

Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

Vol. 18 No. 12

November 12 - 16, 2017

POTOMAC VEGETABLE FARMS
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com
(703) 759-2119 ... Vienna
(540) 882-3885 ... Purcellville

Four Season Farming

by Hana Newcomb

In the beginning, we only grew vegetables in the summer. Then after a while we expanded into the spring, and then discovered that the fall is the best season of all. About five years ago we started to dip our cold toes into winter growing, and now we are just about to become a real four season farm. Our friend Zach Lester of Tree and Leaf Farm is joining forces with us, and he will show us how to get the most out of winter here in Northern Virginia.

For the last three months, Stephen and Michael have been building high tunnels and Zach and crew have planted bok choy and lettuce and leeks for January and beyond. Zach will fuss over these crops, making sure they don't get too warm or too cold, and we will be at the Dupont Circle Farmers Market on Sundays starting in late January. We will also have our winter CSA at the Vienna farm, with greens from our tunnels and fields and sweet potatoes from our secret storage room.

With the cold weather finally upon us, we are in a mad rush to get all the crops covered, and get the



Zach and Carrie divide up the radish seeds for winter planting in September.

doors on the ends of the tunnels. This is like going to school year-round, and we will have to get used to shorter vacations. Winter growing seems to make sense these days, as winters get warmer and warmer.

If you want to join the winter CSA, write to Hana@potomacvegetablefarms.com and get yourself on the list! The first pickup day is December 3.

Wonder, Possibility, Cuteness

by Stephen Bradford

"Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go."

— James Baldwin

Whatever grows, grows from the past. This apparent tautology

is as much valid for a farm as it is for a nation or a newborn baby.

We see this on our farm in a literal sense as our topsoil – the dynamic product of countless millennia of transformation – becomes a living, breathing record of the cumulative effects of each season. For a farmer to realize the full potential of this soil for productive growth, she must

understand the complex story it tells, and then add to that story in a conscientious manner. And it occurs to me that this principle applies to the farm just as well on the level of soil agronomy as it does on an institutional and operational level. Continued growth requires that any changes brought to the

continued on page 4

How Has the Farm Changed Me?

by Nina Stewart

Having only working at this job for 8 months I can honestly say I love it and it has made a huge impact on my life. Farming for me is therapeutic, literally hoeing and weeding away my stress at times. I am happy to wake up every morning and go to work. The farm has taught me mental motivation, which pushes me to complete tasks even when hard and wanting to quit.

I have a growing an attachment to my feather friends. Usually my mornings start off with by going to see the chickens, where I feed and give them fresh



Nina appreciates all creatures, great and small.

water. Then later return in the evening to repeat as well as collect their eggs which are sold at our farmers markets. On the way to the chickens each day I stop by the

pigs, give them some attention and a snack or two. Then after I visit animals I get down to the real work which could vary upon the day and the weather. Whether

it is weeding, planting, or picking I enjoy and appreciate each task.

Being surrounded by such inspiring people every day has made me look at life differently. The powerful women at Potomac vegetable Farms are so knowledgeable and driven by their passions and don't let things get in their way, I look up to them because of that. In a way I have found myself, having struggled with mental illness in the past. The farm provides daily therapy and mental clarity. Each day I learn something new that encourages me to narrow down my own goals and making the most out of life.

Multi-tasking at the Stand: Such Fun

by Dick Clement

One of my enjoyable tasks during my rookie farmer period at PVF has been working the stand. Engaging customers in conversation, helping them with their shopping lists, sharing recipes—Felicity's Scottish apple pie, Sandy's lobster broth—and occasionally having my picture taken and posted on Facebook.

I most often wear my Muscongus Bay Lobster Company hat. This bay is on the Pemaquid Peninsula, mid-coast, Maine. The village of Round Pond is home to this company and is a small working harbor.

One day, I was multitasking, i.e. washing vegetables and minding the stand, a customer needed assistance. I walked out with my rubber apron and Muscongus Bay hat. The customer was momentarily stunned. "Are you a fisherman?" he asked. It turns out that his family has property on the Pemaquid Peninsula. He knew all about Round Pond. He, Dave Robinson, asked to snap the picture of a misplaced Maine fisherman among pumpkins. Dave also had a fun story about left-handed male lobsters—another story for another day.



Here We Are

by Julia Metzger-Traber

I never thought I would end up in Virginia, let alone on a farm in Virginia. Nor could I have imagined ending up here in the south, in a moment in US history in which white supremacy has regained power and visibility.

I'm a Jew from Boston and the last six years of my life have been spent in Berlin, Germany, two of those in the midst of what has internationally been dubbed the 'refugee crisis', working with people who have fled Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq to facilitate their healing, expression and holistic integration into German society. It has been vibrant and urgent work in a country with such a horrific past of racialized violence. The questions raised by this crisis are impossible to ignore or avoid: Who may enter? Who belongs here? And who gets to decide? Who are "they" and who are "we"?

Similar questions have

been re-surfacing on the US political stage with regard to immigration and race. Who are 'we'? Though I grew up in the states, living abroad for such a large part of my twenties means that coming back I see things partly as an outsider. Dynamics I took for granted growing up, even if critical of them, now seem terrifically strange, even surreal. Two examples are our hypocritical fear of immigrants, and our profoundly persistent racial segregation. Like the issue of refugees in Berlin, here, racism is impossible to avoid or ignore. It is stitched into the American flag, and sown into the soil from which our food grows.

This August, the white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville, just a couple of hours from here, were invoking the Nazi ideology of racist exclusion and mystical national belonging as they chanted 'blood and soil'—Blut und



The Crossroads volunteers on a tour of the farm.

Boden—a phrase I am all too familiar with as a German and a Jew. Though this phrase is not only terrifyingly violent in its historical implications and completely ironic being chanted by white people on land stolen from native Americans by European immigrants, its indication toward humanity's profound (albeit sometimes perverted) connection to land may inadvertently offer a key to healing our racial wounds. This key to reparation and transformation may be the land itself.

And so here I am on my partner's beautiful family's farm in Virginia. Here I am on land that was worked by enslaved people for longer than it has been worked by

free people, and on land that has managed for generations to grow delicious ecoganic food and host and foster a loving and supportive community, and from it eat nearly 500 CSA members and even more market goers. Connection to land, the food that we eat and each other has the potential to heal even grave wounds. Just as the land can be a tool for enslavement and inequality, it can be a source of healing, reconciliation and empowerment. As we've all seen this year, wounds run deep, and we have a lot of work to do to feed positive change. So maybe that's what brought me to a farm in Virginia. Maybe this is exactly where some of the most vital work for transforming hate and racism needs to happen. In the coming year and years, I want to work toward PVF becoming a hub, fertile soil, for thinking, talking, learning about and transforming racism and I want to engage this vibrant, conscientious farm community to do so. Want to join me?



Crossroads Farmers Market volunteers thinking, learning, talking at a brief retreat on the Loudoun farm on a chilly November afternoon.

*“Wonder,” continued
from pg 1*

organization of the farm must achieve a certain balance in the complex web of relationships that sustain the operation.

In theory I know this to be true, but when I strive to envision a new path forward for Potomac Vegetable Farms, I find myself going cross-eyed, with one eye gazing blurrily into a hazy and indefinite field of infinite future possibility, while the other strains to focus on an expansive range of the historical, social, economic, communal and microbiological realities through which the farm has been constituted. If I narrow my focus I can clearly delineate elements of the farm’s story – fortuitously located land, healthy soil, a talented management team, an affluent customer base, and a broad mutually-supportive agrarian community – which suggest a clear path forward that builds on the connections between these existing strengths of the operation to promote sustained growth. However, if I broaden my attention to the periphery, I see the local food movement and with it a series of messy entanglements in the contradictions of private landownership, racial injustice, suburban sprawl, economic inequality and a capitalist system that is inherently unsustainable and exploitative. As these

elements come in to clearer focus, I see that they are not so much peripheral to the growth of the farm as they are intrinsic, and envisioning a path forward becomes a much murkier prospect.

After years spent living abroad, this sensation of cross-eyed confusion has colored much of my return to the farm – and more broadly this country – in a moment when I don’t know whether to look forward to an increasingly unconvincing narrative of progress, or backward to reexamine the toxic soil through which our nation’s roots continue to grow, feeding the divisions and contradictions that seem as robust as ever. Yet simultaneously, I feel an inexplicable sense

of hope and boundless possibility that seems to radiate particularly from the presence of my newborn baby girl, Shaia Rose.

In my mind I know that no baby is truly born pure and free, just as a farm sprouting from a utopian vision cannot escape the economic context that supports it, and even a new nation founded on ideals of freedom and equality must still contend with a legacy of colonialism and slavery that it has inherited. But nonetheless, Shaia’s face calls me to uncross my eyes, to let past and future merge into the expansive field of wonder, possibility and cuteness that is the here and now.

And what possibility do I see as I now look around

with my newly uncrossed eyes? Well, for starters, I see Potomac Vegetable Farms becoming not only a leader in the next wave of an inclusive, socially transformative local food movement, but growing to support a network of places for collective healing and creation where diverse communities are brought together to grapple with the enduring contradictions of our society and to forge new paths forward into a sustainable, liberatory, future.

Growing up in that context, Shaia Rose naturally becomes the prophet of a neoagrarian spiritual revolution that heals our homeland’s soils from the harms of industrial agriculture through a rural revitalization by creating resilient, evolutionary communities that offer shelter, food and salvation to the refugees fleeing climate disaster, conflict and the collapsing urban centers. Despite the crumbling of capitalism and the nation-state world-wide, the foreseeable apocalypse is narrowly averted (by the grace of the prophet) as human civilization reorganizes into a pluralistic confederation of autonomous, self-reliant, yet globally interconnected and mutually-supportive communities, inspired by the model pioneered at Potomac Vegetable Farms. But no pressure, Baby Shaia.



Shaia, on whom the future rests, and Stephen who sees the possibilities.