

Dear CSA members,

It is March 10, and we have over one foot of snow on the ground. The snow-drops and garlic were poking out of the ground a week ago, but are now under snow again. Spring equinox is just around the corner, and we look forward to being able to work the land again. Last year at this time we had many crops in the ground already and we were actually harvesting some from the greenhouse by mid-March. This reminds us how much variability farmers are experiencing from year-to-year as a result of unpredictable weather patterns. That being said, here's an update on what's been going on at the farm:

- ❖ Our greenhouse got damaged by high winds before the big February storm. The plastic cover was ripped and some of the beams were bent. We ordered new plastic, and fixed the beams using an old implement that we found on our farm. We got the greenhouse back up by mid-February, in time to start our onion and brassica soil blocks. Because of the damage we experienced and the time it took to get the greenhouse back up, we were not able to start anything in the ground in the greenhouse in February, as we had hoped. But, we should be able to direct seed carrots, beets, lettuces and other crops by mid-March.



- ❖ Our planting plan for the season is finalized. We spend much time during the winter planning how much of each crop, when and where it will be planted. Many variables need to be taken into account such as: the number of CSA members; crops and quantities that CSA members told us to grow in last year's survey (we do take those surveys very seriously, and modify our planting plan accordingly); space availability; physical location, etc. We work always with the health of the soil in mind: thus we plan our rotations so that no two crops from the same family follow each other; we include cover crops as much as possible; and so on. The end result of all this is a mega spreadsheet which tells us, week by week, what needs to go in the ground and where.
- ❖ Another thing we've been putting lots of time into over the winter is the orchard plan. As some of you know, we started our orchard last year. We want to grow more fruits and berries for ourselves and for the CSA. We already have apple trees in the ground, some of which we expect to produce next year, others much later. We plan to get pear and peach trees in the ground this year, as well as blueberries and elderberries. Currently, the layout of the orchard, and well as the fertility plan we will follow are almost completed.
- ❖ We are excited about increasing the diversity of our planting this year. We are hoping to plant a variety of annual and perennial flowers and herbs that are known to attract beneficial insects into the field, such as tachinid and other type of wasps, syrphid flies, different kinds of pollinators, and so on. These insects are deemed "beneficial" because they are pollinators of trees and vegetable crops, and/or predators of pests such as caterpillars, tomato horn worms, aphids and others that affect our crops. Since we do not spray anything to control pests, neither organic nor conventional, the assistance of these beneficial insects is very important to us, and we want to create habitat for them

on our farm. It has been said that these beneficial insects, along with soil micro-organisms are the real farmers. They make it possible for plants to obtain the minerals and nutrients they need from the soil, and they allow plants to stay strong against pests and disease. The best we humans can do is help these real farmers along, by not killing them with toxic sprays, and by working to improve the health of the soil and of the ecosystem in general.

- ❖ Cow update: over the winter, we looked into the feasibility of having a dairy cow, and the major stumbling block we came across is that we do not have enough land to support one or two pastured cows. We need land for pasture, and hay production, in addition to our current vegetable production and orchard requirements. We are currently considering renting agricultural land. We have an intern working with us, whose project is to determine the specific requirements of a small pastured dairy operation like what we're envisioning. Her findings, which should be finalized by May, will help us determine the feasibility of the cow operation.
- ❖ One more thing we wanted to share with you: Our CSA is about producing high-quality, nutritious, healthy food for our members. But just as important to us is to share with you our love of the land and the natural environment. We are humbled and grateful for the many gifts the earth gives us every day, without which we could not survive, gifts such as the water we drink, the air we breathe, the nutritious food that becomes our bodies, and so on. We ask for your help in taking care of the earth and the natural elements. Every day, each of us makes decisions that impact the environment in more or less direct ways. We can make these decisions from a place of respect and connectedness with the land; or we can deny and ignore the impact of our actions. We sincerely hope that getting some of your food from us will heighten your sense of connection with the land and with your local community, and will encourage healthier living for all.

Enjoy the coming spring, and may all be renewed by it!



Pictures from top left: onions and brassicas started in the greenhouse in soil blocks; snow-drops; and baby kale.