

## Highlights

- Important Member Action Items .....Page 1
- Henderson Japan Slideshow .....Page 4
- Season Extended .....Page 4
- GVOCSA Vision Statement .....Page 5

## Inside

- Notes from the Farm ..... Page 1
- The Cost of Organic Seed ..... Page 3
- Medicinal Herbs ..... Page 4
- End of Season Survey Results ..... Page 4

# GVOCSA News

*On the way to your stomach something happens to your soul.*

*February 2003*



## Notes from the Farm

*By Elizabeth Henderson*

The weather in the fall of 2002 could have been worse. What we had was challenge enough. An inch of rain on September 15 did break the long summer drought, but the ground was still so dry that we had to continue irrigating through the following week. That marks a Wayne County record for consecutive weeks without significant rain. The first heavy frost was unusually late - October 15. (Most years we get a frost around the middle of September.) Fall lasted about three weeks before the weather flipped again into winter mode. We spent the final month of the 2002 season dodging snowflakes and organizing our picking strategies around heavy frosts. Let's just say that farm clean up is a lot more fun in sun than sleet and snow.

For both quantity and quality, we ended the season on a strong note. While the yield per bed of potatoes was not high, we had planted more beds than ever before and the potatoes had excellent flavor and comparatively few defects. Scab, while unsightly, is superficial, and does not affect the eating quality of a potato. Greens of all varieties were abundant. We discovered that two of the new ones, komatsuna and shungiku, are very cold hardy. I

came home from Japan with some new recipes, so expect more of these in the future. The improved irrigation tape that Greg hunted down, with higher volume and holes every 4 inches instead of every 12 inches, assured a steady supply of carrots. One advantage of the wetness in October was that we could pull the carrots right out by hand without using forks or a digger.

The big disappointment was the short supply of broccoli. The number of weeks was fewer because the hot, dry weather caused plants of different ages to mature at the same time. Quite understandably, some of you complained about the gray aphids. All I can tell you is we gave you the better plants! You did not see the ones we left in the field or tossed in the treeline in disgust. You literally could not see the broccoli for the aphids. This infestation was region-wide. Weather conditions were just perfect for this pest, which, once established, multiples geometrically without the need for sexual reproduction. There is no organic remedy. A cold winter should break their grip for next year.

We were pleased to be able to offer Squirrel Bulk again with plenty of onions, garlic, kale, leeks, beets, carrots and potatoes. Assembling the orders in advance of distribution seems to work well, so we will use that system in the future.

## Member Action Items!

- ❑ *Have you paid your \$50 deposit for the 2002 season?* After January 1<sup>st</sup>, GVOCSA membership is on a first come first serve basis. If you want to be guaranteed a spot, act now before general sign-up in March. Mail Judy Emerson your \$50 deposit, or call her if you have any questions.

Judy Emerson  
130 Monroe Parkway  
Rochester, NY 14618  
716-461-5378

- ❑ *Mark your calendar for the general sign-up meeting* Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 7-9 PM, OR Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2-4 PM. The location is Friends Meeting House, 84 Scio Street (between East Avenue and Main St.). The entrance is off Charlotte Street, and childcare is provided. For more information, call 241-9680 or 442-5658.
- ❑ Tell your friends and co-workers! Word of mouth is the best way to recruit new members.
- ❑ *Order plants for your garden* using the order form. The Farm grows your plants with untreated seed, in our compost-based soil.

As we harvest crops through the fall, we spade the beds and plant cover crops. We had a fine team of seeders this year - Victoria, Judith and Greg became experts in sidestepping with the cyclone seeder so that the seeds cover our narrow beds without overflowing into the grass strips. We covered just about every bed, though the sudden extreme cold prevented some of the rye from germinating. The snow cover is especially welcome on those beds since it protects them from wind erosion.

We had a special extra helper in October - Oneas Mufandaedza from Zimbabwe. He found us through the profile of our farm in The New American Farmer, a publication of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE). Oneas completed a Ph.D. in agronomy in North Carolina in the early 90's, returned to Zimbabwe to teach and do research at an agricultural station, and, all on his own, started a school for impoverished children near his home village. The bureaucratic frustrations he experienced with the school and discrimination at the university, led him to leave Zimbabwe in August to seek work and refuge in the US. As he explained his situation to me, he was not guilty of being **anti-Mugabe**, the head of the government, but he was not adequately **pro-Mugabe**. He would have preferred to remain a-political while working for the benefit of youngsters in need of education. He requested the chance to spend a month at our farm to get some hands-on farming experience that might help him get a teaching job in sustainable agriculture. He is currently backed in North Carolina, working on a dairy farm while teaching a course in sustainable livestock management.

Help further reduced our short handedness two days a week from Judith Murphy. A long-time

member of the GVOCSA, Judith found herself between homes and asked to live here at the farm. In April, Judith plans to set off on a great adventure - she intends to hike the entire Appalachian Trail! Doing some farmwork was part of her physical training regime. Early every morning, I can hear her downstairs in the kitchen preparing food to place in a drier. She will have gourmet, organic dried food to give her energy for her trek.

I must confess that I did not contribute much to the end of the season clean up this year. I owe a big debt of gratitude to my stalwart partners, Greg and Ammie, and our fine intern, Victoria, who put things in good winter order, despite the inclement weather. They managed to reel in 4 or 5 of the 7 1/2 miles of trickle tape before deep snows buried the rest from sight. To protect them from the weather, we store wash tables, picnic tables and harvest boxes in the packing shed, and tractor implements in the big barn. Anything that will suffer from extreme cold, such as paint, left over vegetables, tractor batteries, etc., we take to our own houses. In my basement, I built a cold storage closet, insulated on the inside, where we store gladiola bulbs, seed potatoes, and root crops.

While Greg, Ammie, and Victoria were winding tape, I was on a marathon of speaking engagements that took me south, then north, then all the way to Japan. I was keynote speaker for the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association in Boone, North Carolina, where my theme was "Feeding Our Neighbors As We Would Ourselves." I also gave two workshops on CSA, and the politics of food. Next, I returned home for the last CSA harvest morning and the End of the Season Dinner. Forewarned of a frost, the farm team had spent many hours picking all the greens for the final shares in advance. For those of you who

missed the dinner, it was another in our series of annual community celebrations, sumptuous potlucks with a hundred or so dishes from which to choose. I showed slides, recent photos by Marilyn Anderson and me of the farm and distribution. Before dawn the next morning, I flew off to New Hampshire to the Soul of Agriculture Conference where I gave the concluding keynote, "Linking Social Justice and Food Safety." Finally, I flew to Japan as a guest of the Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA). I spent ten days speaking about CSA, touring organic farms and meeting with organic farmers and farm members. For a complete account of the trip, please visit the GVOCSA website. I will show slides and talk about my trip at 2 pm on Sunday afternoon, March 16, at Marianne Simmons' house, 49 Reservoir St., Rochester. You are all welcome to attend.

As usual, in December, we complete our accounts for the season and develop a budget for the coming year. Financially, the farm is in healthy condition. Although we spent more money than we had planned on additional irrigation tape and a new filter, we did not spend all the money we had budgeted on interns since we only found one. Through our own savings and member contributions to the capital

## **NEWS**

*Volume 13 Issue No.1*

### **Editors:**

Mark Pierce  
mark.pierce@rochester.edu

Marianne Tracy  
marianne\_tracy@urmc.rochester.edu

Pat Mannix  
girafepm@aol.com

### **Published bi-monthly by:**

Politics of Food  
Genesee Valley Organic Community  
Supported Agriculture (GVOCSA)  
121 N. Fitzhugh Street  
Rochester, New York 14614

budget, we were able to purchase a new (second-hand) mower, a brand new transplanter, and a Lely cultivator, that will reduce hand weeding. Compared to many farms, Peacework is relatively efficient, with a lower percentage of our revenues going to production expenses, and a higher percentage to farmer salaries. All your help with harvest and distribution keeps our labor expenses down. Greg and Ammie have been building equity in the farm as I reduce mine since I put up all the initial investment to start Peacework. Our goal is to have equal ownership in a few more years.

We really need the help of two interns. So far, we have found one, a young man named Chris McCallam from Pennsylvania. We are interviewing more candidates in early February.

Ammie, Greg and I enter this New Year with hope for a decent growing season. Farmers are a little like gamblers: we continue to believe that someday we will win. Unlike gamblers, however, we do not leave this entirely up to fate. We spend part of our winters improving our skills by attending conferences and workshops, and researching new equipment and vegetable varieties. We plan to purchase more high volume trickle tape, a gauge for measuring soil moisture to improve our timing of irrigation, and a big water tank to even out water flow. We would like to improve the gutters on the big red barn so that we can also catch rainwater for irrigation. To cut down on the time we spend planting, we are shopping for seeders that we can mount on a tractor instead of doing all the seeding by hand.

So we hope you will join us again in our "Consumer-Farmer Partnership," where "On the way to your stomach, something happens to your soul!" In this winter of grim news from so many parts of the

world, at least we can look forward to a lush market garden of vibrant, healthy plants to feed our growing community for a sustainable future.



## **Organically Grown Seed: What Is the Cost to Us?**

*By Greg Palmer*

At Peacework Organic Farm, we grow vegetables, as you might surmise. To please our customers and minimize risks from crop failure, we grow a large number of different crops from arugula to zucchini. The diversity on our farm becomes even more wondrous when one thinks of the several varieties of each crop we grow. We also plant cover crops to help feed the soil, minimize erosion, and suppress weed growth. Growing these crops requires planting seeds every year. (We're growing only a few perennials, such as rhubarb.)

We do not produce most of our own seed because we grow so many varieties, and about half are hybrids. Producing seed in quantity -- especially hybrid seed, is a highly specialized type of farming in itself. This means we buy most of our seed from off-farm sources and, as for all organic farmers, this is becoming a more complicated and expensive part of what we do.

Several developments over the past decade or so have changed the way seeds are produced, distributed, and marketed. These include a continuing consolidation of the seed industry, the merging of the seed industry into the even more concentrated chemical and pharmaceutical industries, the extension of patent and copyright law to include plant DNA and seed varieties, and the use of genetic engineering to introduce radically unrelated genetic material into plants and seeds. In October of 2002, with the implementation of the final rule of the National

Organic Program, these standards require the use of organically grown seed when commercially available. Until now, organic standards allowed the use of conventionally produced seeds provided they were not genetically engineered or coated or dusted with synthetic pesticides or fungicides. However, as the giant chemical and pharmaceutical corporations' seed company subsidiaries have produced more and more genetically engineered seeds, the incapacity of humans to successfully segregate normal seed from GMO seed or to prevent contamination of future seed generations from cross-pollination has become highly evident.

Resisting this trend are organic and sustainable farmers and, more particularly those farmers whose farms are certified organic who have agreed to follow organic production standards (as we do at Peacework). Our use, as organic farmers, of organically grown seed is certainly a good thing. At this point in time, though, the commercial availability of organically grown seed, especially hybrid seed, is quite limited. To quote CR Lawn, founder of Fedco Seeds, the National Organic Program's seed rule is "ahead of the industry. Most of the companies that control hybrid production have not shown much interest in organics." So far, organic seed production is in the hands of small growers producing mostly open-pollinated varieties. The number of growers is small (but increasing), the volume of seed produced is small (but increasing), and the quality of seed is inconsistent (but improving). The price of these seeds ranges from slightly higher to more than five times the cost of conventional seed and prices can fluctuate wildly from year to year. All of these are normal characteristics of a young, emerging industry. We feel Peacework Organic Farm, within the limits of its budget, should support this new industry, and

perhaps, in the future, share in its opportunities.

Our certifying organization, NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC, requires growers to "contact three sources for seed. If it cannot be found certified organic, then untreated [seed] may be used. If it is available organically but if it is 3-5 times the cost, the quality is poor or the quantity is not available, then untreated seed may be used. The attempts to locate seed must be documented." At Peacework, we have decided that since organic growers typically receive a 15-20% premium over conventional prices for produce, we can afford to pay a 15-20% premium for good quality organic seed. We may pay more than this to buy a very small amount of seed to trial a new variety or to test the quality of seed of a variety newly available organically.

In practice, what this all means is more time spent by us reading seed catalogues and doing our seed orders. Our mainstays are still Fedco Seeds with Johnny's Seeds as runner-up. Fedco, a co-op, has revised its catalogue this year to include a separate organic section. It also indicates which of its other seed selections are sustainably grown but not certified organic. Fedco actively encourages growers to produce organically grown seed and is "going to pay our growers more for certified organic" in hopes of "encouraging some of our growers, particularly the small farm growers, by the premium, to get certified". Fedco is truly a leader in

### Medicinal Herbs

Would you like to get Medicinal Herbs?

If you'd like to get medicinal herbs from the farm such as burdock, yellow dock, mullein, motherwort, St. Johnsword, etc., call or email the farm.

creating a viable market for organically grown seeds. We also buy from smaller seed companies such as High Mowing Seed, Seed Savers Exchange, Pine Tree Seeds, Moose Tubers, Bountiful Gardens, and Seeds of Change. From these companies, we have purchased significant quantities of organic bean, lettuce, arugula, cilantro, potato, and melon seed.

Much, but not all, of the organic seed we have planted so far has been satisfactory. As can also happen with conventional seed, a few varieties did not germinate well and some produced larger percentages of off-types. Also, there are, and always will be, varieties we try that turn out not to have the qualities we were looking for in flavor, coloration, or size. We are just at the beginning of this trialing process with certified organic seed.

As we find more organic seed varieties that are successful on our farm, our seed budget will increase due to the higher cost of organic seed. Saving seed on the farm can help mitigate this increase. We currently save all of our own soybean (edamame) and garlic seed. We also save some of our bean, cilantro, and flower seed. Last year, we saved some potato seed for the first time and will see how well it does in storage. Liz and I have attended several seed saving workshops during the past year in order to improve and expand our seed saving ability. Whoever does the seed production, it is "work that takes a lot of time, step by step", according to CR Lawn, who knows what of he speaks! To Peacework, and other organic farms, this translates into steadily increasing seed costs for the foreseeable future.



### Elizabeth Henderson to give slide-show of her Japan trip

This past November, Liz flew to Japan as a guest of the Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA). There she spent ten days speaking about CSA, touring organic farms and meeting with organic farmers and farm members. Liz will show slides and talk about her trip at:

2 pm on Sunday afternoon, March 16, Marianne Simmons' house, 49 Reservoir St., Rochester

*You are all welcome to attend!*

### Season Extended, \$1 Per Week Increase

For 2003, we face higher costs from rising seed and fuel prices. (See the article by Greg, elsewhere in this newsletter, on the cost of organic seed.) Reluctantly, we proposed to the GVOCSA Core that we raise fees for full shares by \$1 a week. This is our first increase in 3 years. We will also extend the season by one week, so you will get 27 weeks of vegetables instead of 26. The Core approved this change, rather than increasing the number of shares to cover the increased expenses. The farm would rather add only a few more shares, and concentrate on doing a better job for the members we have. We would also like to supply more produce to Abundance Cooperative Market, and to the new CSA in formation by Greater Rochester Urban Bounty (GRUB).

### 2002 End of Season Survey Summary

*By Elizabeth Henderson*

Thanks to the many of you (50) who took the time to fill out our End of Season Survey! We always read these very carefully to find out how we have done for the year and to get your suggestions for improvements.

A broad spectrum of old and new members responded with memberships ranging from 1 to 14 years. Over half learned of the CSA from friends, 7 from newspaper articles, 4 from Abundance, and 2 from Sierra Club presentations. The most common reason for joining was to obtain “fresh, organic produce,” followed by supporting local farmers, being part of a cooperative effort, preferring responsible sustainable agriculture, and knowing the farmers. Several people listed healthy food, pesticide free food, and care for the earth. One person liked the chance to do farm work and two people couldn’t resist our list of greens.

There were many helpful suggestions for improving the GVOCSA. Some will be easy to implement, like posting the crop list for the next week at both the farm and distribution. Some require a lot of time, such as providing recipe sheets for every week. If someone would like to do this, the farm would welcome your help! We produced the FoodBook to provide recipes, and this winter, a member will be creating a supplement on new crops, such as komatsuna and watercress.

**Communication**

The favorite mode of communication with the CSA is reading the newsletter. One person wrote in “always” next to “read the newsletter,” and another wrote, “I love newsletter - especially Elizabeth’s articles.” (Honest,

Elizabeth did not pay them.) Many people talk with others during farm work (“love the time on the farm!”) and at distribution. Hardly anyone claims to write for the newsletter, come to the farm just for fun or serve on the Core. We’ll have to fix that. And one person said that they

only 2 of the 14 partial shares said that the quantity of food is not enough. One partial would like more lettuce and another more carrots and potatoes. The number of people a full share feeds ranges from 1 or 2 to 9. Partial shares feed from 1 to 3 people. On quality, many people wrote “good,” “excellent,” “fresh and delicious,” and one said, “fabulous, except for aphids.” Another member even liked the aphids, commenting, “above average, even the bugs!” No one protested about the price of shares. Most said the price is okay, or worthwhile even if a bit of a stretch. Other comments: “wonder if it’s fair to farmers,” “considering quality of produce, the cost is reasonable,” “good value even in lean season,” and “food for stomach, mind, soul.”

**Scheduling and Distribution**

Most respondents are satisfied with the scheduling process, though two suggested we put it on-line and let members mail in checks. (A major website overhaul is underway. You will hear about this soon!)

Two people would like pickup to be earlier and two want it later. One person commented: “hard for working people to work on week day.” Distribution received many complements: “I love it, the coop, and that extra shares are bagged for those who forget.” Many members find the next day pick up useful, but quite a few did not seem to know about it or were foggy about the process.

**Peacework Farm Vision Statement**

“We envision the creation of a land-based community of people of diverse ages, backgrounds and incomes, farmers and non-farmers, who are committed to love, justice, equality, democracy and cooperation, and honor the intrinsic value of nature and food, and the dignity of labor.

The members of this community will work gently together to learn and teach others to live sustainably, in the broadest sense, for the health of all living creatures and the planet. We will practice an agriculture that supports a whole, healthy, sustainable and loving community.”

communicate: “through the amazing veggies - eating, looking, feeling and seeing them! Wow.” Those who attended our orientation found it helpful. The level of comfort with farmers, distribution coordinators and schedulers seems to be high.

**Shares**

None of the 32 full shares and

## Abundance

There seem to be about equal numbers of Abundance members and non-members, but most Rochester members shop at the store.

## Farm work

Here are some of the comments about why members like farm work:

*...hard, meaningful work, organized, camaraderie*

*It's nice to involve children so they see the effort involved in growing the food.*

Being outdoors, chatting with people of various backgrounds, and finding common ground. Getting dirty and getting clean. The feeling of connection with others and with the earth. The chance to witness the miracle of germination and growth.

Most of the things people don't like about farm work are beyond our control - too cold, too hot, mosquitoes, and the long drive. This year, only two people complained about the farm work running late making it hard for them to get back to the city. We made a real effort to stop on time. One person thinks our lovely in-house outhouse is "gross." And one person exclaimed: "I like that I come away appreciating the amount of hard work it takes to be a farmer. I'm happy to only have to work 1-2 shifts per season!"

Two people said they would prefer to work one full day, instead of two half days, to reduce driving to the farm. The problem with this is that the farm depends on members to transport the vegetables into the city. If members do not transport the food, then we farmers will have to do it.

Children who like the farm work outnumber children who do not like it by 4 to 1. In a few families, half the children like the farm, and some like it some of the time.

## Rejoining

Almost everyone plans to rejoin, except one family, which might do its own garden, and one person who wrote, "Looking for CSA with less work and more produce." (Try the Porter Farm in Elba.) One family will only rejoin if they can pick up on Thursdays and work on Sundays. We can allow a few people to do this, but if too many people choose this combination, we won't have any pickers for Thursdays.



## Food System Questions

For questions on the positive economic impact of buying from local farms, the healthfulness of fresh foods, the danger of GMOs, and the safety of organically grown foods, most respondents *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*. Five people neither agree nor disagree on the GMO question. I think we all would like more information about whether GMOs are harmful before we make them a steady part of our diet.

There was the widest range of responses to the question of whether the USDA can be trusted to protect organic integrity by running the National Organic Program: Strongly Agree: 1; Agree: 2, In the middle on this: 12, Disagree: 16, and Strongly Disagree:

10. The comments included: "need more info," and "Bigger is worse!" Clearly there is significant suspicion that USDA may be harmful to the integrity of organic food.

Members have many additional concerns about the current food system:

- inhumane treatment of migrant farm workers and of farm animals
- squeezing out of small farmers
- loss of farmland, sprawl
  - excessive use of antibiotics, hormones (B<sub>g</sub>H in milk) and additives
  - safety for workers, fair wages for farm workers
  - cleanliness of food system
  - importation of food with even worse pesticides than allowed in US agriculture.
- quality of water supply, and chemical runoff into water
- too much costly packaging
- poor food in schools and daycares
- "Globalization" of food production is one of the current trends that undercuts American farmers. Excessive artificial inputs and mono-cultural growing practices have literally killed the soil. Powerful lobbies, like truckers, in the interests of their own job security, work against local consumption of local food. Large-scale food production on industrial farms alienates us from the earth."

Thanks again, for your good ideas! We need everyone's help to make this CSA fit conveniently into all our lives.



# PLANT ORDER FORM

Peacework will grow these plants in our greenhouse using untreated seed and our own compost-based potting soil. We will deliver them to Rochester in the spring approximately 5/22.

**PRICES:** \$1.50 per single plant (larger plant in 4 in. pot)  
 \$2.00 per flat (6 smaller plants *to a flat*)  
 A=annual P=perennial

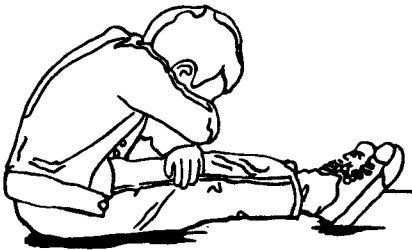
VARIETY	# OF SINGLE PLANTS	# OF FLATS	AMT. PAID
<b>Herbs:</b>			
Parsley (A)			
Basil (A)			
French Thyme (P)			
Rosemary (P)			
Sage (P)			
<b>Flowers:</b>			
Marigolds (A)			
Petunias (A)			
Nasturtiums (A)			
Snapdragons (A)			
Columbines (P)			
Hollyhocks (P)			
Delphiniums (P)			
Sweet Williams (P)			
Echinacea (P)			
<b>Vegetables:</b>			
Red Cherry Tomato (A)			
Yellow Cherry Tomato (A)			
Regular Red Tomato (A)			
Broccoli (A)			
Sweet Peppers (A)			
Other			

Make checks payable to Elizabeth Henderson. Send to: Peacework Organic Farm, 2218 Welcher Rd., Newark NY 14513  
**DEADLINE FOR ADVANCE ORDERS: MARCH 1, 2003**

*Sundays and  
Thursdays  
just aren't  
as much fun  
any more!*

**Don't stay away  
or wait for May.  
Keep the blahs at bay.  
Stop in today!**

*I **REALLY** miss  
all the folks  
from GVOCSA  
so much!*



**STOP IN AND SAY HELLO!**  
The weather outside is frightful but at  
Abundance it's so delightful: friendly folks,  
good values, new products every week,  
and live music on Saturdays!



62 Marshall Street off Monroe  
Rochester, NY 14607  
585-454-COOP (voice & tty)  
585-454-0343 (fax)  
[www.abundancecoop.com](http://www.abundancecoop.com)  
*Shop Abundance First*

**OPEN  
SEVEN DAYS**  
M-F 8-8  
Sat 9-6  
Sun 11-6

Politics of Food Program, Inc  
**GVOCSA**  
121 N. Fitzhugh Street  
Rochester, NY 14614

**Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Rochester, NY  
Permit No. 536**

**Return Service Requested**