

the
Canticle Farm
newsletter

HARVEST TIMES

The Canticle Farm is a Certified Naturally Grown farm and Community Supported Agriculture project sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. The farm is committed to connecting all peoples, practicing Earth-friendly habits, and realizing a Creation-centered spirituality.



week of September 24, 2007

week # 17 of 20

A Message from the Board of Directors

Weather changes, the seasons roll on, and soon we will be finishing our seventh summer at Canticle Farm. For those shareholders who were not able to get one of our limited fall shares, there's still hope to get some good, fresh, produce. Canticle Farm will be at the Olean Farmers' Market until it closes for the winter. Watch for information about the farm stand. It will also be open for some limited hours during the fall.

In 2008, Canticle Farm will have a few changes. As a result of feedback from our shareholders, we have decided to lengthen the spring share season to five weeks and cut the summer share season to 18 weeks. Some folks just love those greens and can't get enough. Others just don't know what to do with three or four heads of lettuce! For those folks who choose not to get a spring share, our greens will still be available on a more limited basis at the Olean Farmers Market and at our farm stand. Our fall share season will remain the same at five weeks. Since some of the crops for the spring and fall shares are grown in the high tunnels, we have to limit the number of shares available during those seasons. Lucky for us, we have enough land to grow plenty of summer shares!

Another change that you will see on our application is a slight increase in the volunteer hours for our participating shareholders. As on any farm, labor is our biggest cost. At Canticle Farm, our labor costs increased significantly with the loss of our Journey Project volunteers that came to us through a grant received by St. Bonaventure University and as a result of an increase in the minimum wage. By having shareholders help out at the farm, we can reduce some of the cost of labor. For 2008, small shares (half shares) will require five volunteer hours; large shares (full shares) will require 10. As before, there is also the option to be a non-participating shareholder and pay a higher fee. In order for us to use the labor wisely, we are scheduling our participating shareholders at more specific times and for more specific tasks. Unfortunately, some shareholders wait until the last minute to try to put in their hours and that is not very useful to our farmer, Mark. He has very time-intensive tasks that occur early in the season and throughout the season. If shareholders don't volunteer for them, the work still has to be done and we wind up hiring more labor or exhausting our wonderful crew! While some of the tasks involve bending and digging, there are many light duty tasks that

can be done while sitting in the greenhouse or outside the barn. An added bonus is that you might just be lucky enough to get a visit from a cat who wants to help you!

As part of the application process, participating shareholders are being asked to sign an agreement with Canticle Farm detailing when they will participate and what tasks they are willing to have assigned to them. Those shareholders who do not fulfill their agreement will be billed at the non-participating rate. As you can imagine, it takes a lot of planning and organizing throughout the winter to be able to grow enough produce for up to 200 families and organizations. Mark carefully plans out the work hours needed for each week and we have to make sure that we can meet those hours if we want to have a good harvest.

Thanks to all of our shareholders for joining with Canticle Farm to produce and enjoy healthy, fresh vegetables while treating the earth gently. Thanks to all of our great staff for the incredible work that they do and the wonderful dedication that they have to the mission of Canticle Farm.

How's it GROWin'?

by Garrett Dudley

¡Hola! ¿Que pasa? Not much on this end....but if you happen to catch the crew speaking Spanish in the next few days, don't be alarmed. We're just trying to disguise our frustrations with our latest misfortune - winter squash. I've heard that in years prior we were able to distribute loads upon loads of this heavy vine crop, while this year's harvest is barely enough to cover a few tarps. We cite the rampant weeds, the hot and dry summer, and a few underfed baby woodchucks as the reasons for our low yield.

If you are craving more winter squash than we are able to provide, please keep in mind that several local growers can be found with squash at the Olean Farmers Market. I can't guarantee that same Canticle flavor, but it never hurts to support other local producers.

Nine Mile Scout

by Garrett Dudley

Heads up and eyes to the sky!! Last Wednesday was my first official Bald Eagle sighting at the farm. For me, there is no greater joy than seeing this majestic creature soaring over the river...so if you've never seen one, be sure to keep your eyes peeled!

Methods to the Madness!

by Garrett Dudley and Mark Printz

Ok folks, time to get serious. You've had it easy up till now ... just reading these articles, picking up your veggies, and sitting back fat and happy at the dinner table. But now its time for you to understand our crazy farming system! This might require a tad more effort on your part ... no calisthenics I promise ... but you might have to *think*. Ready?

By now you know that the CSA aspect of Canticle Farm is our primary focus when it comes to producing vegetables. We reach out to other consumers at the farm stand and at market, but our shareholders are our first priority. When Mark creates a plan in the offseason, he does so with a certain number of memberships in mind, then he adds 10 to 15 percent for additional market and stand production. Believe it or not, we don't just throw seeds in the ground and divide up produce when (surprise!) something pokes its head through the ground!!

This kind of farming requires constant planning, figuring, and a bit of intuitive knowledge. For example, let's do a little exercise with tomatoes (no, I don't mean dancing in between the rows!). Last week we distributed 7 lbs of tomatoes per full share ... so ... do the math ... and you realize that we had to have roughly 910 lbs of tomatoes to satisfy 130 full share equivalents. If we are distributing 70 full shares on Tuesday and 60 on Friday, we have to harvest 490 lbs and 420 lbs, respectively. If we have enough, additional produce is set aside for the Farm Stand and market.

So if we want to distribute one item or one pound of something to all of you shareholders, we have to make certain that we have 260 of that item (2 items or lbs for full shares/1 for half shares). Now here is where it gets interesting: what if a certain crop isn't ready for a full distribution? Chard is a good example! Today the chard is ready to harvest, yet not enough for 130 shares. What then? As you've probably seen, it ends up on the choice table, at the farm stand, or at market. We have to do something with it, right? This is what happens when certain crops are slow to mature, produce less fruit than we plan for, or were grown strictly as experimental varieties.

So maybe this explains why you might see gladiolas for sale but not for distribution. It's also an apology to any hapless volunteers who get hit in the head with a tomato meant for market but accidentally left on the CSA rack! Mark is constantly questioning ... what is ready? ... what will be ready? ... what needs a week to mature? Might sound easy, but try going toe to toe with Mark on a heavy harvest day - you'll find these headgames are for serious farmers only!

Join our Early Bird Raffle!

Planting starts early and we need to know how many shareholders we're going to have for our summer shares so that we can buy and plant a sufficient number of seeds. To encourage early applications, Canticle Farm will hold a drawing on March 3, 2008. All shareholders who have their applications in and have made **full payment** for the summer shares by March 1 will be entered in the drawing. One lucky winner will receive \$50 off a small share or \$100 off a large share.

HARVEST RECIPES

Borscht

from *allrecipes.com*

6 cups water
¾ tablespoon salt
½ cup finely chopped carrots
¼ cup chopped green bell pepper, divided
½ stalk celery, chopped
1 medium beet
½ cup canned peeled and diced tomatoes
3 potatoes, quartered
1/3 cup butter
½ cup chopped onion
1 ½ cups canned tomatoes
3 cups finely shredded cabbage, divided
¼ cup heavy cream
¾ cup diced potatoes
1 tablespoon dried dill weed
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper to taste
salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place water, salt, carrots, ½ of the bell pepper, celery, beet, tomatoes, and quartered potatoes in a large stock pot over high heat. Bring to a boil.

Melt 1/3 cup butter in a separate skillet over medium heat. Sauté onions in butter until tender, approximately 5 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, reduce heat to medium low, and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove ½ cup of sauce from skillet, and set aside. Stir half of the cabbage into the skillet with remaining sauce, and continue simmering 5 minutes more, or until tender.

Remove beet from boiling liquid and discard. Remove potatoes with a slotted spoon or tongs, and place in a bowl with remaining 1 tablespoon of butter and the cream. Mash together until smooth. Return the ½ cup of reserved onion-tomato sauce to the stock pot.

Stir in diced potatoes, and simmer until just tender but still firm, approximately 5 minutes. Increase heat to a low boil, and stir in remaining cabbage, tomato sauce, and mashed potatoes. Reduce heat and simmer a few minutes more. Stir in remaining bell pepper, season with black pepper, and serve.

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

The annual Canticle Farm end of year questionnaire will be available in the distribution center starting this week. PLEASE take a moment to fill one out, either while you are at distribution or at home. The survey can be returned to the distribution center (there will be a box for their collection) or mailed to the farm office. Your honest feedback is invaluable to us, giving us direction and ideas for improvements. We are always trying to serve you, our shareholders, better, and we use the surveys to help guide our planning for next season. Thank you in advance for your honest and constructive feedback.