

Pinehold Gardens *Field Notes*

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Winter, 2014

A DAY IN THE LIFE

We have a hunch that even the most devoted winter enthusiast is getting a little tired of the cold weather. For one thing, it is the constant dressing layers, especially kids that make going out and coming in so much more a chore. But the cold just plain hampers the amount of time we can be outdoors, making more of the great indoors person than we might like.

But even this winter too will pass just like the summer did. Every day is still 24 hours long, despite how long they feel.

We've been assembling seed orders, attending workshops and conferences, planning for equipment upgrades and changes, meeting with chefs, and kicking back a good deal. Unfortunately both of us are also helping with elderly parent issues.

CSA SIGN UP

We would like to thank the people that have already signed up for the season as that money is literally our seed money which now approaches \$4,000. And before we put a seed in the ground 90 percent of our farm expenditures occur. The biggest early expenses include our 2013 income and property taxes and the purchase of potting soil for the 10,000 plants we start in our greenhouse. In the old days of farming a local bank would cover the operating expenses for a farm with a revolving line of credit. So that is one of the most important things about supporting a farm through a CSA membership.

Almost all CSAs motivate their members to sign up early by offering an early bird sign up discount. We have never done that. Instead

we honor last year's price for any returning member.

Unfortunately we are only at 20 percent of our goal of 200 members and we had hoped we would be a little farther along at this time of the year. The price for returning members is \$460, which is the same per week price as last year. (We added one week more of deliveries.) If you are interested in being a member again this year, you can pay with one check for the full amount, 2 checks with one for the current date and the second one dated for July 1st, or, just write as many post-dated checks as you like as long as they add up to \$460. Post-dated checks eliminates collection bookkeeping for Sandy during our busy farming season.

Our best marketing, like many small businesses, is word of mouth. So if you know of anyone who may be interested in joining a CSA, please tell them about us and direct them to www.pineholdgardens.com where our brochure, sign-up form and charts of what was delivered the last three years can be found.

THE NEW YEAR

When we reviewed last year, we were pleased with meeting our goal of delivering more of the requested crops such as beans and carrots.

Goals for this year include putting up temporary hoop houses to shelter our upick tomatoes from the elements and late blight disease. This week Sandy will be attending a half day workshop in Madison that just covers the growing of lettuce and onions so that we can provide a more consistent supply of those staple crops. And we will be working with Piper

Farms to grow sweet corn, allowing us to grow more of the less space-intensive crops.

We were also very pleased with our decision to concentrate on and expand the CSA

membership and length of season and not attend any summer farmers market, except for our stand at the farm on Saturday mornings.



Five months away from the first ripe tomatoes. Really.

CASTLES IN THE AIR

We have thus far lived by the words of William Blake, the 18th century poet, who said that everything now proved was once only imagined. It gave me hope that solutions to problems were only as far away as our dreams. We have always thought a local-regional food system was possible

We, as a community, have been tremendously successful at creating a movement toward a better farming and food system. Beginning in the early '90s with the passage of the National Organic Program, interest has grown to include dozens of organizations. The idea of local food broke into the mainstream via blockbuster movies and books touting small farms, local food and agriculture-as-if-people-mattered. Just look at the number of farmers markets that have started nationally. There has been a 17 percent increase in markets since last year— an increase of more than 1,000, according

to new USDA data. More than 2,500 CSAs operate across the nation. And this information is self reported, which means the actual number is probably larger. This tells me more people are interested in the idea of local food. We have given the movement teeth and it is nibbling at the industrial way of things.

We need to apply our imaginations now to taking this movement right into the eating habits of the mainstream. To really engage this larger community may rely any number of things to happen, some planned and good, and some, well, not so good.

I have a dream for a future of local food. It will take some effort to realize this, and we may indeed be building castles in the air, to borrow from Henry David Thoreau, but that is the right place for them. Now we have to work together to build the foundation under them.