



WEEKLY NOTE Week of July 11th, 2016

Spring Share Survey Results Time!

The results are in, the survey is closed. Now it's time to find out what you all had to say about the Spring Share!

I recently had a friend introduce me to **The 80% rule**. "If," she said "you satisfy 80% of the people 80% of the time, you'll be in a good place". So as we reviewed the Spring Share Survey, we kept that comment in mind and feel pretty good about the results.

The most important issues to us related to your experience with the quality, quantity, diversity and price. Here's a quick snapshot:

Quality - 100% of members responding reported the quality of vegetables met or exceed their expectations

BINGO - we're well over our 80% mark!

Quantity - 80% of responses reported the quantity delivered was a good fit for their consumption patterns

BINGO AGAIN! **We hit 80%**
 There were a couple of comments specific to the quantity of lettuce ...as in it was a lot! Two comments asking for more rhubarb. And weaving in comments from some of the other questions that relate to this, we also heard...request for more kohlrabi, peas, spinach, less radish, garlic scapes, more arugula and mustard greens, more broccoli, more carrots.

Diversity - 89 % responding reported satisfaction with the vegetable diversity included with the Spring Share. Specific comments are reflected in my notes under the Quantity note above.

BINGO a 3rd time **We're on a roll!**

Value of share - 70% responding report, without hesitation that the share is a good value and they'd recommend it to a friend. Allowing members to acknowledge that, for some, it's a stretch for their food budget, yet they would sign up again, we reached 100% responses.

The remaining questions had to do with...

Weekly Note - strong thumbs up from responses and generally keep on keeping on! I fully intend to.

Pick up schedule - strong response that the schedule is, overall, working well.

How much the farm source of produce fills member needs vs. grocer, farmers market, or home garden.

Interesting that, according to responses, the farm source supplied the majority of veggies for 2/3 of responses. The next most important source was the grocer over the market and both well over home gardens during this early part of the growing season.

Length of membership of respondents - A really nice mixture of all years of experience. 27% were first year members, 36% have been members for 2-3 years, and the remaining 38% have been members for more than 4 years. We feel this is important to give a good grounding and balance of perspective to all responses.

This summary comes from a thorough review Tim and I did this past weekend. We have the notes on file and will refer to this survey when we get deeper into 2017 planning late this fall.

Here are a few of our comments, to share with you what the spring share looked like from the farmers' perspective:

- Overall, it was a good season - pretty close match between actual delivered and our plan. We were pleased, from this end, on quality of most items
- The radish crop did not meet our quality standards and we will be trying some new varieties next year.
- We do want to cut back on the lettuce a bit and introduce some other greens. Several other producers have suggested we introduce Pac Choi in the Spring Share. We'll be consulting our seed catalog for ideas to introduce a bit more variety into the Spring Share.
- Peas - oh, my. These have perpetually been a challenge. We've experienced inconsistent germination with up and down early season temperatures, predation from ground squirrels and deer, and excessive labor demands in our effort to protecting them. We love them and when we get a good crop everyone is thrilled, but after the past two years in particular, we are seriously considering dropping them from our share. But if we do drop them, we will be working to find a delicious, sweet substitute vegetable.
- Carrots - yes, that was a surprise treat we hadn't really planned on, but glad it worked as the peas were a short fall. And, because it did work so well, we will be discussing holding carrots over specifically for a small quantity inclusion in Spring Share. But now that you've had a taste, we know you'll look forward to this season's carrots.

THANK YOU ALL WHO TOOK THE TIME TO RESPOND!

At a total of 47 responses, this survey reflects almost 62% response rate. That's excellent result for surveys.

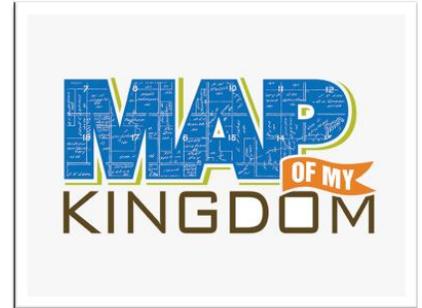
Food feature of the week

We're hearing that zucchini, cucumbers, green beans, and tomatoes are beginning to show up at the market. Have you been there?

North Iowa Fresh - of which we are a member - is continuing to make local products available in area grocers. Bill's in Garner has been expanding their purchases. If you are shopping near Garner, stop in and ask about their local products and thank them for supporting local growers! Other sources include Hy-Vee West in Mason City, Be Wellness in Clear Lake. Stop, shop, and thank there too!

Upcoming Play about Land Transition

Friday, July 29, 7 pm - Clear Lake Art Center will be hosting a showing of Map of My Kingdom - a thoughtful play about the very serious issue of land transition that Iowa is facing as our farmers age. Commissioned by Practical Farmers of Iowa and created by Mary Swander, Iowa's former Poet Laureate, this one person play, followed by a panel discussion, is sure to stimulate discussion. Play is free and open to the public.



Here are a few images capturing what's up at the farm....

Early broccoli and cauliflower are now a memory - mowed off and tilled up. This field now sports cabbage, peppers and a brand new planting of fall broccoli along with chinese cabbage and pac choi for our Go Gourmet shares.



But oh, my, the Pac Choi first planting took a direct hit from hungry flea beetles. The plants were beautiful when we set them out, but beetles that we had noticed on the nearby cabbage took no time to find and mow down the tender, young plants. Thankfully, we had not planted all the starts we had. Those held over plants got planted a couple of days later and immediately covered so we still should have some Pac Choi.



The cucumbers are flowering.

the purple cabbage is filling out.





Top left: tomatoes filling out;
 Middle: Tim covering fall broccoli; top right: 2nd planting bean sprouts breaking through; bottom right: field of carrots (7 beds) freshly weeded.



Soil & Soul - Looking for the Hope



The past several weeks have included repeated shooting incidents in this country that have ripped at our sense of who we are as a nation - not to mention violence that continues to be reported from across the globe. Amidst this growing violence, a persistent question is raised - "where is the hope?" Our daughter and her fiancé, Katrina, live in St. Paul, just blocks away from the location of the recent Falcon Heights, MN shooting and feel the grief of the community reacting to this tragedy. Katrina has participated in some of the subsequent protests. It's unclear, they both reflected in a recent conversation, whether a path toward hope can be found.

Shortly after the Falcon Heights shooting there was the shooting of five police in Dallas. The list of violence in this country is long and the angst deep. We are all looking for the hope.

We propose in our own farm slogan a connection between raising healthy food and raising hope. Rich Pirog, who led Iowa's early food system work and now heads up the food system work in Michigan, has been increasingly urging food system leaders to include "equity" into their food system strategies. "We will never realize a just food system," Rich stated at a meeting of local food coordinators last summer, "unless we address the equity issues throughout the food system." By this Rich was referring not only to equity of food access, fair wages for farmers, but equity for farm workers, food processors, food service workers, etc. The food system is complex and increasingly finding itself at the intersection of powerful issues of health, environment, and economic development. This powerful junction elevates food system work toward a significant social movement.

Sometimes the work at farms such as One Step at a Time Gardens looks as specific as weeding all seven beds of carrots. At other times the farms are seen as one of the many food system cogs carving out space for a whole new set of relationship priorities.

The same kind of whole system thinking and bold, visionary leadership needed to address food system issues is needed to address race relations and violence in this country. One step at a time we look for hope.