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

## CSA Season 14: What You Should Know

Welcome to all our enthusiastic new and returning members! Now, to keep us all happy, let's set up some ground rules.

1. **Pickup time:** Know your pickup time. If you decide to pick up early, your shares will not be ready.

2. **Know what you ordered.**

3. **Sending substitutes to pick up your share:** This is our biggest source of chaos. Please, give complete instructions if you are sending someone else to pick up your vegetables.

4. **Off-farm folks (East):** Bring your PVF bags back. Every week.

5. **Returning containers to use again:** We do not take all recyclables. We do reuse some bags, egg cartons and some plastic containers.

Plastic half pint, pint and quart container from berries or tomatoes or similar fruits or vegetables in the standard sizes.

- Paper half pint, pint and quart containers.
- Newspaper, Produce, and Grocery bags. These must be clean. The grocery bags are the typical handled grocery bags and not bags from the mall. Produce bags should be bags that have previously housed a produce item and not bread or other food bags or Ziploc bags.
- Egg cartons.

6. **Weekly emails:** required reading (okay to speed read). You'll receive weekly emails. Every other week you'll also receive the farm's newsletter, Farm Notes. In The Bag is required reading every week. If you don't read our messages, you won't know what's going on, and we can easily tell when you are not doing your homework.

7. **Vegetable questions:** What is this stuff? How to

figure it out:

- Look at your In The Bag email.
- Check the ID That Veggie section of the PVF website, [www.potomacvegetablefarms.com](http://www.potomacvegetablefarms.com).
- Go to Google. Type in the name of an item listed in the email that you can not identify in the bag. Search images.
- Email your host and politely inquire if they can help you.
- Email me, Becky, at [becky@potomacvegetablefarms.com](mailto:becky@potomacvegetablefarms.com).

8. **What do I do with this stuff?** We send you recipes every week and upload recipes to our website. Go to our website and type the name of your vegetable into the search field. You should come up with lots of yummy ideas to look over. You can also type the vegetable name into your favorite search engine and see what comes up.

9. **Contacting us:** Your first contact should always be your host. If your host can't answer your question, they'll pass it on to us. Please do not post CSA questions or requests to Facebook. Questions can be sent to [becky@potomacvegetablefarms.com](mailto:becky@potomacvegetablefarms.com).



## The Core Team



Ellen

**Ellen Polishuk**, owner/research and development:

My role in running PVF West continues to evolve. I do all the bookkeeping, banking and payroll. I meet with Stacey and Casey to look over the crops, problem solve and plan for the future. My experience with equipment is useful when something breaks down – I can fix it or call in the experts. This season I have happily volunteered to manage trellising the tomatoes and cucumbers in our new hoophouse.



Hana

When not at the farm, I am embarking on a new job with Midwestern BioAg, a biological fertilizer company based in Madison, Wisconsin. I have been hired by the company's founder Gary Zimmer, to help translate his message of biological agriculture into vegetable speak. Gary is a dairy man, and his lectures and advice always include references to the rumen (the series of stomachs in a cow that ferment and digest grass), which is a turn-off to veggie growers. So, I will be co-writing a book on biological vegetable production, turning that into educational modules and presentations.

**Hana Newcomb**, owner/manager:

I grew up on this farm on Leesburg Pike, and for the last 20 years or so I have been responsible for managing operations at the Vienna farm (PVF East). I have been doing this for so long now that I tend to come up with changes and improvements as a matter of habit, just to keep things interesting.

This year it looks like I will be doing more managing and less rigorous field work, as our middle management team (Carrie and Becky) gets more experienced and as my body continues to wear out, little by little. Farming is a tough sport and I plan to be in it for many more seasons, so I am happy to rely on those who are younger and stronger and much more

flexible.

My main role is to get the puzzle pieces to fit together: I plan the day's activities, I prepare the soil for seeds and plants, I identify the deadlines and I set the pace. But the new workers would probably tell you that I just ride around on the golf cart and make notes and give advice, and they would be correct.

**Mariette Hiu Newcomb**, founding farmer and owner:

As other people gradually take on more and more of the daily work, my role gets increasingly eclectic. I start the season in the greenhouse – I am responsible for growing all the seedlings and keeping them alive until they go outside (no small task). I can fill in wherever there is a need: markets, picking, working with volunteers, but my core responsibilities revolve around keeping things going administratively – I pay the bills, order supplies, deal with the mail, maintaining the business from my chronically chaotic office. I manage all our educational efforts, including scheduling tours, giving interviews, making school visits and speaking to groups. Another niche I have filled for 50 years: I paint the signs and billboards. At the end of the year, I work with Ellen to get all the numbers together to send to the accountant. And in the winter, I get to make the seed order so we can start all over again!

**Carrie Nemec**, manager:

I moved to Virginia from Lake George, NY seven years ago and by luck I stumbled upon PVF on the Internet. Within weeks of my move I started at PVF East with no idea if I would last – but here I am, in my seventh season on the farm. This part of the season is my favorite because every day brings the pieces of the puzzle closer together. Every year has its own set of challenges and I get a better



Mariette



Carrie



sense of what it takes to make this farm work. This year I am looking forward to working with a lot of new faces and introducing them to our style of farming.

Every new set of hands brings with it a new and interesting personality, and cultivating a healthy team is as much work as cultivating healthy veggies - and it is just as important to a successful farm season. Look for me at market, delivering CSA bags to drop-offs, and driving around on the G (my favorite tractor).

**Casey Gustowarow,**  
manager:

This is my third year working for PVF. My wife Stacey and I manage PVF West and are happy to be included in the ever-growing PVF family. I do most of the field planning and preparation on the Purcellville farm to make sure we have enough vegetables to make our CSA shares and farm stands bountiful. I also concentrate on keeping our soil healthy and biologically active by making compost and using cover crops in our field rotations.

This year I am excited about also trying to find time for some other projects on our farm. I love cooking and am going to make small batches of products

such as salsas, pestos, hot sauces and pickles which will be available at our farm stands and markets. I also want to establish more wildlife habitat on our farm. One project that we are working on now is a native perennial strip to encourage beneficial insects and pollinators which will help our crops and provide habitat for endangered wildlife such as monarch butterflies.

**Stacey Carlberg,**  
manager:

Casey and I decided early in our management days that it is best to divide and conquer, so we split our responsibilities. In general, I tend to the greenhouse, manage the crew (when we are all working together), oversee marketing for PVF West and decide which vegetables will go where. Basically, I am bustling around the farm to make sure people are busy and doing things right, trying to stay one step ahead of them and getting us set up and prepped for our marketing outlets each week (stand, CSA and markets). I also dabble in tractor duties. Casey and I are branching out a bit more this year to mix things up - he is working with the crew more and I am getting on the tractor more.

**Becky Crouse Durst,**  
manager:

This is my fourth full-time season at PVF. I help manage the CSA, the roadside stand, and the website, and I work out in the fields doing what I'm told. Last season I got married. This season, my husband and I bought a house, and I am a commuter for the first time since I started working at PVF. It's an adjustment! And, just to be sure I get all the major life changes over with as quickly as possible, I'm having a baby—due on Labor Day. We are all taking the season as it comes. I'm working a few less hours per week, but I plan to do as much as I can for as long as I can. So, if you see me waddling around market or heaving myself out of a delivery van, know it's because I'm still feeling great and not because that mean Hana is a slave driver.

**Jonathan Groisser,**  
special projects:

Over the last 30 years, I have learned enough general skills to keep most of the systems going on this farm. I was trained as a computer programmer (which I still am) and had some minor mechanical and carpentry experience. Now I am responsible

for plumbing, electricity, building projects, tractor and vehicle maintenance (with some professional help), banking, CSA registration, computers, and fixing things as they break. When I first arrived on the farm, I learned to pick vegetables, but it quickly became apparent that my talents were needed elsewhere. My list is endless as it is constantly interrupted by requests for a new set of shelves, a new design for a CSA report, or an emergency golf cart repair.



# Notes from the Field

## Connecting the Dots

by Rebecca Roberts

I graduated last year with a double minor in Russian and Japanese (don't ask) and majored in Biology with an emphasis on aquatic ecosystems. In college I researched neurotoxins produced by algal blooms in Green Bay, studied zooplankton diversity in Northern Wisconsin, and spent a term carrying out investigations on coral reef health and fish behavior underwater while scuba diving off Grand Cayman. After so many years of hardly working.. I mean working hard... multiple professors recommended taking a year off before graduate school. "A spectacular 'and now for something completely different' phase," I thought.

One of my hearts was already in Scandinavia. My most recent immigrant ancestors to the United States came from Sweden and Norway in the 1870s, so I have always identified with my Scandinavian heritage (though truth be told, I'm mostly German). Being a poor college grad/extreme cheapskate, I decided

to WWOOF around. WWOOF (wwoof.com) is a website that matches volunteering travelers with organic farms that need extra help, especially during the harvest season, in exchange for room and board.

I started my magical journey in the rural heart of Skåneland, surrounded by miles of rolling farmland and pocketed forest. O Sverige! I went to Den Gamles Gård (The Old Man's Farm) and met den gamle-- a towering man named Torbjörn, with a penchant for working from 5 am to 8 pm, often barefoot. I can't remember how big the farm was (because I retain no measurement in hectares), but he had about 40 chickens, a small apple orchard, possibly the only locally-grown greenhouse grapevines in Sweden, and a slew of all the cool-weather crops -- ready to harvest in the middle of July! Torbjörn loved his siestas, a good bar of chocolate, and to play devil's advocate. Before he'd retired to become a self-sufficient farmer ("It's a little more self-sufficient every year"), Torbjörn was an animal



husbandry technician working on cage conditions at a university. When I learned that, I realized agricultural research was more than private-sector genetic modification.

Later in the summer came more self-induced pressure to choose The One Career I Will Stick With Forever. I finally connected the dots with my pleasure in participating in agricultural processes, my deep respect for scientific investigation, and my belief that leading a sustainable life is literally the most important thing a human can do. I applied for and accepted a Master's position at Iowa State University's graduate program in Sustainable Agriculture! I will be researching nitrous oxide (a greenhouse gas) production in fields as a function of sustainable techniques in crop management, which will draw upon

what I'm learning in the field here at PVF and what I've learned in the past as a field scientist. Pioneering farmers in the organic movement independently came to conclusions about what works best and what minimizes environmental impact. My passion is to research these methods, generate evidence for best practices, and provide information to farmers and consumers to make the most sustainable choices.

I read that the average American spends 90% of his or her day inside. I can't imagine that life, though I've lived it. I love being outside all day. The delicate scent of moist greenery! The indifference with which everyone reacts to dirt soil! The sinewy muscles from manual labor! Every day is satisfying in a kind of methodical and refreshing way! ...Though ask me again when it's 90 degrees out.