



Ignatius Farm
CSA News
 January 2006



CSA Newsletters are also available online at www.ignatiusguelph.ca/csa/html

Farmer Musings

The 2005 season was the 5th anniversary for Ignatius Farm CSA, and proved to be a celebration in many ways. The intense heat yielded abundance: red peppers (a tough feat in our climate!), our best crop of winter squash and pumpkins, melons ripening faster than we could pick them, more tomatoes than we and all of our members doing u-pick could collect, and our eggplants trying to fit in a second harvest season (almost successfully, although a bit small!). Every year we try to make our operation more efficient: Timing of mechanical cultivation is being polished, and we are now able to standardize our plantings so that more crops can be mechanically cultivated... for which the interns and farmer are very thankful!

Every year our Core Group amazes me further with their dedication and enthusiasm. After 4 seasons of having a Core Group, I am encouraged that members frequently choose to carry on beyond the usual 2 year commitment, with some folks going into their 4th year with us. As our Core Group of members grows stronger and more established every year, our CSA moves more and more towards the Japanese Teiki roots of Community Shared Agriculture, initiated by consumers to bring them in community with their farmers ~ 'putting the farmer's face on food' is the traditional definition of Teiki. Consider any volunteer contribution you can make to the CSA: you will not only join a group of positive people, but become an advocate for local food security, local farmers, and the freshest and healthiest food for your community.

As with any new organization or small business, the 5th year is also a good marking point, a time to assess

and make adjustments. Over the past 6 months, the Business Advisory Committee for the CSA and I have been evaluating and looking at ways to move further towards sustainability in finances and human resources, aligned with our overarching goals in education and organic agriculture. So 2006 is going to be a very exciting year for us. We will be hiring an Assistant Farmer to balance my workload and share the responsibilities of managing production and the internship program. (This is clearly exciting to me, as it will also give me enough time to get married this year, and to go on a trip to Zambia and Malawi !!) In planning for the long-term, we also hope to do some research and development in marketing and educational programming development in 2006. We are looking at researching and making assessments for other markets for our vegetables beyond the CSA, to supplement income for our very tight budget. We also want to formalize the education program that is offered to our interns, so that we might share it with other farms, in addition to developing models for farm tours and membership activities. We hope to hire a Market Developer and Education Program Developer for these purposes, and are looking forward to the results that their research yields!

If you know of anyone that would be interested in these new positions, or our internships, please have them visit our website www.ignatiusguelph.ca/csa.html, and email or call me at csafarmer@ignatiusguelph.ca or 519-824-1250 ext. 275. Those interested in internships will also want to attend our workshop on CRAFT (Collaborative Regional

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Get in touch: CSA Office 824-1250 ext. 245 / E-mail: csa_members@ignatiusguelph.ca



Farmer Musings

Alliance for Farmer Training) at the Guelph Organic Conference, January 28. www.guelphorganicconf.ca. CRAFT is the monthly on-farm education program that our interns participate in with other organic farms, which we were instrumental in establishing.

Further planning includes offering small and regular share sizes for 2006. This is in response to the many people that are splitting shares that commented on the complexity of these arrangements (including us keeping track of them!).

In addition to all of these new steps that we are taking, we are also moving fields for 2006. This is to allow us to have a longer crop rotation, with nearly 2/3rds of the land in cover crops and green manures. As vegetables are highly demanding crops for both nutrients and tillage, this is ideal for the health of the land and to allow us to more easily build our soil fertility with the cattle no longer here providing organic manure for compost. We're looking forward to showing off our new fields in June!

Every year, we also survey you for feedback on the growing season, and take this into consideration, along with the seasonal fluctuations, for our crop planning for the upcoming season. Again this year, the feedback was very positive. There were a few crops for which we received more than 1 comment for us to improve upon. Here is a tally of the crops we will be adjusting based on your feedback:

Cucumbers: Our first planting did not survive the transplant shock very well and was battered with wind by the row covers on top of the crops protecting them from cucumber beetles. We have modified our timing for covering these fragile young plants, and will plant more next year.

Onions: The direct seeded onions were a failure this year with the dry season, and being planted in one of our quick-drying early fields. The transplanted red onions were larger than last year, so we are going to follow the transplant schedule we used for them and increase our greenhouse seeding of onions.

Peppers: It was a good year for peppers, and we yielded as we had planned, but feedback says it just wasn't enough! We'll plant more!

Potatoes: We have finally found a good potato cultivar for storage that is adapted to our soils, so we will be planting more of it.

Spinach: It seems to be temperamental in our spring seedings. In the fall we tried some different seeding rates, and these seemed to work better, so we will be trying them with our spring plantings this year. We will additionally be adjusting harvest times for certain crops to maximize quality, adjusting per-week quantities to fit with average eating amounts (as yields permit), providing utensils for collecting lettuce mix at the pick-up, and doing other minor modifications. Crop planning for 64 crops is a creative adventure!

So we have many developments that we are working on for 2006. We hope that they will allow us to better provide you with quality vegetables, and that we can continually uphold our goals for fostering community, sustainable agriculture, and the mentoring of new organic farmers.

See you at the Open House in April!

Heather Lekx

csafarmer@ignatiusguelph.ca





Final Intern Report

Editor's note: This note from Becky was written in the last two weeks of the Intern's stay, just after harvest pick-ups ended. The six interns this year took turns contributing field reports to the newsletter, but Becky's final report shows what being an intern at Ignatius means to the young people who meet that challenge. We think it shows the value of our intern program here at Ignatius, and how we are about so much more than just growing vegetables!

Although the changing weather hints at the fact that the growing season is over, it is still surprising that our time as interns at Ignatius Farm is coming to an end. The six months seem to have sped by. We have had an amazing season of learning and of hard work that I am sure we will never forget. The dirt may eventually come out from under our fingernails but the skills we have gained as farmers will stay with us into the future. I am thankful every time I recall that we were given the chance to intern for the CSA without any previous farm or growing experience. It has been an incredible opportunity and for first time farmers I think we did a pretty good job!

As part of the internship, the various CRAFT education days that we attended once a month over the season were much appreciated. We travelled to many an interesting organic farm in the Southern Ontario

region and have now experienced first hand a variety of different organic farming methods as well as become more aware of food security issues and food politics in Canada. As well, the amount of time spent on a daily basis by Heather, Lorne and Erin educating us on the daily activities of Ignatius farm was very valuable. As interns we are now fully aware of the amount of hard work that is required to run an organic farm and CSA project. The work has been hard, the days long and the heat unbearable at times but we survived and produced a great haul of vegetables to show for it! The best part of this internship has been to be involved in the whole cycle: seeding, planting, watering, weeding, growing, harvesting and then eating! Not only that but the friendships that have been made here on the farm will be long lasting.

As we move into our last two weeks of the internship program we will be looking forward to preparing the fields for next season and to a week of informative workshops with Heather and Erin on farm management, planning and budgeting. Once again we are very thankful for this remarkable learning experience and for your involvement in supporting the CSA through your membership. It has been a great season!

Intern Becky

Shares Now Available For 2006 CSA Season

Don't be disappointed!! Sign up for your membership today!!

Last year, we sold all our memberships in record time – so sign up soon to avoid being left out. This year we have 2 share sizes, the regular size (same as last year) for \$595, and a small share for \$345. A member brochure for you and a friend are included in this mailing, and additional copies and information can be found on our website at: www.ignatiusguelph.ca/csa.html.

CSA Member Open House

Mark Thursday, April 27th on your calendars! This evening will be our annual CSA Members Open House. Even if you are a returning member, plan to come to this event, as it is a good way to start the growing season with some community spirit. You will be able to meet the farmer and the new interns, enjoy some food, and hear what's new at the farm this year! Bring a friend who may be interested in joining up as well! Specific details about time/place will be posted on the website in April.





Volunteering at Ignatius Farm CSA

By Reid Davis

My wife and I moved from Sudbury to Guelph just over a year ago. We had a fairly large city property and we both liked to garden. Our yard here in Guelph is quite small and so I felt I needed to do some extra work in the soil. My love of gardening has always been directed toward the eating part as opposed to the aesthetics part. After we joined the CSA we heard that there were opportunities for volunteers so I decided to try it starting last May.

My first experience was with planning, and the new interns and I were all learning the ropes. I then missed a few weeks and by the time I got back, we were ready to start harvesting. Many of the vegetables were new to me and also the how-to of harvesting, which was explained to us by Heather. The washing, equipment cleaning, and storage was also a new experience.

For the remainder of the summer, I showed up on one of the harvest days, so most of my experience was with the gathering of the crops. During the heat wave in July and August, this was at times hard, tiring work. We looked forward to the mid-morning break and the breaks for lunch.

After a while, I started to feel like one of the crew and was always invited to stay for the noon meal and then work until my pick-up time at three. I really felt that my efforts were appreciated by all the interns and that we became good friends. Their days were long – starting at six in the morning and finishing – I don't know when since I never lasted a full day – and a new face gave them someone extra with whom to talk and visit. I met several other volunteers there during the summer and all of us got the same warm welcome and vote of thanks at each visit.

The interns and volunteers do work hard, but I believe the volunteers get so much more out the experience than the hard work they put in. Being close to senior citizen age, I can say that every time I was out there I felt 20 to 30 years younger and it was like a re-visit of my youth.

I strongly encourage all CSA members to give volunteering a try. You will appreciate your produce all the more and you will gain many new friends who will truly value your efforts and your willingness to help.

Introducing the 2006 Core Group

The Core Group is a group of volunteers who help with the non-field aspects of running the farm. We have some vacant positions, please call **824-1250 x245** if you are interested in helping out! This year's team includes:

Co-chairs and Co-coordinators: Siobhan Hanley and Yolanda Wiersma

Secretary: Karol Storez

Membership Coordinator: Sande MacEachern

Graphic Design and Marketing Coordinator: Lisbeth Sider

Human Resources Assistant: Moragh Lippert

Membership Liaison: Pat Dares

Communications Coordinator: Pat Thomas

Intern Hospitality Coordinator: Christine Oldfield

Business Advisory Committee members: June Hofland, Hector Barber and Moragh Lippert

Jesuit Representative: Bill Clark

VACANT: Fundraising Coordinator, Events Coordinator

If you have questions or need to contact the Ignatius Farm CSA, we can be reached at:
Ignatius Farm CSA, P.O. Box 1238, Guelph ON, N1H 6N6; **Phone:** 824-1250 ext. 245;
E-mail: csa_members@ignatiusguelph.ca or visit our website at: www.ignatiusguelph.ca/csa.html.

