



# The Weekly Weeder

A weekly publication for CSA members

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## Box Contents, Tips & Crop Talk

**It's always a difficult decision of when to start the first boxes. Sadly, our radish planting that was intended for this box bolted in the record heat wave a week ago. We have another succession that may be ready for the next box. Hot then cold; Dry now wet...we're starting to feel behind in planting and transplanting.**

**Wet field conditions made harvest and wash of things a challenge. We did our best in the muddy conditions. But, you'll still find dirt lodged into the interiors of bunches and grit in the salad mix.**

**Lettuce Salad Mix**— An incredible harvest of over 400 pounds! Wash then lay out to dry on towel. Store in refrigerator salad spinner or cotton towel in a plastic bag. Will spoil quickly if stored too wet.

**Cilantro**— Beefy bunches! If you can't use this all fresh, freeze into cubes by chopping, fill ice cube trays with leaves, gently topping with water.

**Swiss Chard (full shares only)** - Coming out of the high tunnel, an unheated greenhouse where we grow in the soil). Half shares will receive next week.

**Spinach**— Use fresh or as a cooking green. Our favorites are to chop coarsely and (1) wilt until tender into a cooking spaghetti/pizza sauce, and (2) add to your mixture of taco mixings (ours include ground beef, onions, garlic, cilantro, bell pepper, seasonings). Cut about 1" above rubber band to neatly leave behind edible leaves and stalks. Wash thoroughly. Store in salad spinner

**Green Garlic**—Looks much like a leek, but is the first stage of the garlic plant as a young tender edible stalk. Peel off first leaf all the way to the root end. Cleans best when you cut entire white stalk (up the green leaves), a slit down the center of the stalk essentially. Then rinse under running water to flush dirt between layers of garlic membrane (will be the future paper of the dried garlic bulb). A mild garlic flavor when eaten raw or used in place of garlic bulbs. Stores well in plastic bag in crisper drawer for 2 weeks.

## NEWS FROM THE FARM

Welcome! We are really excited for another CSA Season. The crew has been eagerly anticipating the larger harvests Ahh...to once again grow weary from the long rows of cilantro! It is absolutely wonderful to find that familiar rhythm in the frantic nature of a vegetable farmer at the beginning of June.

This is the 10th year of Ridgeland Harvest, where Cate and I set out to grow food for our family as well as for the larger community. Our goal was to create a diversified farm that would be ecologically and financially sustainable. While we are certainly not lighting cigars with 20's or even 1's, we are finally able to say that we no longer need off-farm jobs, thanks to our dedicated CSA members. We continue to make great advancements to lessen the environmental impact that inevitably accompanies all forms of agriculture.

It took 10 years for Cate and I to feel comfortable calling ourselves farmers – for some reason we always felt that as members of this next generation, or, first generation of returning farmers, that we did not deserve the right to call ourselves farmers unless we were sustained from the farm in every way. This year is shaping up to be a promising year for our family.

So how did we begin? For us it started at a community garden in Madison, where we drew immense energy from working the soil and tending our crops. The bounty from our small plot was immense, and beyond sharing vegetables and meals with friends and family, we learned how to preserve and can our extras. At the same time, Cate worked at Tipi Produce which connected us to a wonderful community with other young people inspired to farm and learn through the example of teacher/farmer Steve Pincus.

Mat has a Geography Degree from Stevens Point and was able to get a job with the WI DNR doing entry level GIS I

## NEWS FROM THE FARM CONTINUED

visited every Public Well and Leaky Underground Storage Tank in the South Central Region. It gave him the experience to get a job with Monroe County in the Land Information Office, moving us at last into the countryside. Cate worked as Packing Shed Coordinator at Harmony Valley Farm for 3 years, providing us with more valuable education in production and handling of vegetables, fruits and herbs. With some financial security we were able to purchase our farm in 2001 from an Amish Family. The farm was not Amish built, and from all indications was originally built in the mid 1860 's. Construction on the house continues today!

While we worked off-farm jobs, our own farm business developed. We began a small CSA of 5 boxes in 2002 – several of those members are still with us today. In 2003 we partnered with two other farms to form the Bad Axe Farmers Alliance– a cooperatively run CSA marketed to the Twin Cities. Despite our good intentions and large customer base, the Alliance only existed for two years. However, it did provide us with the opportunity to see what it would be like to increase our production. After 5 years on the farm, we had about 5 acres in produce. As the farm grew, working 12 hour physical hours at another farm became difficult. So Cate was able to get a job with MOSA (Midwest Organic Services Association) as an Organic Certification Specialist (and sit all day!) Mat was finally able to get out from behind the desk in 2007, working from home, and within 2 years we could support Mat as a farmer. Now, this season, our 10th season, Cate no longer has to work an off-farm job, but can focus on farming and raising our two young sons. Thank you for helping us reach our goals, supporting us!

Stats on the farm this year:

69.75 acres total  
20 acres Forest and Prairie  
18.5 acres in Produce  
31.25 acres in Pasture and Hay

234 CSA Members  
81 Full Shares  
153 Half Shares  
4 full time employees  
3 part time employees

## CREW!



Harvesting spinach: Mat, Craig, Erin, Cedarose & Mike; Liz washes cilantro & Dave bags salad mix. No pictured was Aquilino who was spending time with his new baby born Saturday.



Mat's parents Marie & Jack come each week to help with childcare, laundry & housework, and mowing/yard work. Then there is me, Cate, and little John.

## Barn Preservation Project

Thank you for your contributions! Together, members donated a total of \$374.75 to help us fix up our 1900's dairy barn. We are gathering costs on materials and labor, then we'll determine what will be done to the north side of the barn (pictures on website).

We'll give you another update soon. THANK YOU AGAIN! (Yes, donations are always welcome, just indicate "barn preservation" on the memo of your check.)

## Coming Soon:

Napa Cabbage, Radishes, Garlic Scapes, Kohlrabi, Leaf Lettuce and Beet Greens...and recipes