

Saugeen River CSA Newsletter

April 2014

Hello everyone,

It seemed like it took a long time, but spring is finally here. We have had snow in April before, but usually the winter snow has all melted and we get a bit of fresh snow. On April 10 I was finally able to walk into the garden fields without snow shoes... for the first time since early December! Now we are into the season of mud. Typically, we are able to get on the field work to begin preparing the ground for planting sometime towards the end of April. The determining factor is how wet the soil is. I'm anticipating it may be a bit later this year, although the weather can turn around quite fast.

I did an experiment last year that may really pay off this season. As part of the crop rotation, the ground that will be planted in our early crops (peas, carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, onions etc.)



was seeded in a cover crop of field peas and oats. I have done this for years, since peas and oats die over the winter I can easily work them in early and get the first things planted. We always have to wait until the ground is dry enough to do the initial plowing though. We tried a new system last August when the peas and oats needed to be planted. First the beds were roughed in with the horses, second, we broadcasted the seed by hand, then third, they got covered as the beds were finished. These three steps are seen in the pictures above. Now, this spring, all we need to do to plant is to make a small furrow on the top of the ridge that is already made and away we go! This can be done even if the soil is not dry enough for plowing. This also cuts back on the amount of work needed be done in the usually busy spring, and decreases the weeds that would germinate from seed laying deeper in the soil. This experiment isn't complete, as we are still waiting for the soil to dry, and I have had to modify some equipment to do this, but it all looks good so far!

As the garden gradually appears from under the snow, the soil is showing the benefits of a real winter. There was enough snow coverage that for the most part the ground didn't freeze. This means that all the beneficial organisms in the soil, although slowed down, continued their activity. Humus could continue to be built, earthworms although hibernating some, could keep their work up more than other years without so much snow cover. And just as the snow is still

half on the fields, we could see the garlic that was planted in the fall starting to poke their leaf tips out of the soil.

As with the transition into spring, other changes come to the farm: two new apprentices have committed to learning and growing your food for the season. Jessica Hammond (pictured here) arrived early April, and Jean-Francois Langlais will be arriving in May. Please welcome them when you see them at the farm or in the community.



Also with spring, as you all know, come taxes! In February and March I usually finish getting all of the previous year's financial records in order. One of the most important aspects of the CSA I feel is financial transparency. This is part of the vision of creating healthy economic relationships that many people are struggling to find. The whole global monstrosity of economic life is so big, complex, intertwined and overpowering, that it can really be a challenge to feel a real sense of humanity with most of our economic dealings. We can be kind and have a genuine friendship with the store clerks and owners that we interact with on a daily basis, but most of the goods we take into our homes come from all over the world and are made under circumstances we can know so little about. One of the goals of the CSA is to change that. The CSA model is based on Associative Economics, or a Vertical Cooperative, by another name. Cooperatives are fairly common, but usually they are of a Horizontal nature: either being a cooperative of producers, distributors, **or** consumers. This economic model of cooperative is usually looking after the best financial needs of one particular group. The Associative Economic model tries to be a cooperative of the producer, distributor **and** consumer, which relates to the vertical nature of cooperation, seeing where the money chain leads. Transparency is key to this cooperation; so many CSA's share the financial records of the farm with the membership.

In previous years I have printed out a copy of the previous season's cash flow summary and given this directly to members. This is a document that shows how much income came from the farming operation for the year, and how much was spent on farming related expenses. Now in the digital age, with the newsletters on the farm website, and the cost of postage going higher, I have decided to publish the information on the website. So you will find a separate cash flow statement for the 2013 year on the Newsletters page.

Economics can be quite complex, and involves much more than just you giving me money and me giving you vegetables. There is a deeper meaning to this economic relationship that is worth exploring if we really want to create sustainability, a healthy social life, and personal meaning in our own lives. For those of you who want to go into this in more depth, I have added a "Threefolding" page to the website that explores some of the intricacies of where this idea of Associative Economics comes from. But for those of you who are just curious about the farm's financial picture, you can see the cash flow summary on the Newsletters page.

This financial statement is a little unconventional. In presenting the figures to the accountant for tax purposes, I have prepared them in the normal way (which actually has a certain relation to this alternative). The categories I have separated the various aspects in to present to you as members are my attempt to look at how the three types of money, Purchase, Loan, and Gift are functioning within the farm's activities. A well respected economist who is exploring these Associative Economic ideas suggests that the financial figures of a business can be a sense organ for the health of social relationships. Without looking at how the different types of money are playing out in the business, it can be hard to really tell if it is healthy or not.

As always, I invite anyone interested in exploring these ideas to contact me.

Take care, and see you soon,

Cory