



Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

Vol. 24 No. 5

July 23 - 27, 2023



POTOMAC VEGETABLE FARMS
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com
pvfnewsletter@gmail.com

From the River to the Ocean

by Hana Newcomb

Why are we named Potomac Vegetable Farms, anyway? The original name was the Great Potomac Vegetable Company, or so I was told. I know that my parents wanted to name the farm something that could include people who were not in our immediate family, so they chose a geographic name rather than calling ourselves Newcomb's Farm, which doesn't have the same ring to it. The first company my father ever started was the Newcomb Boatbuilding Company, so perhaps he learned from that high school venture that he wanted to be more grandiose in his branding.

Long ago, when my parents were starting to plant corn seeds in rented ground in the McLean area, they purchased a sandy piece of property in Charles County, Maryland. That farm had an entrance on Steinhauser Road, at the

top of the ridge, and the property had woods and fields at the top, then a big hilly wooded descent to some flat lowlands with big open fields that

had grown tobacco, and the farm ended at the marsh. I think the farm might have been a mile long from top to bottom, and only maybe

1000 feet wide at its widest point (but these are wild guesses). It was definitely a long skinny triangle.

You could get through the winding passageways of the marsh in a rowboat or a canoe and make your way to Allen's Fresh and the Wicomico River. The Wicomico feeds into the Potomac and you can get anywhere from there. My father often said that he chose that property because you could sail around the world from there. He had a lifelong interest in boats.

The other two farms that they bought -- one in Fairfax County and one in Loudoun County -- could be reasonably associated with the Potomac River. It is our nearest river, on all three farms. And this is why we are Potomac Vegetable Farms, plural. We farmed three farms for many decades, and if we had wanted to, we could have sailed around the world from any of them, after schlepping overland for a few miles.



photo courtesy of helen roades

Flower bunching has returned as the main event on Friday afternoons -- one person fills buckets with water and keeps the flower table full, and nine other people bunch as fast as they can. It takes us about two hours to make 425 bunches.

For Your Consideration

by Brandon Walker

Recently, very recently, I had experienced an interaction with an anonymous customer that left me feeling unsettled. There was brief bantering over how wonderful our produce is (that was good) but also a brief and disturbing tirade about how commercial food distributed through supermarkets and restaurants is all very bad and not “real food”.

I could not disagree more with this statement. While I would be first to admit that quality of food (much like quality of air and quality of water) is very real and true and that there exists a spectrum of lower grade and higher grade food; I contend that the goodness (perhaps even pureness) of our farm food does not detract from the good that is present within the homes of people who may not procure their families diet exclusively from local and organic farms. And this, I do not find to be reprehensible.

Why I started working out of doors, and particularly farming, was to put myself more in touch with the commonness of dirt and sweat and everyday people. I nod to the highway constructors, and the contract laborers I pass in the myriad public realm, feeling I

have much in common with them, in hand and in heart. It is with people who eat our food who believe themselves to be part of an exclusive elite group that are somehow elevated by our produce, with whom I feel no kinship but rather a very distinct separateness.

I was not raised on organic food nor very many goods within regional production. In fact Mississippi, my home, imports over 90% of the food it consumes. My journey towards organic farming had incredibly little to do with my exterior circumstances, and very highly to do with my interior development, in thought, in belief and in soul, as it were. This is not to imply specialness about myself. This is to imply that the grades of quality have truly no top

and no bottom, and that who we are and how we live are very largely self determined. A human is ever onward toward the development of who they are and who they will themselves to be, not the product of circumstance but in fact the maker of circumstance.

If shopping for local food/manufactured goods is an outlet for spreading and sharing love and kindness; I commend thee. However, if how and where you shop and eat is a way for you to estimate your value as a citizen and as a person; i'm afraid that there might be an error in your thinking that could use the wisdom of re-evaluating.

I am a human who was raised in a home of food insecurity; food

stamps were a lifesaver. Starkist tuna was gold and canned foods were the norm, while I was often rejected lunch at school for reasons that I still don't understand. But more importantly I was raised with love and taught to be loving towards all, with indifference to how different, or how alike, the other may be. And while I do wish to supply organically made food to all of those who seek to seek it; I do not hold this as an exclusionary practice, or marker of human worth. With every step on the farm and each plunge of my bare hands in bare earth, it is with the aim and intention for all people to love one another in equal amounts, regardless of where and how you eat.



photo courtesy of hana newcomb

Out on the big farm in the Green Barn, there is lots of room to splash water everywhere, washing crates and baskets on Wash It Wednesday.

Take your rehydration game to the next level and add a touch of mint syrup to your water. Any of the varieties of mint we grow at PVF or mint that you may have in your backyard would be welcome here. The syrup is also a delicious ingredient in mock/cocktails. *Recipe from Meredith Graves.*

1. Put a bunch of mint leaves in a pitcher
2. Slice a lemon and put on top
3. Add 6 cups of water
4. Let sit for 24 hours
5. Strain into a pot
6. Add 2 cups of granulated sugar (stevia or monk fruit also work)
7. Warm up slowly on medium heat, boil for a few minutes, then let cool
8. Store in a labeled glass jar and add about a tablespoon to your water.



photo courtesy of oscar hc



photo courtesy of helen roades

Oscar admires the chunky fingerling potatoes — they only got watered once, but they are big and beautiful.

We can be like water, my friend. We can find a way around. Through it. We can ride along in a seven gallon jug perched atop shoulders of farmers walking with their moon shadows. Find a way through the rocks of the river bed. Millenia's worth of friction. Still, to this day, it's never been the same river twice. We can be like water. Reaching roots, rain clouds' release. Replenishing pleases. We can ride along in one gallon jugs in vans market bound. Where water wets asphalt weekly after sustaining bouquets. Bundles of delight. Be like water, stirred, as paws paddle. Muskrat passes. My friend, we are water. Salty tears on cheeks. Hydro incubation. Refilled bowl for good dogs, sneaky dogs, any dog. Greenhouse hose, watering watering watering. Water, my friend, water. —OHC

Pool vs. Pool

by Helen Roades

Something that is better than most other things is jumping into a swimming pool after a long, hot day in the Virginia summer sun. I hope we can all agree on that. Given this information, I have to say I think the farm workers of Potomac Vegetable Farms might just be some of the luckiest farm workers in the world. Why, you might ask? On both farms, Wheatland and Vienna, the carpentry-inclined have erected above ground pools to help relieve us from the heat exhaustion that can easily overtake us when working long hours in the fields. The pool in Vienna is actually Carrie's pool, but she generously welcomes weary workers to swim too.

I happen to be one of a small crowd at this farm who get to work and play on both farms throughout the season. Since it's the busy season of summer, I split my time evenly between the two farms. And I think it's high time I write an official Comparison of the Pools, based on nothing but my personal opinions about how the two differ. And you, dear CSA reader, may get a better idea of what it is like to enjoy each of these water wonderlands.

- Bigger, in square feet: Vienna
- Easier to create a whirlpool: Wheatland
- More dead bees: Wheatland
- More alive bees: Vienna
- More algae on the ground: Vienna
- More slippery ground: Wheatland
- Occupied more often: Wheatland
- Better poolside tanning setup: Wheatland
- More secluded from hustle and bustle: Vienna
- Better for playing dolphins, mermaids, etc: Vienna
- Warmer: tie, both pretty cold! Both in the shade!
- Leveler ground for ladder entry: Vienna
- Easier access to freezy pops: Wheatland

There are a lot of factors that go into determining a superior pool. More than just one mind can imagine, really. So I will not try to draw up a judgment one way or the other. Both of these pools feel simply divine when a body feels like it just might never cool down again -- there is nothing like the feeling of stepping into the cold, salty water. It's pool day every day, people.



Peio the pool guy got both the pools up and running this year. That was probably his most important contribution during his three week working vacation on the farm.



This is not the Wheatland or Vienna pool, but this pool is perfect for the two-year-old crowd, and it deserves its own review.