

Report from the Field

Back in September we forgot to discuss the fall equinox. March 21st and September 21st are the spring and fall equinox dates, when day and night are of equal duration. Equinoxes are also the times of fastest change in day length. That is why, now in mid-October, the plants tend to slow down so much. The cooler temperatures drastically impact many crops, but the day length and the angle of incidence of the sun's rays have a significant impact as well. The current day length (<11 hours) is equivalent to late February, when plants (in the greenhouse) just start to wake up from their winter slumber. This time of the year, the amount of energy that plants receive from the sun, given day length and angle of incidence, is about half of what it is in June (when there are >15 hours of sunlight and the sun is closer to being directly overhead). A big counter balance to the shortening day length has been the exceptionally sunny days we've had this fall; Connecticut historically has cloud cover ~50% of the time, so this recent sunny spell is abnormal, and has had a dramatic impact on plant growth. The fall crops loved the fair weather. New England seems like the place to be – we don't get terrible droughts nor do we get floods.

The movable greenhouse project continues. This past week we built a stone wall on one side of it. We need the greenhouse to be 1 to 1½ft higher than the existing grade, so we are building the wall to get the elevation we need and to prevent erosion. We'll have another 1-2 weeks worth of work before the job is complete.

Another task that is underway is pruning the raspberry bushes. Each year in the fall the 2nd year canes are removed and only the canes that grew this year are left. In addition, the plants are further thinned if they are too dense (more than 3-4 canes per square foot). Lastly, we'll spread a thin layer of compost and more woodchips.

For us, the CSA coming to an end means that some of the stressful demands are also coming to an end, but it is merely a slowing of the routine. We continue to plant in the greenhouse as outside crops are done. Instead of harvesting twice a week for the CSA and sometimes for other sales outlets, we will harvest once a week for sales at the farm through December. The myriad of neglected broken things around the farm, which didn't get much attention during the busy season, will finally start to get addressed. Then, in January, we will start planning next year's crops, doing seed orders, and planning the CSA. Planting will start in the greenhouses again in February. With a little luck, we'll be harvesting crops every other week in January and February, and then weekly in March.

Things will look a little different, a change here and there, but life at Shundahai will, all-in-all, remain the same.

Mooo!

