

# Sharing Shalom

Vol. 10, Issue 1

Spring 2008



## Why I Garden

by Erin Kindy

A rainy day in Spring is a great day for some reflection. This will be my third year as Plow Creek Farm's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) gardener. What makes me want to continue? I think there are three main reasons: I believe in local food, I love working with others, and plants offer life.

"So, what's so great about local food?," you may wonder. I love the way buying food grown locally allows me to connect with the people who produce it and builds community in my life. When I pour my milk, I like knowing Ellen gets up early every morning to milk her goats, each with its own name. I know the impact it has on her family when one of her goats get sick and dies. I like knowing who has touched my food before me and knowing it has not traveled 1,500 miles, the average distance food travels before it reaches your plate. You know how you feel after a long trip; well, you can be sure it doesn't do good things for your food either!

The produce we grow in the Plow Creek Farm Valley Garden doesn't exclusively go to our CSA customers, but much of it does. The farm sells 50 shares of produce to individuals and families who then receive a box per week of whatever is in season. The share includes vegetables and herbs as well as in-season berries or melons. This allows customers to eat food when it's fresh, know who is growing their food, and bring their vegetable source closer to home. Next season we hope to add more local customers to our CSA shares. If you're interested, please contact us at [farm@plowcreek.org](mailto:farm@plowcreek.org) or call (815) 646-4862.

I enjoy the challenges and joy of working with others. Some of my best gardening memories from the last two seasons come from the people I worked with. Gardening includes numerous repetitious tasks, so you

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## Eat Food

by Heather Munn

Why am I proud to be working on Plow Creek Farm? The answer might sound funny, but here it is: I grew up in France. My parents worked there (and still do) as missionaries. It's a lovely place, I enjoyed growing up there, liked the food a lot. And that's the thing.

In French culture, food is a big deal. Now I know that might make you think of snobs and caviar, but please don't. Think of asparagus served hours after it's picked, shiny with melted butter; think of roasted red bell peppers with olive oil and basil and grilled chicken with rosemary; think of a man going out into his field to pick his melons for market at the peak of ripeness, meltingly sweet. That's how it was where I grew up. Forget caviar.

And Plow Creek's not really so different from where I grew up.

I know that if you're reading this newsletter you've probably heard of the local food movement; of the insanity of shipping "fresh" food halfway across the world, and the importance of knowing where your food comes from. In France that's not a movement; it's a tradition. Everyone knows that the strawberries from Spain (their equivalent of Mexico!) won't be as good, you should wait for the local strawberries to come in, and that if you get your melons from the farmer down the road they'll be perfect. Everyone knows if you're making chicken for guests you'd better go for free-range, because cooped-up chicken is just kind of tasteless. Everyone knows lettuce is no good in winter.

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**We're getting personal in this issue!  
So you can get to know the folks  
who are growing your food.**

## Why I Garden (continued)

don't have to concentrate so much on the job and can converse with people you're working with. Last season, while we picked peas or beans or packed produce for the CSA, I enjoyed countless conversations with Katie Piché, a summer helper and friend visiting from the Church of the Sojourners community in San Francisco. And I live near most of the people I work with, so I get to share life with them outside working hours, too. Long term Plow Creek Farm workers also choose to share the profits of the farm in a way that meets the needs of all our families and is not based on an hourly wage rate. Each family receives a percentage of farm income based on their needs. This allows us to care for each other's needs in a way an hourly wage would not, and more closely links our income to the natural risks and uncertainties of farming. So we are encouraged to trust that our needs will be met through God's provision.

The flexibility of the farm also allows us to welcome helpers and interns for periods of time during the growing season. I'm most excited about welcoming my new husband Carlos Mucú. He's eager to see the farm grow, is a fast worker and has experience with farming, albeit different crops since he's from Guatemala.

Plants offer life, literally, and for me they offer the chance of good, life-enhancing work. I love watching the sun rise as I go to uncover the cold frame and nibbling fresh snap peas as I pick and smelling dewy cilantro about to go to market. Then there are moments when it feels like slugs or weeds are overtaking the garden or when it seems I can't bend over one more time. But both types of experiences make me say that everyone should connect more to their food. One way to do that is to come pick your own at Plow Creek Farm (we offer blueberries, blackberries, strawberries and raspberries in season) or maybe grow herbs in a pot at home. At the very least, know where your food comes from. Wonder who touched it before you did, and find out. You, our communities, and the world will be better for it. •

To contact us, call:

**(815) 646-4862**

Human phone answering at these times:

**June:** Mon, Tue, Thu, Sat 9:30-11:30AM

**July - September:** Monday 9:30-11:30AM

Or leave your order or inquiry on the answering machine. We try to return all calls within a day.

## Eat Food (continued)

(They buy endives then instead. I miss endives.) Now I know there's a lot of other reasons for buying locally and from small farms—the environmental impact of shipping, the way small farmers care for the land, the riskiness of the nation's food supply being dependent on trucks and trains. But when I promote something, I like to have a reason just about anybody can get behind, and here's my reason, straight from my roots: food tastes good, and local food tastes better.

And this, too: the better it tastes, the better it is for you. I know that goes against conventional wisdom but honestly I want to question that. I'm not talking about donuts or breakfast cereal stuck together with corn syrup, I'm talking about fresh-picked corn, sun-ripe tomatoes, crisp buttercrunch lettuce, and strawberries that are deep red right to the center. The fresher and riper those things are, the better they taste *because* they're rich with nutrients your body needs. God made

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“Get your food from the ground. God made the ground, and God loves you. The food industry does not love you.”

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the fruits of the earth as a blessing for us to enjoy; and God made them taste good when they *are* good. It's only when companies mess around with what God has made, picking things green and cooking them to death and emulsifying the tasteless mixture with unpronounceable chemicals, that they need to spike our food with fattening corn syrup to make it taste good. As a writer whose name I forget put it, “Get your food from the ground. God made the ground, and God loves you. The food industry does not love you.”

There's a new book I like on this subject, called *In Defense of Food*, by Michael Pollan. One of his main pieces of advice is “Eat food.” (I love that.) It sounds obvious—and it is—but by “food” he doesn't just mean anything edible, he means things that are recognizable as food. Specifically he suggests eating only things that your grandmother would feel comfortable serving up. You can see where that would take you—the products of the food industry, Go-Gurt, Power Bars, rainbow-colored cereals, anything with carrageenan or guar gum or chemicals with foot-long names, are out. Fresh raspberries, watermelon, beef and eggs and tomatoes and bell peppers are in. I agree. Grandma was right.

And—I just can't resist saying this: I hope you eat our strawberries with real cream. And smile. Nothing God made is bad for you. •

## Farm News

We have lots of new arrivals at Plow Creek Farm this year. A flock of goslings was delivered recently, to help weed our strawberry rows (when the geese get a little bigger—but don't worry, they won't be out there when you're picking!). We hear geese eat weeds but not strawberry plants. There also will be four interns with us this season, and a few more young people joining us from Reba Place Fellowship near Chicago, to help weed also. And pick berries and tomatoes and melons.... (They're not expected to eat the weeds.)

Improvements to the farm include a greenhouse that we built this spring (pictured below). It's full of young plants already. The greenhouse will save us the cost of paying someone else to start our plants for us. And, after years of being on life support, our big tractor finally gave up the ghost. It was pretty important to the farm, used for preparing fields and planting strawberries, among other things. With a kind loan from some friends, we were able to purchase another used one.

And you won't be seeing Kevin and Lorie Behrens out in the fields this summer. They and their kids moved to Michigan last fall. We'll miss them. And do our best to care for our customers as well as Kevin did the past several years. •

For the latest farm info: [www.plowcreekfarm.com](http://www.plowcreekfarm.com)



### Our Strawberry Varieties

The first berries to appear and perhaps the best-tasting, **Earliglow**, are deep red, uniformly colored and known for their sweet flavor. **Northeaster** is another early berry with a strong flavor and aroma, good for eating fresh or frozen. **Honeoye** is our most misspelled strawberry. The berries are large, firm, and bright red with an "old-fashioned" strawberry flavor. **Allstar** bears large, very firm fruit with a mild, sweet flavor. And our most popular variety, **Jewel**, has very large, excellent quality fruit, delicious for desserts and freezing.

## Across The Fence Row

Thoughts from the Farm Manager

Thirty years! Give or take a year, that's how long Plow Creek Farm has been selling strawberries and other produce. Much has changed; people, equipment, and ideas have come and gone. Other things remain constant. Farming, no matter what, requires a lot of hard work, sweat, and a certain amount of risk taking. Nevertheless, our underlying commitment at Plow Creek Farm is to grow good quality, healthy food for the local direct market.

In 2008 rising fuel costs, and other associated costs, bring their own set of challenges to farming. Because of this, you will likely see a slight increase in the prices of Plow Creek produce. At the same time we want to be sensitive to the fact that all your food costs are climbing. I hope that we can still work out a trade: our hard work and sweat in exchange for your dollars. We will also gain great satisfaction in knowing that you will walk away from our berry patches, farm stand, or farmers' market with fresh produce that's good for you.

We believe in what we are doing. To show that, we:

- Planted about 90 new blueberry plants
- Invested a sum of money into a newer tractor
- Put up a small greenhouse

Other people are taking notice: an energetic group of people will be joining us in the work this summer, learning from what we do. Only God knows what the next thirty years will bring, or even if there will be a next thirty years. So let's take care of the life He has given us by working well and eating well. Hope to see you in the berry patch or at the farmers' markets some time this year!

*Neil Horning*

Manager  
Plow Creek Farm

...and don't forget:

homemade bread, rolls,  
and cookies from

**Plow Creek Bakery**

at market, or call to order:  
**(815) 646-4851**



## 2008 Market Locations

### Market Barn at the Farm

Mon - Sat: 9AM - 5PM

### Darius Miller Park, Princeton

**Tue: 3:30 - 7PM NEW TIME!**

Sat: 8:30AM - 1PM (kickoff: May 24)

### Valley Flowers, Spring Valley

Thu: 8AM - Noon (kickoff: June 12)

### Riverfront Market, Peoria

Sat: 8AM - Noon (kickoff: July 5)

### 15th Annual Strawberry Festival

Tiskilwa West Park  
Sat June 14th, 11 to 2



## 2008 U-Pick Schedule

All schedules subject to change due to weather, shortage or abundance.

Daily updates at [www.plowcreekfarm.com](http://www.plowcreekfarm.com)

### Strawberry U-Pick (June)

Mon - Sat 7AM - Noon and some evenings 4 - 8PM

### Blueberry U-Pick (July)

Mon, Wed, Sat 7AM - Noon; Thu 4 - 8PM

### Blackberry U-Pick (July-Aug)

follows blueberry schedule

### Raspberry U-Pick (July-Sept)

Mon - Sat 7AM - 6PM, evenings by appointment

### Concord Grape U-pick (Sept)

by appointment

We offer volume discounts on >50 lb. strawberries, or >10 pt. raspberries/blackberries



## 2008 Ready-Pick Schedule

### Strawberry Order Pickup:

Mon, Tue, Thu, Sat 9:30AM - Noon at the farm

For Info and Ordering, call

**(815) 646-4862**

visit [www.plowcreekfarm.com](http://www.plowcreekfarm.com)

or e-mail: [orders@plowcreek.org](mailto:orders@plowcreek.org)



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