



Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

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Telling Our Story

by Hana Newcomb

We love to tell our story – how the farm began, what the founding farmers were hoping to do, how we gradually learned to do this work successfully, and what our hopes are now, 60 years into it. It’s a long story and it has a lot of characters, hundreds of relationships, so many bushels of sweet corn and tomatoes, and a mission that has remained remarkably consistent over the decades. Our origin story has elements that have become critical to our identity – my family that has stayed with it through the generations, an amazing location, a commitment to growing community and teaching people of all ages and backgrounds, working with people of all ages and capabilities, and always striving to earn more than we spend.

In a fit of over-telling, we wrote a long history and put it on our website about 20 years ago and we haven’t really updated it much except for a nice video that a filmmaker made about us in about 2014. But things change here so steadily – while staying the same –

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photo courtesy of meredith

QUIET GRAND OPENING at our ROADSIDE STANDS!

In Purcellville, we will start on June 13.
Tuesday - Sunday 10 -5

In Vlenna, we open on June 27
Tuesday - Sunday 10 - 5

At our stands, we sell local produce, meat, honey, jams and fruit from farms that we support for their growing practices. We will have honey from Lovettsville, peaches when in season, sweet corn and watermelon from farmers in the region, as soon as they are ready.

We accept cash, checks, and credit cards and occasionally you will find a self-service situation with lots of instructions -- but we will be open!

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that most details are outdated within just a few seasons. Only the tomatoes stay the same, and even those names change.

Almost since the beginning, newspaper and television reporters have also told our story when they discovered this quirky operation in this unlikely location. We have learned that when other people try to explain what we are doing, they often have a notion of what they think they already know and what they want to say.

Fifty years ago, when we had been growing sweet corn for about ten seasons, a progressive journalist came upon our farm and wrote one of his syndicated columns in The Washington Post about my father. The writer was Colman McCarthy and the piece was called "One Man and a Piece of Earth." The photo of my handsome young dad, 38, looking thoughtfully into the distance, arms crossed over his signature (dirty) white T-shirt – it just seemed over the top. We all thought that was a ridiculous headline and we didn't pay as much attention as we might have to the story that Mr. McCarthy

was trying to tell. He has had a lifelong career as a renowned teacher, pacifist, anarchist, peace activist and journalist, training up generations of students to question everything, and teaching them about non-violent conflict resolution and pacifism. When he wrote about my father, he was seeing our mission through his own eyes. In fact, my father was a student of utopias and one of the motivations for starting this farm was starting at the beginning with the agrarian component.

I have a file full of newspaper clippings about this farm, plus the magazines that have included us when they talk about women farmers, plus the articles that come out every year talking about eating seasonal produce. The most memorable year (2008) was when Stephanie Sedgwick convinced her editors that she should describe the contents of her CSA bag every single week. She sometimes complained about the vegetables her kids wouldn't eat, but it was an incredible run of free advertising for us, and a lot of positive exposure.

In addition to growing and selling vegetables, we remember

the broader goals of creating a better world, at least right nearby. We instigated the creation of a cohousing community on the back of our Vienna farm (Blueberry Hill, lots of press about that too) and, as a resident and founder, I feel that we are modeling a way of living that could have huge ramifications for promoting peace and non-violence, even in the suburbs. But that is a whole other story. And there are many other stories involving farms that have been born from our farm. So many farms.

The story of our farm looks like it will continue for at least another generation, as we have well-seasoned farmers growing older along with us, and they are still young. The youngest members of our extended family are still being born, so there is no telling what will happen. The Newcomb family has many strengths, and one of them is accumulating amazing people who want to be on this farm, helping to keep the mission and vision going, and picking endless quantities of lettuce and carrots, tomatoes and peppers and so many sweet potatoes. May it always be so.



OBIES AT THE ROOT

Our virtual Oberlin family farm took root with Potomac Vegetable Farms in Vienna, Virginia, which began more than five decades ago almost as a hobby for Anthony Tony Newcomb '58 and Mariette Hiu Newcomb '58. Since becoming full-time farmers in 1970, the Newcombs have engaged various family members—and a fair share of Oberlin students—at the farm. Potomac has survived divorce and death (Tony died in 1984) and married to longtime friend and remarriages: Mariette is now married to longtime friend of the farm Michael Lipsky '61. Today, Potomac is run by oldest daughter Hana Newcomb '80 and continues to be worked by the next generation, including Jesse Bradford '08, Michael Bradford '12, and Rebecca Groisser '14. In 2000, the family built the first of 20 houses for a co-housing community—an intentional neighborhood governed by consensus—called Blueberry Hill, so future generations of Newcombs could raise their children together and share in the experience with like-minded folks. Blueberry Hill is home to Anna Newcomb Bradford '84, Jim Bradford '84, and David Giusti '08. Charles "Chip" Plank '62 and Susan Hilgart Plank '63 learned farming from the Newcombs in the mid-1970s. From 1979 to 2010, the Planks operated their own farm, Wheatland Vegetable Farms, in Purcellville, Virginia, using ecological methods and selling at producer-only farmers' markets in the D.C. area. The Planks adopted the Newcomb practice of hiring students, Obies among them. Twenty-five of the Planks' 250 former workers have gone on to run their own farms, including Chew Chang '95, Jen Smith '03, and Giusti.

Print media will never die.





photo courtesy of helen

Cassandra and Annie riding to one of the fields at the Vienna farm.

Recently Delicious

Cooking in the beloved and recently renovated Pod Kitchen is a dream. This cozy culinary hub is a two-minute walk to the Green Barn in Wheatland with a view from the porch of fields currently full of cover crop. Closer to farm-fresh produce than ever before, I am a happy kitchen witch. Here's a short list of some meals I've recently prepared, sans recipe, following my intuition and my appetite.

-Oscar HC

1. Roasted broccoli with five-spice powder (cinnamon, fennel, cloves, star anise and white pepper) with gochujang tofu nuggets
2. Fritters with dandelion and lambs quarter
3. Chicken gravy from the broth of the Instant Pot chicken cooked with sage and apple mint
4. Cilantro and dill egg salad lettuce wraps
5. Hakurei sticks tossed in mango salsa with bean and cheese pupusas

Hot Tip

When you get home with tender fresh herbs, remove the rubber band and trim the stems. Place the bunch in a glass or jar with about an inch of water. You could put a lid on the jar or cover it with an inverted plastic bag and seal with a rubber band. Unless you've got basil or a thin mint, place the glass in your fridge. For the cold-sensitive herbs, leave on the counter out of direct light.

We'd love to know what other Hot Tips you'd like to read. Send us an email with your questions to pvfcsaadvice@gmail.com.



photo courtesy of oscar

Helen taking a chomp of an oversized hakurei.



photo courtesy of oscar

Five-spice broccoli with gochujang tofu and fried rice.

Meet Our Farmers (With More to Come)



Meredith Graves (She/Her)

Since fall 2021 I've been working part time at PVF Vienna. Because I only work part time and mostly on CSA delivery days, many field tasks are still new to me. I recently discovered, for example, the delicious pop and slide sensation of harvesting garlic scapes. This season I hope to learn more about the full field lifecycle - composting, planting, harvesting, crop covering and rotating.

Most of my family has been dairy farming in New Zealand for years and years. I grew up visiting when we could, where I would help herd cows and pick out soon to deliver pregnant

ones that we would need to keep an eye on. I came to PVF hoping to learn all I can about operating a farm. Although mine will be very small, I hope to have my own farm someday where I can run children's summer camps and school programs, grow healthy vegetables for my family and community, and have space for as many rescue animals as I can.

I work part time at PVF for two reasons: 1) I started my own business in 2020 doing proposal management and technical writing/graphic design for government contractors. Recently, I was hired by 4P Foods to manage their Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP)

grant that focuses on "strengthening the viability and resilience of regional food economies through collaboration and coordination." We are working with seven regenerative farms in the DMV region to show the state of Virginia that it can be economically viable for schools, people, and businesses to buy food locally rather than importing chemically grown carrots from California. 2) I played Division 1 CAA soccer in college as center mid. The constant heading of the ball and mid-air collisions took a toll on my spine, so I must be smart about how I farm and limit the prolonged hours.

I really love being at PVF. I'm constantly filled with child-like wonder at the symmetry of a bok choy, the stunning colors of the swiss chard, and the deliciousness of arugula. I love talking to everyone and feeling a part of the team. Hana and Carrie are super flexible and understanding and I'm so happy they like me enough to keep me around. I'm always proud to be seen out and about in my PVF t-shirt!

Hey I'm Jenna, the rookie on the Vienna farm this season! I just finished my second year studying agriscience at the University of Georgia and I'm loving getting to play in the dirt all day. So far in my time at the farm I've been having a great time meeting all the kind, experienced, hilarious people. I look forward to flower season and being absorbed into the farm's barefoot crew. Off the farm, I love driving my loved-on (read: dented) 2002 Toyota Corolla and making overly-specific Spotify playlists. It's gonna be a great season of laughing, learning, and sweating and I couldn't be more pumped!!

