

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

Despite the occasional cool spell, we continue to have plenty of warm weather. This is speeding up the growth and maturation of our crops, many of which have been early. Some years our strawberries are just getting going at this time. This year we are into the final stretch and may be done by this weekend.

We will be harvesting lots of peas and brassicas over the next couple of weeks. The cauliflower and cabbage are sizing up and there are small cucumbers starting in the hoophouse.

While we welcome the heat, we are starting to hope for some rain. It has been very dry this past month and anything not irrigated is starting to show the effects. We are reminded of our first season here, 2012, when large parts of central Canada and the US experienced drought. It makes us very happy we had our irrigation pond dug last fall.

The strawberries have been a real joy this year. They have surpassed expectations and renewed our confidence in growing them. The planting for next year is much smaller, so we

may not have the same surplus we did this year, however, we feel confident we will again have berries. Below is a nice photo of our daughter Lilly picking berries. She hung out with us in the evenings when we were picking berries for all of you. I think next year less of them will end up in her mouth!

Our orchard trees are also doing well. This is the first year we left blossoms and fruit on the trees and we can see little apples coming along. The cherries, of which I got five, were mostly eaten by the birds, who we are encouraging to come into the orchard to help with pest control. Next year we will net them so we can have some for ourselves!

We hope that next year we will start to see some pears and plums. In a few years time we will try incorporating some of the tree fruit into the fall pickups for the CSA.

We are sad to say that our broiler chickens for this year met an unfortunate demise. They spent the first two and a half weeks of life

in a small pen in our driveshed. We moved them out to pasture in a chicken tractor on Friday evening, with the plan to put up an electric fence the beginning of this week. On Saturday night, their second night on pasture, a skunk got into their coup and killed every single one. We feel bad for they way those birds died as it was most likely traumatic, and for the effort and food put into them. At least it was less than 30 birds and we were raising them for ourselves and not for sale. It is better to learn lessons like that at a smaller scale without too many lives or dollars on the line...

Enjoy,
Devan

Harvesting

- **Baby Beets**
- **Broccoli**
- **Cabbage**
- **Cauliflower**
- **Fennel**
- **Garlic Scapes**
- **Green Onions**
- **Herbs**
- **Kale and Chard**
- **Lettuce**
- **Peas**
- **Strawberries**
- **Turnip**
- **Zucchini**



Black Plastic Mulch?

Many of you may have seen fruit and vegetable beds with the plants growing through a sheet of black plastic. Have you ever wondered why that is?

Black plastic mulch is used on a variety of crops from strawberries and tomatoes, to melons and sweet potatoes. The mulch provides wide control, keeps fruits clean and heats the soil, good for crops that prefer a warm climate. As we are pushing the northern boundary for some of the fruit crops we grow, we use black plastic mulch for our tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, melons and our first planting of zucchini and cucumber.

Forming beds with the mulch is a lot of work if done by hand. It is also labour intensive planting into the mulch as it requires carefully making holes and sealing them with soil and stones when finished. All of this work usually feels justified as the heat and weed control provided make up for the initial investment.

There are many types of black plastic to use, coming in 3-5' widths and rolls thousands of feet long. There are different thicknesses and biodegradable and non-biodegradable types. The first type we used was a non-biodegradable type. We

had some ethical dilemmas in using this product as it is a petroleum based plastic and because we had troubles removing all of it from our fields. So this year we tried ordering a completely biodegradable type, made from corn plastic. We thought this would be a good way to move away from fossil fuel products and reduce the plastic waste left in our fields.

Our experience with this new mulch has unfortunately been disastrous. The plastic is very flimsy causing it to tear some as we were installing it. With the unseasonal high heat and wind in late May

through June the plastic has begun to tear apart and biodegrade already. I expected to see this kind of damage later in the season, but at this time the crops still need the heat and weed control the plastic was intended to provide. Now the dilemma will be, whether or not to try and make this product work or try to get rid of 4 years of plastic left on the roll. So much for reducing waste...



next year, so if you know people in the tri-city area, please pass word that we will be doing a CSA drop off there starting next June.

Still Looking for Members

We are still looking for members for the 2016 season. We have had about 1 new member per week, joining since the beginning of the pickups. If we can keep that up we may get close to our goal for this year by the end of the season.

For new members start-

ing partway through the season, we offer prorated shares roughly proportional to the number of weeks left of pickups. Shares are weighted a little heavier towards the end of the season as the overall value of produce rises throughout the summer peaking in late August or early Sep-

tember.

There is space in both the Guelph and on-farm pickups, so if you think of anyone who may be interested, please pass our information their way.

Also, we will be expanding into the Kitchener/Waterloo market

Fair Fields CSA Potluck

This years CSA Potluck will be **Saturday July 30**, from **2-7 pm**.

We will be throwing some food on the **BBQ** during that time and enjoying it with some **salads** and **homemade beer**.

We are welcoming members, friends and family and encourage you to bring yours as well and enjoy a **tour of the farm** and some food and beverages with us. There will also be **bocce ball** and **croquet** set up.

Please **RSVP** if you think you will come so we can get a sense of numbers.

Hope to see you there!

Devan, Nicole, Lilly and Rachael