

Pinehold Gardens *Field Notes*

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Spring, 2014

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Happy Spring? At least we tied a record for the number of days of measurable snow, 52, so we can all say “Remember the winter of 2013?”

The weather and some difficult deaths have weighed on us this winter. A few months ago we lost our dear friend and CSA member Mark Schaus and summer talk of baseball and banjos will be no more. Then David’s dad left us a month ago, and while we prepared the house to bring him home, fate had other intentions and he never made it. And soon cancer will take away my best boss ever and dear friend Charles Kakuk, Managing Director of Next Act Theatre. Every day we cherish the times we spent together with each and everyone one of them.

As we sometimes struggle to focus on moving forward, our thoughts of our CSA members and farm friends, many who have become an unbelievable source of friendship and support, keep us smiling and grateful.

CSA SIGN UP

We are at 106 members or 66 percent of our goal of 160 paid memberships. Exactly half, 77, of our 2013 members have already signed up. We thank you for your continued support of our CSA program. Our usual return rate is 65-75% so we are hoping that at least 30 more will join us again this year. And so far we have welcomed 29 new members to the farm this year, many of them referrals from our members and friends.

FIELD NOTES

In 2010 after experiencing too many cold wet springs and spring flooding events we made

the decision to push back our CSA start date from mid June to early July and shorten the length of our season to 16 weeks. That might have been one of our best farming decisions ever. To start delivering in June, one must start planting crops outdoors in April as it takes a minimum of 60 days for most quick crops to mature. Today, April 15, is the usual pea planting day. If peas were planted today they would rot in the cold soil. It takes Pinehold Gardens, with its heavy soil and proximity to the lake and its cool breezes quite a while to warm up in the spring in a normal year. So while other farmers in the area might be stressed about getting a late start, we already have some leeway built into our CSA schedule. Also as we have gained experience over the years, each year we are getting better and better at extending the season with summer planted, fall harvested crops so we feel very confident in our extension of the 2014 season from 17 weeks to 18 weeks, extending the deliveries into November.

All of our onions, shallots, peppers, greenhouse tomatoes and the early green crops of chard and collards have been started in seedling trays with the bulk of the other crops waiting until next week as we don’t anticipate being able to take a tractor onto the field until mid May.

SAVE THE DATE

Our Farm Festival will be held on Sunday, September 7. We have changed our festival to an every other year event rotating with a People’s Sunday Supper. Despite pleas and many requests for a repeat of last year’s magical dinner prepared by Peter Sandroni and his staff at La



The promise and the peril of being the first. The unpredictability of spring was made palpable on Tuesday when we received about a half of inch of snow. To protect the crocuses we covered them with bins, hoping the not-yet-blossoming spring flowers will take the cold, and they probably will. However, did it get cold enough to effect fruit buds on the apples, peaches and pears? We’ll have to wait to find out.

Merenda, you will have to wait until 2015 for another dinner.

And our Farm Festival will be more of an educational, food focused event. Yes, there will still be the famous pot luck lunch, but there also will be multiple events and demonstrations for you to enjoy. On the schedule so far are Peter Sandroni, owner of La Merenda cooking sweet and savory dishes from his new Walkers Point breakfast and lunch restaurant, Engine Company No. 3; Kyle Pett, Executive Chef at La Merenda featuring a locally

sourced dish; Christina Ward, certified Master Food Preserver, with a hands on making and canning salsa class; Paul Funk of Hinterland Gastropub teaching the ins and outs of making pickles; Tammy Peacy, experienced youth cooking educator with a kids cooking class; and Kirsten Jurcek owner of Brattset Family Farm leading a talk and discussion about grass fed and pastured beef and pork.

CSA UPICKS

Our planned CSA member only upicks this year will be

paste tomatoes and carving and pie pumpkins. Specific dates will be announced in our newsletter. New this year will be upick zinnias available from the fields when you pick up your CSA box.

AGENT ORANGE UPDATE

There were over 400,000 comments submitted to the

USDA over their Draft Environmental Impact Study. The petition to deregulate 2, 4-D ready corn and soybeans is still under review by the EPA and soon their Draft Environmental Impact Study will be released that will trigger another 30-day comment period. We will keep you posted.

MONARCHS

We may be seeing our last monarchs this summer. So few made it to their migratory home in Mexico that Eric Lee-Mader from The Xerces Society told the attendees at the MOSES Organic Conference that there might not be enough of them left when they

return to find each other, mate and return to Mexico. Loss of habitat due the increased use of Roundup (and now possibly 2,4-D) is one of the many reasons for their decline.

To make a small amends in this sad story we have ordered 120 Red Milkweed plants for you, our members, to plant in a gardens if you would like.

Nurture vs. nature is at the core of farming. The tender young plants that we raise and nurture from seed become the healthy and hardy plants that will flourish in the field. Seeds contain everything the plant needs to germinate. Give them a little water and some warmth and presto, a plant emerges. After roots and true leaves form nature takes over. How much TLC after that? In nature, not much, but success in nature depends on lots of seeds. A single weed could produce tens of thousands of seeds. We don't plant anything approaching that amount to produce our plants. So we need to baby them a bit to ensure their survival and their fruitfulness. Pictured clockwise (right) are onions and peppers. Below more onions, lettuce, pac choi, tomatoes and Swiss chard.

