

Saugeen River CSA

Newsletter

March 2013

Hello everyone!

The other morning, as I was walking up to the barn to feed the animals, I could have sworn it was spring. Even with the ground covered with snow, there was a different spring like light in the not totally clear sky, and the birds had a different tone to their chatter, suggesting a change had come.

This has been a good winter for the farm. There has been enough snow, and enough cold to put the past year to rest. The mild weather last winter created some challenges in the garden with the greatest insect pest year I have experienced. We are still feeling the effects of it in our Winter CSA, as some of what we grew for winter didn't pan out so well. The fall cabbage, kale and kohlrabi were so devoured by the flea beetle we had nothing to store away. We have made up for it with the abundant root crops though. Like other years, there is always food, it's just hard to predict what crops will thrive, and what will not.

The spring work is beginning! On March 12 we will be starting up the greenhouse with the first seeding. This is a few days later than some years, but I noticed the new moon is on the 11th. I have seen it happen before, that during this early season, when the sun is not too strong, the new moon has a big impact on seed germination. Seeds often just sit there and wait until after the new moon to germinate. I felt it was not worth heating the greenhouse just to let the seeds sit there, so we will start a few days later and what normally happens is things will catch up. By the end of March, it will feel very spring like in the greenhouse with the warmth and little seedlings coming up. If anyone would like a dose of spring, you are welcome to come by and soak it up. And while you're visiting, how about spending half a day helping with seeding or digging beds? This can go towards your work share for the season, just contact me ahead of time to make sure it is a good day.

Now for a significant announcement: this will affect CSA members who pick up at the farm, more than the Owen Sound members. We are going to experiment this season with having a CSA distribution at Chicory Common, the Natural Foods store in Durham (as if you didn't know!). It will be the same time we have had the pick-up at the farm, Tuesdays from 3-6pm.

There are a few reasons for trying this out. The main reason is that we lack a public face in the Durham area. Every year most members rejoin the CSA, but there are always some that drop out for whatever reason. And every year I have a waiting list of people who are looking to join for the next year. Because of our very public appearance at the Owen Sound Farmer's Market, there has been many more people on the waiting list from Owen Sound, since there are people who see what we are doing and get excited to try it out. So the balance of members has shifted so that there are now more members in the Owen Sound area than right around the farm. I would like to at least keep the balance more even.

A second reason is that over the years, there have been a few requests to have a pick-up in Durham. This has come from a few people who don't want to drive out to the farm, either due to time restraints or an ethical sense of not wanting to drive so much. Having a pick-up at Chicory Common will likely cut back on people's driving. I know there are many people who have a habit of going to Chicory before coming to the farm anyway, and this will make for "one stop shopping!" I will set it up similar to the Owen Sound Market, where I will have a few things for sale, and have the member pick-up visible to whoever walks by. There will not be nearly the diversity of items for sale, but enough to pique peoples interest.

Another reason is related to market share. When we started the CSA in 1997, there were no other CSA's for several hours drive. That first year we spent a great deal of time and energy in promoting what we were doing, and managed to get 11 local members. Consciousness has definitely shifted over the years. There are now five CSA's between Durham and Hanover. I am working cooperatively with these other farms in many ways, so it isn't just about competition, but I realized there is still a limited number of people interested in the CSA model, so if I didn't want our farm to get lost in the energy and enthusiasm of the all the new CSA's starting up, I needed to have a more public face, and I am grateful that Chicory Common was excited to explore this possibility. In reality I am happy to see more CSA's in this area, the more the better. It is the produce shipped from California or elsewhere that I would rather see displaced.

I know many of you love to come to the farm to get your produce, so I need to hear how you feel about this change. I'm going to be honest, it is a bit more work to have a delivery to town, however the benefit I think will justify it. I would rather just have the one distribution on Tuesdays, which would mean not having a pick-up at the farm. How do you Durham members feel about this? If there is a great uproar, we could keep the farm pick-up in addition to the new Chicory Common one, so let me know what you think. Having people come to the farm is actually an essential part of the connectedness of CSA's, so I don't want to diminish that. However, it doesn't prevent you from coming to the farm anyway! The flowers and cherry tomatoes that you come to pick will still be there for you to pick. And maybe more people will come to our weeding parties to connect in that way!! That wouldn't be so bad! But please feel free to honestly reply, so I know what you think.

More news soon,

Cory