



The Weekly Weeder

A weekly publication for CSA members
ISSUE 1: MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION - MAY 2008

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News From the Farm

Greetings CSA members!

It's been a cool start to the season. But, despite the cold and wet weather, planting has stayed on track for the most part. **We are happy to announce that the first box delivery will begin as predicted—Wednesday, June 11!!** The cool night time temperatures means that crops aren't growing as fast as they are in a typical spring. This means crops like broccoli, carrots and cabbage may take a week or two longer to arrive in your boxes. But never fear, while the early boxes start light, they will quickly build with diversity in color and crops. Weather predicts and restricts the food we eat, something that we've become unaccustomed to because of the trend that stores stock everything all year round. So congratulations to committing to eating what is available in our Midwest region!

What's also fun about eating with the seasons is that each year is different. In 2007 at this time, we were desperately dragging irrigation hoses and sprinklers around the farm as the 80-degree temperatures wilted the cool-season crops. Peas and spring broccoli didn't fair well in this unusual weather. So while crops may be slower in growing, the weather hints at a long delicious spring of peas, baby turnips, radishes, greens and more.

The growing season starts early for us. In January we finish our seed orders and start in on other paperwork projects including updating our annual organic certification, taxes, farm service agency reporting, and advertising. We met some of you at the various booths we set up in Viroqua, La Crosse and Madison this winter. Other highlights from the last few months include:

February 5: The greenhouse wood stove is fired up and seeding begins! While we were very glad not to be paying for petroleum, the cold temperatures made for many trips to the woods for more wood fuel! And with so much snow, it required snow shoes and crampons. Cross country skied under the moon. Sledding down the gravel road with Paul (15 months) squealing!

March: COLD night time temperatures require the wood stove in the greenhouse has to be stoked every 3 hours. Another baby!

March 8 Power flickered at 12:30 am, then goes out. We lay awake; the house starts to chill within the hour. Thanks to our cell phone we call the power company but they don't know what the problem is or where it is. At 1:30 am we rise. I look out across the countryside, totally black. No farmstead lights dotting my view. Diehl's, Slack's, Sine's are now unmarked territories. I put another sweater over my shoulders, add a thick blanket on top of Paul, put more wood in the house stove. My nose is cold. Expected lows of 7 below. Mat dresses and goes to the greenhouse. Dread has filled us as we think of the greenhouse. Entirely headed by wood, fans propel heat through a unique duct system that Mat devised. The 50 some metal barrels that our benches sit on are filled with water and act as a heat sink, evening out temperatures at night when typically the lowest temperature is no colder than 52-degrees. But without the electrical source for our fans, the heat can't be distributed. Energy has been a subject on our minds since moving to the farm. This past summer during the August rains when our area was hit hard by straight-line winds, power was knocked out for 3 days. We depend on electricity for lights, heat, refrigeration septic system, and our well pump for water. We are continuously reminded of the fragile state of existence. A thin wall separates us from the elements. We were lucky, power resumed at 4:30 am. For now, we rest, exhausted from the worry.

March 24 Garlic pushes its way through the heavy straw mulch.

April: The greenhouse is completely packed. The elaborate vertical shelving Mat constructed inside the greenhouse has maximized all possible indoor space. He builds 2 new cold frames (unheated structures used to harden off transplants prior to being field planted) to accommodate for continuous seeding that needs to happen in the greenhouse. We'll continue to seed crops in the greenhouse until mid-June.

April 3 Winter Rye that was planted in the fall is greening up nicely, about 6 inches tall. At 8 inches tall, strips of it will be plowed in as a cover crop for utilizing for nitrogen.

April 28 Very cold and very wet. Snow and freezing night time temperatures delayed our typical mid-April plantings for another 2 days.

May: The packing shed is scrubbed and cleaned from the long winter's dust, ready for the harvest.

May 4 Ice covered the cold frames this morning. The timeframes to field planting are very short. Rain always on the horizon.

May 12 600+ raspberry plants transplanted. My taste buds water to think about next season's bountiful crop!

As this season unfolds we look forward to sharing it with you from our many perspectives: a woman, a man, as farmers, parents, thirty-something's, as a young couple continuously striving to do our best to tend to the land and livestock in our care. We thank each of you for your support. From our family to yours - Cate, Mat and Paul

CSA Member Responsibilities:

1. Pick-up your box every Wednesday. Times for delivery are listed in the detailed pick-up site listing enclosed. Be sure you know when your site closes.
2. Transfer produce into your own bag, leaving the wax box at your site.
3. Read your newsletter. Each week we supply one copy of the newsletter in each box so you can identify each item and get dinner ideas too! More copies can be downloaded from our website on the day of delivery.
4. Respect your pick-up site by leaving it clean of any debris. This is especially important for the many businesses who have graciously volunteered to host our CSA. Please take any extra leaves with you.
5. Try a new vegetable by fixing it at least 3 different ways before saying "yuck!" It takes practice to get it right, so give it a few tries. Recipe ideas will be given each week, especially for new items.
6. Share your recipes and other tips with members by emailing them to the farm.
7. Visit the farm! You're welcome to come anytime, just call ahead so we can plan accordingly. Plan to attend the fall harvest gathering at the farm (mid-October). Watch for other details on u-pick events and the "dinner & a movie" that we'll be hosting locally and in Madison.
8. Give us feedback at anytime. Contact Cate or Mat: 608-675-3855 or csa@ridgelandharvest.com

How to pick-up your box & frequently asked questions:

1. All boxes are labeled with member's names. Be sure you have the right box! If you are picking up at a food coop, be sure to tell them your name and it's also helpful if you tell them if you have a half or full share. If you can't remember this detail, the label on your box will indicate the size of your box for next time.
2. Be sure to review the time when boxes are delivered and when your site closes. It's best when produce can be picked up directly after it comes off our refrigerated truck to keep quality of the produce.
 - A. I'm going on vacation for a week, what do I do? You may have someone else pick-up your box that week (be sure they know how to do this). If nobody will be picking up your box, you may either contact the farm and we'll not pack a box that week for you OR contact your site coordinator to give away.
 - B. I'm running late, help! Contact your site coordinator immediately to see if other arrangements can be made. You may be able to come late or the next day.
 - C. What if I came too late and my site was closed? You may be out of luck. All coordinators have been instructed to use or give away an unclaimed box at the close of their site, unless other arrangements have been made. You may contact the site coordinator to see if you are too late.
 - D. What if I need to switch sites? If for any reason you need to change sites, inform the farm right away so we know where to switch your site.
3. Bring your own bag or box to transfer your produce into. The wax boxes that your produce is delivered in needs to stay at your pick-up site. This is a perfect example of how individuals can make a difference in saving resources both environmentally and economically.
 - A. Careful please! The food-grade wax boxes are not recyclable so keeping them in good condition is important so we can re-use them many times. The flaps that hold the bottom of the box must NOT be ripped or they must be thrown away (we don't want you to pick up your box and the bottom to drop out of it, bruising your vine ripened melons!) A diagram for how to unfold your box with care is included in this packet.
 - B. Doesn't my share include the cost of this box? We want to keep your share cost going towards produce, not boxes. The average cost of a wax box is \$1.25. We'd rather give you something to eat.
4. Swap Box. Don't like something in your box this week? Put in the swap box for someone else to pick up and take an item to replace it. While you may not like something, someone else likely will. Please only take one item for each you exchanged. Example: You put in the 3 green bell peppers, you swap for the 1 bunch of beets not 3 bunches.
5. Read over the following details about your specific pick-up site so you are familiar with the how-to's.

Wednesday Pick-up Site Details

The Local General Store

Site Coordinator: Erin

Phone: 608-637-2327

Address: 207 South Main Street, Viroqua

Time: 2-8 pm

Boxes will be on the shady back porch under wool blankets to keep the produce cool. Enter through the Main Street front entrance to the store, or through the back alley. Place your empty boxes in a neat stack by the "Empty Boxes Here" sign with our farm logo. Since boxes are kept on the back porch, you may pick up boxes after the close of the store, but it's appreciated if you can get them by 8 pm.

People's Food Coop

Site Coordinator: Roger Bertch

Phone: 608-784-5798

Address: 315 5th Avenue South, La Crosse

Time: 2-10 pm

Boxes will be located in the cooler of the Produce Department. You'll need to find a produce department staff person to retrieve your box. The Swap Box will likely be located in the cooler too, so you'll need to ask the employee about this if you wish to swap something. Return your empty box to a staff person.

Field Street

Site Coordinator: Tracy Schumacher and Jonah West

Phone: 608-251-4168

Address: 2032 Field Street, Madison

Time: 2-8 pm

The boxes for pick-up will be in the garage on a white table. Garage door will be open during pick-up hours. Empty boxes will be stored below the white table in the garage. It will be okay if people want to park in our driveway when picking up their produce, but please do not idle cars. If someone has a question they can knock on the front door anytime during the day.

Nature's Bakery

Site Coordinator: Chris

Phone: 608-257-3649

Address: 1019 Williamson Street, Madison

Time: 2:30-5:30 pm

You will go up 2 flights of stairs to where the boxes will be located. You will pass the Bakery's retail front and production kitchen and up the second flight of stairs. Metal shelving will house boxes for pick-up and for empty boxes. Because this is a bakery and temperatures can get very hot, we may choose to locate boxes on the first floor landing, to the right of the stairway that goes up to Nature's Bakery retail front. Either location, blankets will be placed over the boxes to help keep them cool, so be sure to put the blankets back over any remaining boxes after retrieving yours. Look for the 'place empty boxes here' sign to put your flattened box.

Wednesday Pick-up Site Details Continued

Regent Market Coop

Site Coordinator: Matthew, Produce Manager

Phone: 608-233-4329

Address: 2136 Regent Street, Madison

Time: 2-9 pm

Go to the Meat/Deli case where you'll ask a staff person to get your box. Boxes are housed in their cooler. The Swap Box may be located in their cooler, so be sure to ask a staff person if you don't see one out. Empty boxes should be flattened and handed back to a staff person.

Dunning Street

Site Coordinator: Sheila Lenius

Phone: 608-243-1193

Address: 173 Dunning Street, Madison. We're a white corner house with a fire hydrant, one block in from Atwood.

Time: 2-7 pm. Please no calls after 8:30 pm.

Look for the Ridgeland Harvest logo in the window of the house. Boxes will be placed on the shady porch. Park on the street and walk onto the porch. A place for empty boxes and the Swap Box will be located on the porch.

Dolomite Lane

Site Coordinator: Rita Haft

Phone: 608-848-2943

Address: 8310 Dolomite Lane, Madison. Our home is 2 blocks in from the M & Midtown intersection.

Time: 2-7 pm. Please no calls after 8:30 pm.

Boxes will be located in the garage. The garage door will be open and visible from the road. A counter will house the Swap Box and flattened boxes. If you have any questions or need anything, use the front doorbell instead of knocking on the garage door, so Rita's sure to hear you.

Epic Systems — Verona

Site Coordinator: Luke Zahm

Time: 2-5 pm

Boxes will be located in the cafeteria on carts. Swap Box will also be located in the cafeteria and labeled so members can easily find it. Empty boxes should be flattened and placed onto designated carts.

Epic Systems — Tokay

Site Coordinator: Luke Zahm

Time: 2-5 pm

Boxes will be located in the Commons Area on carts. The Swap Box will also be located in the cafeteria and labeled so members can easily find it. Empty boxes should be flattened and placed onto designated carts.

Bulletin Board

Still have summer produce shares? We have a little room for anyone you know who is looking for a summer produce share. Have them contact the farm directly. We have about 10 more spaces available.

Meat Bundles & Winter Share:

Q: When do we need to sign-up by?

A: Pork Bundles are going fast so sign-up soon! We anticipate pork bundles to be delivered in time for Thanksgiving. We'll continue taking Beef Bundle and Winter Share sign-up's. Members who have ordered beef bundles should watch the newsletter for delivery dates closer to the fall.

Bulk Orders & U-Pick Options

Q: How can I order bulk quantities of items?

A: We will indicate the crop, quantity and cost of available items in the newsletter's Bulletin Board. Watch the newsletter for dates of any u-pick opportunities too. These will be informal opportunities for anyone who wants to pick-their-own items. A formal gathering in October will be set for the CSA Harvest Party. You'll hear more about this as plans are solidified.

How to flatten your box:

Push in direction of arrow.

1 With box upside down, apply pressure in direction of arrow on an end flap. Flaps are tucked into slots. Do not pull up, it will rip or bend tabs on end flaps. Repeat on other end flap.

DON'T RIP THAT BOX!!
Directions for unfolding the 5/9 bushel box.

2 Slip the tabs on the end flaps out of the slots, lift.

3 Lift up the two remaining flaps.

4 Lay it flat, ready to be stored.

5 Then put your flattened box into the large, open, empty box.

Every time you do this successfully is one more time we can reuse this non-recyclable box.