

October 2, 2008

Hello Everyone,

The season is rapidly winding down, which means we're taking a moment to catch our breath and looking ahead to next year. First and foremost, we'd like to thank you for taking such a huge leap of faith with us this season. CSA inherently involves risk, and that's only magnified when you're dealing with a new farm with no track record. We only hope you were satisfied, and that the risk was well worth it.

With a full year behind us, we now have a framework for measuring future vision against actual potential. Our first lesson was how quickly the 7 acres stated in our contract boiled down to less than 4 tillable acres on the ground. Yet even with the diminished acreage, we found that we could have supplied more than the 115 half shares we sold this year. Finally, we discovered that our share price does not accurately reflect the market value of our food. Ours is already one of the most expensive CSAs on Long Island, but the higher price also buys you more food than what most local CSAs distribute. Furthermore, if you were to purchase the same quantity of food at a supermarket, you'd pay significantly more (see attached spread sheet). With all this information, we can now make the adjustments that will set us on course to developing our ultimate vision for the farm.

We've decided to raise the share price to \$425 for a half share and \$850 for a full share. We realize that this is a significant jump, but we simply didn't know what to expect when we set our price last year, and we didn't want you, the members, to bear the brunt of us falling exceptionally short. Now that we do have a frame a reference, we need to set a price that adequately covers our operating costs, as well as providing for growers' salaries.

We've also decided that while we will add 10 more half shares next year, we'd rather keep the CSA small. We've decided this for two reasons. First, even if we were to sell the maximum number of shares, we'll never operate on the same scale as the big farms that make their profit off of volume. Second, a bigger membership would compromise the intimacy that drew us to CSA in the first place. We can offer pick-your-own herbs and flowers, potlucks and other farm events, precisely because we haven't devoted all of our land and energy to pumping out vegetables for the maximum number of shares. Simply put, we've realized that in this suburban oasis, we're better off cultivating a niche that emphasizes the quality of the CSA experience over sheer volume.

There are also some additions and improvements we're looking forward to next year. Most exciting, we are offering a pick-your-own berry share for an additional \$40. For several weeks during the summer and early fall, participants will receive pint or quart containers at distribution, which they can fill with raspberries and/or blackberries. Second, we're eager to make improvements to the herb and flower gardens by the distribution tent. It seemed that while the exotic plants were interesting, a greater supply of the basics (parsley, dill, cilantro, etc.) would be preferred. Also, last spring we purchased a cultivating tractor—an Allis Chalmers G—with the intention of converting

to electric. We'll finally have time for it this winter. While we're not likely to recoup the cost of the conversion kit (\$3,000), we excited to showcase green technology on the farm. Finally, we've talked a lot about organizing various workshops, and we'd like to start making progress on that. Basic food preservation is the first thing that comes to mind, but we're open to any suggestions.

Attached is the 2009 registration form. Because we are only adding 10 shares, we cannot, unfortunately, offer members with half shares the option of upgrading to a full share. We will reserve your share until January 1, 2009. After that, we will open it up to the waiting list. We are also offering an extra Thanksgiving pickup for those who return their registration forms and checks before November 14th. We will divide the remaining storage crops among participants. The food will be distributed Tuesday, Nov. 25th 4-6pm.

We've also attached a survey, and we'd greatly appreciate it if you take the time to fill it out and return it to us, either at distribution or via email. Even if you do not plan to return next year, your input is invaluable to us.

Again, we'd like to thank you all for a great first season, and we hope next year will be even better!

Sincerely,
Dan & Caroline