

Report from the Field

Happy fall equinox! Our sundial has successfully predicted the change of the seasons (the shadow cast by the stylus is a straight line). The lengths of day and night are equal once again, but now we are on the rapid descent to shorter days, the day length changing by its maximum rate right at the equinox. Certain crops are unhindered by the shorter days and cooler temperatures. The brassica family thrives at this time of the year. A partial list of brassicas we have growing now includes: cabbage, broccoli, radishes, rutabagas, mustard, mizuna, bok choy and hakurei turnips. Some of the summer crops hold on for a while, the tomatoes and peppers being wonderful examples, but others have given up, including the cucumbers and summer squash. Personally, we are somewhere in-between the brassicas and cucurbits: holding on, but putting lots of pressure on ourselves to get all the regular farm work done, while urgently trying to preserve the bounty around us for our winter sustenance. We get frustrated by our inability to not get more stored away, but we need to step back and see what we have been able to accomplish (cheese wheels are aging in the root cellar!).



The sundial, casting a shadow Sept 24th at 8am

Let it rain!

Remember, ask a farmer what to complain about, and we'll tell you: this was the year of the drought and cool temperatures. The rain this weekend was much welcomed, a little more than ½ an inch. That puts us at about an inch for the past 30 days, instead of the 4 inches we are accustomed to in CT. As discussed in the past, this means we are watering constantly. A chart tracks what needs to be watered, when, and how much, ensuring a good harvest.

Although we might complain about the lack of rain, the lack of humidity and rain have actually resulted in us having our best growing season ever. Overall many crops have done phenomenally well: winter squash harvest has been by far our best ever; potatoes had great yields; lettuces had almost no problems; etcetera. This season clearly demonstrated the weight luck plays in one's success: without an excellent water source to supply irrigation to the crops we would be in big trouble. Other houses near ours have very deep wells with very little water. We have a comparatively shallow well with an abundance of water. We had the well drilled after we bought the house, so it was pure luck that we have so much water.

Most Important Crop of the Year

Environmentally speaking, this is the time of year we are planting our most important crops: cover crops. A cover crop does a lot for the soil: it holds on to nutrients in the winter so they don't leach away (think about the runoff into rivers being reported in the news in the middle of the country); it prevents erosion during the winter; it adds organic matter to the soil (carbon sequestration, water retention, food for microbes); it breaks up packed soil for the free flow of water, roots, and worms; it redistributes minerals from deep in the soil to make them available for shallow crops; and it captures and stores nitrogen (a vital plant nutrient). All these wonderful benefits are obtained by having a mix of cover crops. Some plants are able to fix nitrogen, others are good at capturing what is there and storing it. Other cover crops are deep rooted and pull up nutrients from the depths. By mid spring the cover crops will be 3 feet tall and very thick.



Aiyana prepping a field for a covercrop



Cover crop starting to come in

Cow Happenings

We found a wonderful man for our cows, AI (Artificial Insemination) Mike. Mike is around 80, but he is still at it, wrestling cows to inseminate them. He has come twice to inseminate our ladies, and we know for sure at least one of our cows is pregnant (yeah!).