



# Farm Notes

## CSA Newsletter

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# Community Supported Shares

by Hana Newcomb

Sometime in early August, I wrote a Notes From the Field that went out to all the CSA customers, telling them that it was time for us to organize this season of Solidarity Shares. I had finally connected with an organization that was willing to help us distribute some vegetables in a way that we wanted to do it. It was essentially a fundraising letter, sent to people who know what it is like to eat these vegetables, asking for contributions so others with less discretionary money could also share that experience. Almost immediately, the first donation came in through PayPal and within a week we had received enough support to start packing up CSA vegetables and sending them to a food pantry in Centreville.

We decided to start delivering

15 shares a week, even though we had no guarantee that we would get that much help. But, lo and behold, we are about to pack up our tenth delivery and we have received enough financial support by now that we will be able to deliver 15 shares for the entire 14 weeks. It's not a miracle, but it is a reflection of our members' commitment to sharing the wealth and food by partnering with their farmers. We have been careful to pack the shares with as much attention to quality and diversity as we are when we pack your shares.

We thank you for helping to feed people who will never know who you are. We thank you for trusting us to be fair and honest. We thank the food pantry for agreeing to take these weekly deliveries, even though they had no idea who we were. This is a roundabout



system we are using to try to bring more justice into the world, while feeding people some really good vegetables, but it feels right to share in this way. We are taught that anonymous gifts are the highest form of giving, and our CSA members have given a great deal, sending over \$4000 worth of vegetables to their neighbors, one load at a time.

Since the pandemic took a break, the sense of urgency also declined and fewer of us are sharing. We plan to continue this practice for as long as our members will help us. We always give our surplus and seconds vegetables to local food banks, but this is a different type of sharing. You are helping to share the best of what we have, and that is a generous act.



photos courtesy of annie manville

# Sharing Tractors 101 - An Interview With Ciara Prencipe

transcribed and edited by Oscar HC

*OHC: In the last week, can you tell me about any tractor work you've done and who else may have used the same tractor?*

*CP: Right now on the farm, the big tractor work push is getting cover crop seed in the ground. About three years ago, we got a no-till grain-drill, the implement we use to seed the cover crop, and about three weeks ago, I learned to use it for the first time with the Kubota, a smaller tractor. It's always interesting to see which implements are hooked up when. Casey, of Fireside Farm, has also been driving that tractor in their fields and at PVF. Another implement I've used recently is the mini-bush hog to mow the cover crop stubble before using the no-till drill. It's not exactly mini, but it's smaller than the other bush hog. And I accidentally overheated the 84 tractor, so it's momentarily out of commission until the liquid leak is fixed. Today I worked with the flail mower, one of my favorites because it mows and then chops the mowed pieces into smaller bits, so you can spade it or you can leave the pieces to decompose and boost the soil flora and fauna. It's the difference*



photo courtesy of oscar hc

John DiBenedetto processes some wheat for Fireside Farm.

between getting a haircut with nice clippers versus rusty scissors — that's the bush hog. \*laughs\* Before I was using the flail mower, Michael Bradford was using that tractor to pull a trailer for collecting tomato stakes from one of the patches that's done for the season. So that tractor ran for four hours today. And while I was flail mowing, Casey was on another tractor spading, which is a type of tillage that leaves a nice, even top to the soil. There's a

lot of negotiation to determine when folks need which tractor and which implements are attached.

*CP: April and May is another period of the farm season when there's a lot of tractor sharing and implement rotation. We're mowing the cover crop that grew all winter, tilling the cover crop in, maybe doing a secondary tillage for planting preparation, maybe there's plastic being laid for transplanting, maybe there's cultivating for*

direct-seeding. Sometimes there are four tractors on the move at the same time. Another time when there can be a lot of tractor negotiation is when we're making compost because that process is involved and requires a tractor to be continuously occupied because of the twice-daily chore of turning. Overall the sharing is smooth, just a lot of texting. \*laughs\* Half of my job is texting.

*OHC: Do you know if PVF shares tractors with*

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any of the neighbor farms?

CP: We don't so much share tractors, but we do share implements. The farms around us have their own tractors, but since we've been around for so long, we've collected many implements. Sometimes you need something weird! Or if there's a digger that could be shared, it's like, "why purchase a duplicate?" I consider myself a new tractor operator; farming since 2014 and driving tractors for the past five years, and I wonder how many hours it takes to be considered an Experienced Operator. Some of the implements look complicated and scary, but actually it's so boring. Like spading: you're using the biggest tractor, it's doing this intense job but it goes so slow. I could be reading a book, but I wouldn't because that is dangerous.

OHC: Let's say someone is at PVF Wheatland and they see

a tractor out in the field but they can't tell which farmer is driving. How might they be able to figure it out?

CP: Check to see if they're standing up. If they are, it's definitely Casey. If they're driving fast, it's definitely Casey. I'll be driving slow. And if they're texting, it's Hana. If they're mowing, it's Michael.

OHC: I had a moment earlier today, wondering who was on the tractor out in the field behind the Pod Kitchen, so I watched and looked for the clues. The hair-bun poking out the back of the cap told me it was you.

CP: \*laughs\* If they have a beard, it's Casey. If they have a bun, it's me.

CP: Of all the things that we share on the farm, sharing tractors and implements is the least stressful. We all do our best to say what we need, when and why, helping to swap out implements. It's been a joy to share tractors this season.



photo courtesy of oscar hc



photo courtesy of meredith lindsey

Farm children are often required to entertain themselves while they wait for their parents to finish working. Wearing high fashion gloves, Zoey watches her mom clean garlic from her comfortable perch on the flower shelf. She was forbidden to climb to the next shelf.

# Making Hay in the Hudson Valley in the 1940s

by Michael Lipsky

I first thought about the instinct and necessity of sharing among farmers in 1965 when I was dating Suzanne, whom I would soon marry.

She grew up on a farm in Gardiner, N.Y., near the college town of New Paltz. There were 11 small dairy farms on the road. The farms were laid out like ribbons, starting at the Wallkill river and the fertile bottom lands which supported corn. Pastures and some woodlands ascended in narrow bands toward the two lane highway up the hill, where the farm houses, barns, milking sheds, and other buildings were located. Across the highway were the hayfields.

Some of the farms were operated by men whose families had owned them for generations. Others, like Suzanne's, were owned by newcomers to farming. Like many farms, they were marginal enterprises whose owners and their spouses often worked locally in other jobs.

There wasn't much money in those years. Suzanne's mother made all her clothes. Suzanne



photo courtesy of oscar hc

Odessa, farm child, plays with black walnuts.

lived in dread she would return home from school to find the local dairy had rejected the milk that day because it smelled of the wild onions the cows had gotten into.

To make hay in season the farmers worked on one farm after another until all the hay was gathered and stored. They worked all day, stopping for lunch prepared by the farm family. A

good lunch was a source of pride for the family whose hay was being brought in that day.

They pooled their equipment as well. Some but not all farmers had hay wagons. One or two had grapple forks and other specialized equipment.

In those days, before baling hay had come to this part of the Hudson Valley, loose hay gathered in wagons brought to the barn was secured by the grapple forks, then raised to the lofts by ropes or cables drawn by a tractor on the other side of the barn. In the loft the hay was positioned to use as much of the loft as possible.

Suzanne remembers the cry: "take it away," when the fork had secured the hay. Then, when the load of hay had disappeared into the loft, "trip it," when the hay was positioned in the loft and released.

Making hay at the farms along the road, visiting with neighbors, helping where a nine year old could help, are some of Suzanne's fondest memories as a child.



photo courtesy of emily chiappinelli

Rachel, Stephen and Emily pose for a selfie at the DuPont Farmers Market.