act of 2009' (bill HR 875). I took the time to read through an analysis of the bill and the proposed legislation. The bill is presented as addressing food safety issues but is filled with overly broad definitions and open-ended administrative authority. The bill sounds well-intentioned and has key aspects such as the mandatory recall of tainted food, but overall it does very little to address the big threats to food safety such as the practices of industrial scale factory farms and global imports. The resulting restrictions on seed saving and storing, mandates for industrialized farming practices to all farms and food processors could effectively eliminate the ability for small farms to exist and "organic" to be redefined. Please call or write our House and Senate representatives and let them know you oppose this bill as it is currently written. Go to www.house.gov/writerep to get more information on contacting your local representatives.

Visit Our Website

This winter we finally got to updates on our website... more is planned but now we can provide our monthly newsletter through the website. For those of you who are interested in receiving email notification that the newsletter is ready (in place of a paper copy of the newsletter) please email your name and address with email to info@cascadefarmschool.org. This will help reduce costs and paper use associated with our traditional mailing.

Stay Involved:

We are inviting you to get more involved at your farm. We always need help with weeding and planting projects but perhaps you would like to write an article for our newsletter about farming or want to share an inspirational story? Or perhaps you would like to share recipes, or have ideas for our website? Send your ideas to info@cascadefarmschool.org or to the post address below.

Margaret



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