

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

The warm fall weather continues and we are just fine with that... It alarms us that August continued the temperature trends of this seasons, being the hottest on record both locally and globally. On the other hand we are enjoying some of the benefits of this heat including a continuing bumper crop of tomatoes and peppers and some of the finest fall raspberries we have ever grown. We have been slow to transition to our fall crops, as the summer ones just keep producing!

We are thankful that we are at least seeing some more normal moisture levels. The rains have helped rejuvenate hay ground, important as the alfalfa and clover crowns store energy for winter. Ground water levels are still fairly low however. Our pond is fed by both ground and surface waters. The lack of ground water means there is little surface water making it

down to the pond and we wonder if at points the water is even being absorbed out of the pond into the surrounding dry areas. We still have about 5' to go before the pond is at the level it was this spring and early summer. With luck the regular rains will continue through the fall and we get more normal snow fall amounts this winter.

Much of the garden is now finished and we are preparing to plant fall rye, the cover crop we prefer for old garden area. Rye grows very well in cool weather, survives the winter, out-competes weeds and has a great fibrous root system that helps rehabilitate soil structure. We will follow this with red clover, for fixing nitrogen and tap roots that help break up hardpans (hard layers of soil 4-8" down). It feels good to be putting the soil to rest for another season.

Soon we will be doing the last of this years prep work for next years crops. We

still have to pop the garlic, gently breaking apart the bulbs into cloves, which we will then individually plant to grow into full bulbs for next year. We purchased new garlic seed this year and hope it will lead to much better quality and yield in the coming year. If the yield is good enough we hope to have larger quantities of garlic for sale to the CSA. This way we hope you can avoid that tasteless stuff most stores supply for as long as possible!

Enjoy!



Tyler popping seed garlic

Harvesting

- **Beets**
- **Cabbage**
- **Carrots**
- **Celeriac**
- **Garlic**
- **Herbs**
- **Kale and Chard**
- **Lettuce**
- **Onions**
- **Peppers**
- **Potatoes**
- **Raspberries**
- **Spinach**
- **Tomatoes**

CSA Marketing

We will be expanding our membership next year and are again looking for your help. There is always some word of mouth marketing that takes place between members and their friends, family and co-workers and this is indeed a big part of how we have grown our

membership in past years. We encourage all of you to continue passing along our information and this year are hoping to take it one step further. We hope to give some short talks and/or have some informal meet and greets at members workplaces, community gatherings, or even houses. These could also have an

educational focus, if desired, with a topic around local food production and food security, sustainable agriculture, agriculture and climate change, etc., all topics that we are very familiar with!

If you are willing to try this with us we can try to arrange some events over the

fall and winter to try and drum up some awareness and support for our CSA in the coming season. Please let us know if you are interested and we can take it from there.

Thanks again for your continued support!

Preparing for Horses

As time allows we have been preparing for barn renovations, starting this October, ahead of this winter's purchase of draft horses. We will be adding an extension to our main barn with feeding and hitching allies, four horse stalls and two pig pens. So far we have started to clean out the space, draw up plans and have purchased straw for bedding.

Our hope is not to run out of money doing the renovations, so that we can actually buy a team this early winter. Over the next few years we can focus on slowly acquiring equipment, improving our pastures and hay fields and growing some grain for feed.

For the last few years our plans for expansion have been in limbo, as some level of mechanisation is required to make a larger CSA work efficiently. Many CSAs use small cultivating tractors to weed everything except within the planted row. We have been tempted by this but have been trying to hold off till we can get horses, in an attempt to move away from fossil fuel consumption in our farm operation.

This is very important to us, especially since much organic agriculture involves long hours of tractor cultivation to replace the herbicides used to control weeds.

Initially we had hoped to purchase horses in our second or third season, however time and money have been major constraints in moving ahead with these plans. We have been slowly growing other parts of the operation, getting Nicole through her massage training and having a baby! Time is now opening up and with some financing help from my grandmother, Priscilla, we finally feel ready to start this process.

Just to give you a sense of the financing required, here is a rough breakdown of our projected costs:

- Barn renovations—\$15,000
- Three draft horses—\$8-12,000
- Harness and tack—\$2-3,000
- Plow—\$2-4,000
- Row cultivator—\$500-2,000
- Sycle bar mower—\$1000?
- Other basic equipment—\$5,000
- Grain storage?

- Fencing equipment—\$500-1,000

As you can see the costs add up quickly. There are also costs associated with buying a small cultivating tractor, however, they are much less. This is in part because horses are also live stock and need different facilities.

Horses will also be our source of power for heavy field work (plowing, discing, manure spreading, etc.). This means a whole new set of heavy implements. Before I tried to mitigate my equipment costs by borrowing, renting and sharing equipment with neighbours. It is harder to find people to share horse drawn implements as there are less horse farmers around. Eventually the economics will work out with horses, but the up front investment is certainly steep!

We look forward to the renovation work and especially to looking for a team. It feels as though we are finally realizing a dream!

For those coming by the farm you will hopefully see our work coming to fruition over the coming season.

Local Food Options for the Winter

As our CSA season comes to a close, I wanted to highlight some options for buying local food. For those in the Guelph area there are many options, including the farmers market and various winter CSAs. Up around the farm it can be a little more challenging, but there are options.

One winter CSA we highly recommend, that services Guelph, Hanover and the Ayton/Neustadt areas is Green Being Farm. Located down the road from us, Green Being Farm also produces pastured meats. You can find more information about their business at: greenbeingfarm.ca

Another farm down the road is Cedar Down. They are full this year, but do have a waiting list for future years and to fill cancellations.

Grey County folks can also find some local food options through Eat Local Grey Bruce, a coop that services large parts of Grey and Bruce Counties. They are still in their start-up faze, but are hoping to become a year around supplier of many different products including produce, grains, meats, pulses and value added products. More information on Eat Local Grey Bruce can be found at: eat-localgreybruce.ca

A more general resource for finding food options in Grey and Bruce counties is Food Link Grey Bruce. They provide listings for local producers as well as grocers and vendors who supply local products. We have a listing with them, that I need to update... and many of the other

food producers I know in the area are listed there as well. Their website is: www.foodlinkgreybruce.com



Tarrah and Nathan of Green Being Farm with a sample basket.