

Newsletter May 28th 2011

Welcome to the latest members who have just joined us. We are all looking forward to meeting you and feeding you. I keep promising myself that I will spend some more time updating the website with pick up information and other details, but we do have more than a month to go before our first CSA basket and we are still firming up some of the numbers that would make new drop-off sites possible. For now we have a number of sites and times confirmed and we are inching closer to a Lunenburg/Riverport site and are very close to confirming the Halifax site as well.

I sent out an email a couple of weeks ago asking people to let us know where they would most likely be choosing to pick up from in order to help us plan our logistics. So if you haven't responded yet, or you are new to the CSA please take the time to consider what option suits you best and let us know as soon as possible. The week before we begin for the season we will write to all of you and confirm your pick up site and if there are any changes at that time you will need to let us know immediately so we can plan accordingly. Also, I have found a great bag which is inexpensive and insulated, washable and looks great. Strolling down the aisles of the Superstore wondering if and when they may choose to actually buy anything locally produced, I spied these striped picnic bags with zippers and promptly purchased them all... a steal at \$3.00 each! The yellow striped bags will be for the full size members and the blue stripes will be the small shares.

We are asking that you each purchase three bags from us so that one can be returned to us each week as you pick up your new full bag. The third bag is necessary as in many instances, you won't be picking up until long after we have dropped off and we can't make an extra trip to Halifax or Chester or anywhere else, just to pick up empty bags. Your bags will have your names written in permanent marker on the handles as some of you may be getting eggs from time to time and it is a way for us to track things. There will also likely be a coloured tag of some sort that will represent the drop-off site that you have stated as your location of choice for pickup. So for instance, Mary Smith, having chosen to pick up from Mahone Bay will make her way to Mateus' Bistro on Tuesday in time for light lunch carrying her empty bag from the previous week in hand. She will find the bag with her name on the handle and the coloured ribbon attached to the handle that indicates to us that she is a Mahone Bay member. She will leave her empty and clean dry bag, and perhaps an empty egg carton as well, in a basket or box that we will provide, peer delightedly into her nicely packed bag of fresh food and hurry home after a delicious lunch to put her food in the fridge and flowers into a vase. When Mary decides to pickup the following week at the farm with her two grandchildren in tow, she lets us know by Monday morning that this is her plan so that we don't send her bag to Mateus' Bistro but have it waiting for her at the farm.

Here is the basic info which we sent out in the previous update:

Our CSA day will always be on **Tuesday**. Some of you may be able to pick up at **Watershed Farm** in Baker Settlement which is only ten minutes from Bridgewater. We will always offer small enticements to help convince you to come out our way... pick your own bouquet of flowers, feed the chickens, take a few extra cucumbers home, let your children check the henhouse for eggs, see what crops are coming along and pick up a few

tips for your backyard garden or share some of your own advice with us. The farm pick up hours will be on **Tuesday from 4:30pm-7:30pm**. While we always encourage farm pick-ups, and want to help you have that flexibility allowing you to occasionally choose to come to the farm, we will also need to know this in advance if it is different than your normal pick-up site. This means that if you normally pick-up in Bridgewater but plan to make it to the farm next Tuesday, you are very welcome to do so, but you will need to let us know no later than Monday morning so that we can plan to keep your share on the farm and not send it packing with the baskets that will leave the farm Tuesday morning.

The Ark (Lunenburg County Association for the Specially Challenged) will be our **Bridgewater** pick-up site. Conveniently located at **655 King Street**, this central location offers plenty of parking in front and directly across the road. We are proud to team up with The Ark who will be the recipient of regular food donations from the farm for their Cooking Program. Their hours on **Tuesday for pick-up are 8:30am-3:30pm**. Take a few moments while you are picking up your vegetables to check out the beautiful handmade rugs and other crafts that the participants have made which are on display for sale in their lovely showroom.

Rosmarie Lohnes of **Helping Nature Heal** has also offered to be a pick-up site from her cheerful storefront in Bridgewater directly across from the Farmer's Co-op. We will see if we have a need for this second Bridgewater location that may also be able to offer different hours that could be more convenient for some of you than those offered at The Ark.

In **Mahone Bay, Mateus Bistro** has offered to be our pick-site. This lovely establishment opened last year and Mateus who cooks up a storm in his small kitchen has transformed the space with a great new deck and renovated interior. Since he opened, Mat has been a great supporter of our produce, always willing to try new varieties of strange and delicious vegetables and herbs and we have enjoyed growing food for him and his happy customers. We are still working out the time for pick up at Mateus' Bistro but it will likely be from late morning till early evening.

One of our new CSA shareholders has offered to use her home as a pick-up site in **Chester**. We will confirm this location shortly along with the times that it will be open for pick-ups.

This is our first year taking on **Halifax** based shareholders and we are still trying to figure out where our pick-up site will be in town. We do have a few tentative offers on the table so we will be in touch again soon with our Halifax gang as we work out these details. The Halifax drop-off will likely take place around 11:00am and we always offer enticements for those who are kind enough to offer their space (more veggies, herbs and flowers, hugs, poetry, discounts on workshops and concerts at the farm, etc.)

We also want to offer an incentive to each of you who can bring in new shareholders. Starting right now, we would like to give everyone who brings in one new shareholder a free ticket to the Third Annual Stinking Rose Garlic Festival which is an all day extravaganza that takes place at the farm on Saturday October 29th. If you bring in more than one shareholder we will offer two free tickets to one of our upcoming "house party" concerts.

Speaking of house concerts, we are launching the season with a great event on Saturday, June 4th. Two Months' Rain opens for ECMA nominee Ashley Condon and I have attached the poster below so you can find all the details there and hopefully some of you will join us and take the time to arrive a bit early for a farm tour.

Rambling news from the farm:

In case you hadn't realized, this promises to be a very interesting growing season. I believe there is an ancient Chinese curse, "may you live in interesting times". Well, this is certainly an "interesting" growing season. Nova Scotia has been hit with what is likely the coldest, wettest spring in recorded history. And we won't even talk about what's been happening in Manitoba, or France, or Joplin, Missouri. Weather is simply not what it used to be and while insurance companies are scrambling to keep up with claims, farmers are doing what they have always done, reeling with the punches and trying to stay afloat, quite literally in this part of the world.

The good news is that at Watershed Farm we are firm believers in growing a great diversity of food crops. Partly it is an insatiable appetite for all things green and unusual come February. When the seed catalogues appear in the mail box, I revel in all those shiny photos of unusual plants with double handled names that belong to someone's long dead aunt or complicated Chinese names with five different spelling variations depending on which catalogue I am perusing ...and inevitably I end up ordering way too many different varieties for any sane farmer to even think about planting. But these days, that seems to be the smartest survival technique for a farmer. Biodiversity is nature's way of maintaining resiliency.

Most of the seeds that we diligently planted in late March and early April in the greenhouse have been supplying us with wonderful salad mix, stir fry greens and radishes for weeks. But they have to make way for the tomatoes and eggplants and peppers which have grown gangly looking for elusive sunshine despite being potted up and trotted from one greenhouse to the next cold frame for optimum light exposure. Most everything we planted outside earlier in the spring has suffered enormously with the torrential and endless rain and the unseasonably cold weather... To be honest, most of it is a write-off, or rather a wash-off as the seed simply washed away or rotted in the wet cold earth. However, some of the Asian greens seem to be enjoying this weather, or at least adapting to it with a hardiness that is most commendable and gives me hope in the possibility that by late June, when the CSA begins its weekly boxes, we may have a fulsome selection of largely unpronounceable produce to pack into your colourful bags. At this point, as I throw another log on the fire, unless something changes drastically, it's hard to imagine that we will be swimming in the fifteen varieties of melons that we have started, as they thrive in steamy hot weather and my hopes of planting them out in the next week or so are now dashed. But I have heard that this is all supposed to turn around, eventually. In the meantime, we continue to brave on and hope for the best and bless the fourth different type of broccoli as we plant it out in the hopes that it will hang in there and be productive despite what Mother Nature throws at it.

Yesterday I took a trip to the valley for a meeting of the Slow Motion Film Festival planning committee (check us out online: <http://slowmotionfilmfest.ca/>). It was Apple Blossom weekend but very few of the apple trees had blossoms and those that did stood out like brave and foolish brides shivering in their lace rueing the day they convinced themselves that a spring wedding was romantic. The pollinators are no where in sight. Not only is Nova Scotia suffering terrible losses of bees due to a combination of CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) and varroa and tracheal mite infestations, no self-respecting bee would be flying in this weather. The farmers are worried, and so too should anyone who cares to bite into an apple, a peach, a cherry, a cucumber or a tomato. We rely on bees and a host of other pollinators and it has not been an easy season for any of them. Every time the sun comes out here at the farm, however briefly, the place is abuzz with bumble bees, hummingbirds, solitary bees and even some wasps and we all delight in hearing and seeing them and just wish there were more days with sunshine and the temperatures that can allow them to do their work. Sadly, the black flies seem relentlessly adaptable to this new climate and the slugs have morphed and reached sizes previously only seen in the tropics. But today the sun is supposed to shine and Tristan and his horse just may be able to make it out here and up the hill to help us with cultivating the last beds and the lambs are arriving in just a few days and the plum trees are ablaze with blossoms and there are weeds to be pulled and nettles to be dried.

Looking forward to hearing back from all of you and seeing many of you here on June 4th.

Camelia