

Blackberry Meadows Farm



Weeding the lettuce

WEEK 5- July 10/13

On the Menu: (This is a loose projection of what you may find in your CSA share this week. Don't hold us to it! Lettuce/Salad Mix, Herbs, Garlic Scapes, Leafy Greens (probably Kale), kohlrabi.

There's lots of weeding to do on the farm - it's always easier if we can stay ahead and pull or hoe the weeds while they are still small. The most persistent weeds on the farm are red root pigweed, lambs quarters (edible!), and of course, canada thistle.

GROWING NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

It's been a whirlwind of a week! Can you believe that we're already heading into the middle of July?! We had a bonfire and enjoyed the fireworks show put off by (what looked like) the fire dept. down the road. We didn't even have to leave the farm! Holidays are over and we're back at it.

Each week, we try to take an apprentice on a field walk with us, assessing the fields and prioritizing what needs to be done first. We have a motto - "plant something everyday". Today, they are out in the fields seeding [Ashworth Sweet Corn](#). It's a short season crop, and we expect to harvest it in about 2 1/2 months (that'll be the end of September!), a late crop of corn - but it'll be nice to have, regardless. We're also filling in holes where the watermelons and muskmelons didn't germinate. We're growing several interesting varieties: [Golden Midget](#), [Moon and Stars](#), [Orange glo](#), and [Blacktail Mountain](#).

Our broccoli crop is looking spotty - the heads are forming at inconsistent rates and are kind of small - partly due to the weed pressure, surely, but may be due to the dreary weather. We may have a good amount of cabbage (wakefield and red express) - but again, they are maturing unevenly too.

We've experimented with growing more open pollinated or heirloom varieties, and it's not working out for us this year. We've learned from it and now see why some hybrid varieties are preferred for market scale production. We need crops to mature at the same rate - say, when we want to harvest a couple hundred heads of cabbage in one day. This fall - we'll try some new varieties and hopefully have a more well timed broccoli and cabbage harvest!

Each year is a learning year for us. Already we're thinking of 2014 and how we'll do things differently.

Future Farmers: Dana Waelde

“Everyday is a new adventure!” That’s something I often say here on the farm. I now see what a wild life farming is. For the most part, we don’t really know what each day will bring. It’s really a good thing that I’m up for the challenge and the adventure!

Being a lover of food who also supports local farmers, I have been a regular at the Pittsburgh farmers markets for years. I was able to learn more about Blackberry Meadows Farm and about Jen and Greg’s commitment to growing organic food sustainably while involving the community. I knew it was the place for me. I showed up on the farm with not only an interest in organic farming, but with a passion for food and how we can positively affect our local food system. I live everyday as a conscious consumer, paying attention to not only what I eat but to where it came from. Here on the farm I have the opportunity to seed, transplant, weed (save), harvest, sell, cook and eat the food that we grow. Now that is a good feeling! I have taken an interest in learning about all the different weeds and plants that are growing. I really enjoy picking wild berries and foraging for wild edibles and medicinal plants around the farm.

Prior to coming here I had worked in the coffee industry for many years. My newest project on the farm has been roasting coffee by hand in the beautiful brick oven that we have in the yard. I have worked hard to get the temperature, time, and roast all right in order to produce a delicious cup of coffee. We will be selling 8oz. bags of the coffee that I roasted this week in the barn on Wednesday. The plan is to have some freshly roasted for purchase every week!

I have also become a staple at the farmers markets on Saturday in the strip and on Wednesday at Phipps. I enjoy working the markets and talking to people about food! It has been nice getting to know all of you who come to pick up your shares at Phipps and I look forward to more interactions.

Based on my lifestyle and my interests, this apprenticeship is a very important experience for me to have. I couldn’t be happier with the way the season is going so far. I’m constantly learning; I love the work and I get to work with an incredible group of people whom I respect and appreciate.



Dana and Evelyn weed the beets.

I look forward to seeing you all soon and hopefully some of you will come out and help us save some veggies!

I’ve included a recipe that I hope you’ll enjoy.



Lentil Lettuce Wraps

by Dana

Ingredients:

1 T olive oil
2-4 garlic scapes
8 oz. of mushrooms, diced
2 kohlrabi, cut into matchsticks
1 T rice vinegar
1 T tamari (or soy sauce)
1 c cooked lentils
4 scallions, sliced
½ t sesame oil
a small bunch of cilantro, chopped
salt to taste

Preparation:

Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan. Add the scapes and cook for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms, kohlrabi, rice vinegar and tamari. Cook about 5 minutes until mushrooms are tender.

Stir in the lentils, sesame oil, and salt. Cook until lentils are heated through. Remove from heat and stir in the scallions and cilantro.

Place some of the mixture in each lettuce leaf and serve. Eat it like a taco in a lettuce shell!



Mary Parker - our #1 volunteer

Will the rain ever let up?

Hi, my name is Mary and I am a CSA member. I've been a member now for 7-8 years, when Jack and Dale still owned the farm.

I'm retired now and always enjoyed gardening and being dirty, I guess. So 3 years ago, I decided to volunteer at Blackberry Meadows and have been coming back 2 to 3 days a week ever since, doing anything I could to help out, from babysitting to weeding to seeding in the greenhouse.

I've seen the problems that these young farmers are experiencing, always something every year (or should I say every day). From the rain and mud soaked fields, where you can't get the machinery in to plant and everything is done by hand or cannot be done at all until they dry out, to a row of dill and cilantro plants eaten by something the day after being put in the field. I've seen the worry in Jen's face when she thinks maybe there's not enough produce for the CSA members that week.

So I asked if I could write this article in hopes of reminding all the members of this CSA just why they decided to be a part of this large family, why they pick up a share each week. They want fresh, organic, locally grown produce, produce that's grown with you, your children and mother earth in mind. The weather, field conditions and many other problems that come along in a growing season can determine how soon or late you receive certain produce.



So be patient, the tomatoes and peppers will come, meanwhile, enjoy the greens and scapes and all the love that comes with them. And remember all the hard working interns and volunteers that are doing their best. If you have some free time and like the dirt, come join me in weeding the beets or playing in the greenhouse.

Hope to see you,
Mary

Things you ought to know about

A couple of items of note this week:

Dana roasted some **amazing coffee** - we buy fair trade, organic green coffee beans from [Sweet Maria's](#). She'll roast a fresh batch each week - try it out!

We bought a half a hog (**Pasture raised pork**) from Kevin Jarosinski -and we're reselling it by the piece. Kevin runs a pasture based operation, raising chicken, pork, beef, hay and grain. Bacon, chops, steaks, ground - it's all there. If you're at one of our drop off locations - just shout out and we'll bring down what you're looking for.

We also bought a **half a cow** from Showman Farms, up in Erie Co. Jen's folks live up there and buy their raw milk and eggs from this farm - they are a grass fed, organically based dairy. This is meat from a holstein cow - and it's great!

If you'd like to buy another **whole chicken** or more from Kevin Jarosinski - sign up for them in the barn this week - or shoot Jen an email. We'll make sure your name is on the list for chicken delivery for July 17.

Lastly, we have partnered up with [Una Biologicals](#), a Pittsburgh based herbalist. We have lip balm, healing hand salves, and more for sale in the barn. Try it out and let us know what you think. We think she's got a top quality product!

The next Potluck is July 27th. All are welcome to come and enjoy the farm from 4 - 7 pm! Bring games, blankets, drinks, and have fun!

The barn is open on Wednesdays from 11 am - 7 pm. If you think you might be running late - just give us a call (724 226 3939). **The Phipps Market/CSA runs on Wednesdays from 2:30 pm - 6:30 pm, and we'll be at the Boyd Center on Saturdays from 9 am - 11am.**

Be sure to bring your own bags.

Please remember to **check in** when you show up to pick up your share. If you're new to our CSA, we'll gladly give you the run-down on the operation and answer any questions you may have.

If you'd like something delivered to the Phipps or Boyd drop off locations - just give a holler -

we'll gladly send it on down to you.

Once a month (the last Saturday of each month 4 - 7 pm), we typically have a CSA potluck picnic - a very casual event. The goal is to give you an opportunity to come to the farm, relax, enjoy the countryside, and get to know each other. We'd also like to you to help plan for our annual CSA picnic extravaganza - **we're looking for folks who would like to help plan activities, speakers, games, etc.. We'll discuss this ideas at each monthly picnic. Let us know if you're interested in helping.**

Thanks for supporting local organic agriculture!!