

July 1st, 2016

Here we are, already in July. It is very dry again this year, and we are more than grateful for our good well that allows us to irrigate our crops. Without it we'd have no crops, and we know that many people around the world cannot count themselves as lucky, cannot access water whenever they wish in order to grow food for themselves and their community, or even to drink.

Report from the Field

As always, some crops are doing well, and others are not. We've learned over the years that when you grow 40 different crops, there will always be challenges; some will result in failure, others in success. We do our best to work with the challenges, but we have learned not to panic when things seem out of our control.



The tomatoes are doing great this year. We probably have the nicest, healthiest looking plants we've ever had. We're very happy about this, given that tomatoes are one of our most important crops.

Sweet peppers, cucumbers, summer squashes, zucchini, kale, chard, lettuces are also doing very well.

Eggplants had a very rough start this season due to flea beetle damage. They seem to have recovered somewhat, as the flea beetle population is waning, but we expect much lower yields than would've been possible without the flea beetle damage.

Beets continue to be a problem. Last year, we planted them at our home field, and they got severely damaged and stunted by leaf miner. This year, we moved them to our field in Willington, in order to break the leaf miner cycle; however due to lack of rain, and us not being able to go to Willington to irrigate more than once a week, they are not doing well over there either. We will probably stop growing beets for a year or two, until we can grow them at our home field again without leafminer damage.

Potatoes look great, and so do the onions. Garlic too looks very well, and we will be harvesting it in a few weeks and curing it for storage. Winter squashes are mostly doing well, but watermelons, planted in our Willington field, all died due to lack of rain. We replanted but do not have high hopes of success.

The strawberry harvest was excellent this year, and we are happy that many of our CSA members came for pick-your-own. We will have pick your-own raspberries very soon as well.



Animal news - there's been a lot of happening with the animals on the farm. Read on:



Cows:

Mama Jasmine had a bull calf in mid June. We named him Jupiter. He's strong and full of energy, and super cute. Our herd, which originally started with Opal and Jasmine, now counts 6: 2 cows (Opal and Jasmine), 2 heifers (Olive and Oshi), 1 steer (Jet) and 1 bull calf (Jupiter). They're one big happy family and hang out together all the time. Cows are matriarchal, and very family oriented. Opal is also due to have a calf in July, so the herd will be up to 7.

Chickens:

Raluca brought 26 chickens to slaughter a week ago, so our flock is now down to around 12 layer hens, and about 3 roosters. We have enough chicken in the freezer to last us the whole year. Thank you, chickens, for feeding us!



Cats:

Our 4 cats mock us every day, especially on those really hot days when we're out working in the field, while they lounge in the shade of the picnic table, in the most relaxed positions you can imagine. As we come in, hot, sweaty and exhausted from the field, they don't even bother to look at us. They most certainly have no respect for us, who work so hard, while they get by so gracefully, with minimum effort. Silly humans...always running around.

Dog:

Aiyana started her own dog sitting business, and she's had Duke, Raluca's sister's dog in her care at our house over two weeks. Duke is as gentle as can be, and also very timid. He was treated badly by his previous owners when he was a puppy, and even though he's been living with caring people for 5 years now, he's never forgotten his bad experience. He seems very happy on his little vacation at our farm, and we are happy to have his gentle, undemanding presence among us. The only one not happy is mama Jasmine, who's still in protective mode for her little calf, and is not at all pleased to see a dog around. Cows are often terrified of dogs.

Turkeys (wild):

We've had an itinerant wild mama turkey and her 10 babies come through our farm almost every day over the past few weeks. One day, I (Raluca) was sitting in the house, doing work on the computer, when I heard a ruckus outside. I looked and saw a (big) turkey frantically flapping her wings on the porch. I went out to investigate, and saw Snowflake the cat, eating a turkey baby by the maple tree in front of the house. Mama turkey was frantic, circling where Snowflake was, but it was too late to save the baby. Hearing some faint peeps coming from the field, I realized that there were more turkey babies, which had gotten separated from mama. Meanwhile, our other 3 cats were coming on the scene, attracted by all the commotion. I got Ed and together we grabbed the cats and put them in the house where they could not hurt any more babies. We then tried to guide mama turkey back to the babies that she got separated from. But it was all very chaotic, and eventually we left the turkeys alone to find each other, which they did. They came back to the farm the next

day, mama and the 9 remaining babies, and they came again day after day. Fortunately the cats didn't get any more of the babies.

And finally, ducks. Yes, ducks. Three of them, as of this week.

One day, on Facebook, one of our CSA members offered us some hens and two ducks that her mother could no longer care for. We accepted the offer, but after a few messages back and forth, it turned out that her mother ended up making arrangements with someone else to take the birds, so we would not be getting them after all. Aiyana was very disappointed, especially because of the ducks. A few nights later, she was still saying how much she wished she had some ducks to take care of. Next morning, at 4:30am, Ed woke up and was laying in bed, listening to a rooster crow. He was surprised that the crowing was coming from the road, instead of the field, where we keep the chickens. When he went outside to check, he saw some unfamiliar crates by the road, and upon closer inspection, it turned out that there really was a



rooster in one of those crates. Not one of our roosters, a brand new rooster. And there were also two ducks, a male and a female, and separately, a baby duck. There was a note with the animals, saying "We cannot take



our pets with us. They have been hand raised and are tame. Thank you." Someone had dropped off these birds while we were sleeping. Ed was not excited. A rooster is not what he was looking for, being that you only need one rooster for many hens, and we already have too many roosters and not enough hens. One more rooster means more work, and more money spent on grain, and we're not really looking for that at this time of year. But the new rooster is very nice, and handsome as well. So he's got that going for him. Aiyana however, was ecstatic. She felt like her wish from the previous night came true, she got ducks. Three of them. Especially the baby duck, is so cute, it's hard not to fall in love with him. Or her. We're not sure what it is.

We put the ducks in the coops with our chickens, and they're all getting to know each other. So far, fingers crossed, they seem to be getting along.



The good looking rooster found a stray hen, which escaped when her consorts were brought to slaughter last week, and they're hanging out together in the field. Happily ever after? We'll see.

That is probably enough animal news for now.

Bombarded as we are, daily, with news of more violence and chaos in the world, we thank all our animal friends for providing sanity, feeding us, entertaining us, and working alongside us.

Peace

