



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

March 2014

Spring Has Sprung!

by: Andrea Yoder

Spring has Sprung! That's right, yesterday was the first day of spring and we're going to celebrate it even if there is still snow on the ground! We know there may still be an occasional flurry of snow yet in the forecast, but hopefully the worst of winter is behind us. Spring is an exciting time filled with change on our farm. As our valley starts to wake up from a winter of hibernation, new signs of spring start to appear every day. I'm most anxious to hear the peeper frogs fill the valley with their croaking songs in the evening. Sometimes the sound of them is so loud it feels like they are completely surrounding us! Before long the trees will start putting out buds, tiny blades of new grass will start to poke through the ground, and the blue birds will migrate back to the Midwest. The snow has been slowly fading away and it's refreshing to see the hillside pastures start to appear. The overwintered spinach beds are becoming more visible every day, and



Overwintered Spinach

soon it will be time to start hiking the woods looking for signs of ramps pushing through. With less than 2 months until the start of CSA deliveries, the

excitement of a new growing season is building.

While the pace of the farm does slow down during the winter, we've still been keeping busy. As we start to near the transition from winter to spring, we have our annual list of things to do. We took advantage of the few warmer days (as in temperatures above 0 degrees) to forge our way to the fields to trim the curly and pussy willow. After a few nice days last week, the pussy willow started to really open up and the crew was able to get it all harvested before it rained on Wednesday. The ladies have been working diligently to get it all trimmed, bunched and ready for May CSA deliveries and our April farmers' market. Almost all of our seeds have arrived now....and it is quite a pile! Laurel has been busy planting small samplings of the seeds to test their germination potential, and thankfully everything looks pretty good so far. Kelly & Megan have been humming away in the office processing CSA orders, getting everyone scheduled for deliveries, and preparing materials for the welcome packets that will be sent out in just a few weeks!

The packing shed crew has been busy washing and sterilizing greenhouse supplies & harvest containers and next week we'll start our annual spring facilities cleaning to make everything sparkle and shine. The greenhouses are in full swing now



Germ testing in the Greenhouse and the onions, shallots and leeks are looking great. We hope to see the first parsley sprouts this weekend and the celeriac should be pushing through soon as well. The first fennel and dandelion were just planted this week and next week we'll be working on getting the first spring broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi and cabbages seeded. The first of the herbs were planted this week for your herb packs that we will deliver to your sites in May. I almost forgot to mention that the ginger and turmeric have been planted and we're just enduring the long wait for them to start sprouting. It takes almost a month for the seed pieces to start sprouting, but hopefully we'll see something happening within the next several weeks.

Jack & Richard have been busy as well, but their work is a little different than others on the farm. They are more of the scouting and observation crew as we transition into spring. Their winter specialty has been feeding our animals and watching wild animal movement in the valley.

[Visit Us and Bring Your Friends to the FairShare CSA Open House!](#)

This Sunday, March 23rd we will be at the FairShare CSA Open House from 1pm - 4pm at the Monona Terrace. Stop by and say hello to your farmer! Bring along your friends who are interested in joining our CSA. If they sign up you can earn a \$10 referral gift certificate! Visit the FairShare website for a list of workshops being offered. We hope to see many of on Sunday!

[Join our Team!](#)

Visit our opportunities page at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/opportunities.php to see our current openings!

Their domestic animal report is as follows: 1.) The cows still have plenty of “chocolate” hay (that’s the second cutting of the fine, tasty hay that they prefer). However, as the days have started to warm up and the snow is melting away from their pastures, they’ve had smiles on their faces and have been spending a lot more time outdoors. Now that they can see the ground, they have been munching on the little blades of grass that were frozen in time at the end of the season last year. I’m not sure how delectable they are, but it’s probably the ambiance of the setting and the fact that being outside is becoming more enjoyable with the spring weather.



2.) The goats have been busy scrambling on piles of snow and drifts that formed around their houses. They too are anxious for new green grass in their pastures, but there is still quite a bit of snow to melt on their side of the road. Within the next month we expect to have some new baby goats! It looks like we have 6 mamas that are expecting new kids. What is your guess on how many new kids will be born on the farm this spring? Richard and Megan are guessing 10 new kids. Kelly thinks we’ll have 12 new kids, but Jack & I are in agreement that there will only be 9 new kids. We’ll keep you posted!



3.) The chickens are tired of being cooped up and have been happily pecking around the barnyard on warm days. The hens must be pretty happy & content –they’ve been laying as many as a dozen eggs a day now! We certainly appreciate their pretty little blue, pink and tan eggs and have been eating eggs nearly every day. Too bad we don’t have some asparagus or ramps to go with them!

Jack & Richard have seen their first robin, but are still watching for the blue birds to return. The red-winged black birds, killdeer and sandhill cranes have also been spotted flying overhead. The eagles, hawks and great-horned owls that live in our valley have been pretty noisy as they are nesting and are very protective of their nests. The squirrels are running around like crazy darting all over the yard, up and down trees and back and forth across the road. I suppose they are frantically trying to remember where they stashed their nuts last fall. The raccoons and opossums are start-



ing to mill around and the coyotes are howling like crazy. Captain Jack talks to them at night and sometimes in the morning, although we seldom see them. They seem to have a lot to talk about, but Jack won’t translate the conversation for us.

The sap in the maple trees is starting to run and many people have their taps out with hopes that this year will be a good run for maple syrup. Just like farming, every year of maple syrup is a different year completely dependent upon whatever hand Mother Nature deals. We hope to offer Alvin Miller’s syrup again this year if it turns out to be a good season.

In just a few weeks we hope to be able to get into the fields to start planting, laying plastic mulch and transplanting....but that means we need a crew! Just this week we received notice that our application for their visas was approved and we are in the final steps of the annual process to bring this great crew back to Wisconsin. We expect the first group of our crew members to be back on the farm the second week of April! We’re anxious to reconnect with them, see pictures of their children and hear about what’s happening with their families.

It won’t be long before we start digging the overwintered parsnips & sunchokes and in just four more weeks we’ll be attending our first outdoor farmers’ market in Madison! I’m dreaming of creamed ramps, big plates of overwintered spinach salads, chive biscuits alongside warm bowls of tangy sorrel soup, grilled asparagus and rhubarb pie. In case you haven’t noticed....we love food and can’t wait to start eating out of our fields again! Happy Spring to everyone and cheers to the 2014 growing season!



Don’t Forget Our Farmers’ Market Season Starts April 19th!

Our first farmers’ market day is less than a month away! If you can’t wait until those first CSA boxes arrive, be sure to stop by our stand on Mifflin Street at the Dane County Farmers’ Market Stand. If you’re a frequent market stand shopper, don’t forget to purchase your CSA Market cards! We’re looking forward to a great market season!