

October 6, 2009

Hi Everyone,

Our second season is drawing to a close, and so we're breathing our annual sigh of relief. This year has been the most challenging we've ever faced, partially due to the baby, but mostly due to the cold, wet spring. I remember one dismal night back in May when Dan and I stood in our kitchen preparing for what threatened to be a total disaster—at least, that was how we felt. The first distribution was only a week away, yet the spinach was more yellow than green, the kale no bigger than when we transplanted it a month ago, and the beets nowhere to be found.

Our fears weren't entirely unfounded. The beets and carrots were late. We lost the spinach and—even worse—the tomatoes. Geese decimated the sunflowers. Cucumber beetles compromised the cucumber and squash yield. Needless to say, we got off to a rough start.

Thankfully, things started to turn around mid-summer, and now here we are in October, distributing a respectable haul of food. We're happy and relieved that the disaster we feared did not materialize, but we're also walking away from this season fairly humbled. For one thing, we discovered that our heavy soil is far less forgiving than the sandy soils where we learned the craft. We learned not to rely too heavily on new fields that have yet to prove themselves. A disappointing lesson is that we're probably going to have to start using organic controls for the bugs—another expense and demand on our time. But the upshot of all this is that we now know a lot more about the land, its limitations, and its potential. As CSA farmers, we are often asked how much food comes in a share. We can't predict the future, so we will never have a solid answer to that question, but each year helps shape a framework for expectation. Last year pulled us in one direction, this year pulled us in the other, but it's all part of the general picture.

Now, informed by another year of experience, we begin our preparations for next season. The prices for both vegetable and berry shares will remain the same. The berry share, however, will expand to include June raspberries and strawberries. The Friday night pickup will move to Thursday (same time, 4-7pm), and the Saturday morning pickup will move from 11am to 10am. And, as always, we have big hopes for improving the herb and flower garden by the distribution tent.

This season ran the gamut from challenging, to heartbreaking, to redeeming, to gratifying, but we believe the most significant thing to emerge from this year was the triumph of the CSA model. Had we relied entirely on the farm stand for income, we might not have survived the slow start or the loss of the tomatoes. But the fact that you, our members, agreed to share both the bounty and the risk means we'll be back for round three. We're deeply grateful for all the support you've shown not just for the food, but for us, from the birth of our baby, to the news about the tomatoes. Whereas in May we could barely fathom putting ourselves through the ringer again, now we're ready to jump back in.

Sincerely,  
Caroline and Dan (Ada, too!)