



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

February 22, 2012

February Farm Update by Captain Jack De Wilde

Hello Everyone! Even though we aren't coming to your neighborhoods weekly, we haven't forgotten about you. We've been busy here on the farm getting ready for the 2012 growing season....which may be closer than we think! Actually, winter is a very busy time of the year here at the farm. Here's a little insight into what we've been up to this winter.

Most years we don't have too much left in the cooler by the third week of January...but this year has been a little different. Last fall we had one of the best carrot harvests we've had in some time. What are we going to do with all these carrots???!?! Fortunately, all of our storage crops are holding pretty well this year. Last week we finally washed the last bins of beets and carrots and packed our last bag of soup mix until next October. We still have sunchokes, burdock, black radishes, rutabagas and turnips....and the packing shed crew is thankful to have the winter work.

We haven't had too much snow this winter, which has kind of bummed me out....I'm definitely a snow dog. Since we don't have much snow and it's been warmer than in some years, the pussywillows are starting to pop open! Farmer Richard, Hector and I went out to the field to check them last Saturday. Unfortunately, I accidentally hit the automatic door lock on the truck door and locked the keys in the truck. We all had to walk home to get the extra set. Needless to say, I had to stay in the house after that episode. But, I can tell you that the pussywillow is ready to cut from the hedgerows, so the guys will be busy doing that this week. Last week they finished trimming the curly willow from the hedgerows, so the ladies have kept busy trimming and bunching that.

Richard and Andrea finally got all our seeds ordered in the middle of January...and it wasn't long before the boxes started to arrive! I like seed delivery time because it means almost every afternoon a delivery guy comes up to the office for a signature.....and I get a little rub behind the ears. I prefer seed companies to ship via FedEx....that driver carries dog biscuits with him! Simon and Andrea finally have all of our seeds inventoried and put away. Now we have to go through our inventory very carefully to figure out what seeds need to be sterilized and which ones need to be germ tested. This seed thing is a big deal...if the



The author, waiting for the mail to arrive

seeds aren't good, the crop won't thrive.

Now that the seeds are here...it's greenhouse time!! Hector, Simon, Jacinto, Felipe and Gerardo spent three days last week cleaning and sterilizing the nursery greenhouse. It's bright and beautiful and they'll start planting onions this week! We love the first hints of green we see poking out of the flats....and after that it's full speed ahead! Every night we have to check the greenhouses before we go to bed. Andrea and I like to walk through the greenhouse to make sure all our little seeds are tucked in for the night and their house is at the right temperature. Andrea checks the thermometers to make sure everything is set correctly. I stand in front of the furnace and let the warm air blow down my back—that's how I make sure the furnace is working correctly.

Lets see.....Tim, Brandon and David have been keeping busy in the shop. Brandon and David have stayed busy repairing our cultivation equipment, trucks and now they are rebuilding a trailer for our irrigation equipment. Tim has been busy organizing the shop, doing parts inventory and helping with repairs, ordering and setting up the water system for the greenhouse heat tables.

Terri & Kelly have been busy entering in CSA orders and getting everybody scheduled for the new season. I go to the mailbox with Terri every day to pick up the new CSA sign-ups in the mail. I'm not much help with carrying things, but I think Terri likes my company. Richard and Andrea are heading to Chicago and Minneapolis for sales meetings over the

next 2 weeks. Some of the crew will spend several days at the big farming conference in La Crosse later this week. It is a great time to network with other farmers and learn more about organic farming.

Our crewmembers that spend the winter in Mexico are enjoying time with their families. José Antonio and José Manuel are busy running an internet café, Juan is keeping busy with his ice cream business and Nestor is spending time adoring his new little girl who was born last fall shortly after he got home! I'm not sure what everyone else is doing, but I'm looking forward to having them back here in April. We're doing some repairs on their houses and getting all the paperwork taken care of. Unfortunately, we have a bit of a situation with the house at our Hammel Lane property here in the valley. The DNR has determined that the house is in the breach zone for the dam that is upstream. Richard is busy negotiating what the best plan of action is to maintain a safe place for some of our guys to live. We may have to raise the foundation of the house or even move it to higher ground on the property. Hopefully, we'll find some resolution to this situation soon.

I've been helping Hector take care of the animals this winter. The cows seem to be happy and healthy living in the barn we fixed up for them. The chickens are doing really well too. We have 24 hens and 3 roosters. Hector has been getting 8-11 eggs a day! The goats are hanging out and looking forward to spring. I think we'll have some new babies coming, but it's a little soon to tell. As for me, I mostly just chase stray cats, possums and raccoons that might get the chickens. I bark very loudly to let the coyotes know I am watching for them. They have been barking a lot at night lately. The turkeys have been making quite a bit of noise in the pine forest too. I don't chase them though because they don't really cause any problems and they fly pretty high.

Well, I guess that about does it for updates. We hope you are enjoying the winter and looking forward to spring as much as we are! It won't be long before we will be cutting that thick, sweet overwintered spinach and searching for ramps in the woods. If you haven't signed up for the 2012 CSA season yet, it isn't too late to do so! We look forward to growing vegetables for you and your family again this year!