

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

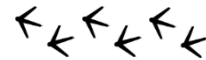
June 2014



Haymaking

We need hay for bedding, and we have acres of field that can be used for haying on our property. The only thing we don't have is a hay baler, or a sickle bar mower. These tools essentially cut and bale the hay when you pull them along the field with your tractor. I was determined to get this hay, so I decided that I would use a scythe if I had to. After about an hour of this and little progress, I gave up and we called our neighbor, Ben, for some help.

Ben brought over his tractor, a brush hog, and some trusty tools. When we bought the property, we inherited an old hay rake from the 1930's. We tinkered with it and got it up and running. This machine combs through the cut field and pushes the straw into long lines, or windrows. Then we let the sun bake it for a day, and ran the machine through again in order to turn the hay over and dry the other side. If straw is not completely dry when stored, the decomposition can heat it up so much that it catches fire. Many barns have burned down this way.



The final step was to drive our truck into the field and load the hay onto the back with our pitchforks. We then unloaded it into the barn, hacking and coughing as straw flew through the air. I wasn't sure how much we would get out of this endeavor, but just a fourth of the field yielded enough for the winter. This, of course, means that next year we can get some cows! If we have enough to feed them through the summer and winter (which, we learned, we do), then bring it on.

Invasion of the Potato Beetle

It is the year of the potato beetle. It seems like every year has its particular pest, and this year the Colorado potato beetle has descended in full force upon our potatoes. It is an ugly, squishy red bug that eats the leaves of the potato plant and decimates it before it can finish growing the potatoes. Since we grow organically, we have to pick them off by hand. Every few days we comb through the potatoes and brush the icky things off into cups filled with soapy water (to stop them from crawling out). So far, we seem to be winning the battle.

New Extern

Two Tracks has an extern this summer. She learned about us through a program at Kalamazoo College (where I studied) that links students with alumni.

Being at Two Tracks has been quite an experience so far! Upon arrival, I was greeted by a fleet of chickens, wandering around the yard as if they too operated the farm. After taking a tour (often accompanied by either a cat or chicken), I knew that these next few weeks were going to be exciting. I decided to do my internship on a farm instead of in a hospital, political campaign, or law office because of my interest in just, local, and sustainable food systems. At K College, I am involved in a student organization that strives to connect students with food grown locally and sustainably. Through my work with that organization, I have come to the conclusion that I would like to pursue a career in food systems. I then decided that having farm experience would not only give me essential knowledge on sustainable agriculture, but the opportunity to see if farming was the way in which I would involve myself in sustainable food systems. Being on Two Tracks is allowing me to see two sides of sustainable agriculture: produce and meat production. In the upcoming weeks, I'm looking forward to spending more time at Two Tracks as well as interacting with other community members involved in different facets of food production! – *Greta Herrin*



Market

Chelsea and Grass Lake markets are going strong this year. Taik has been a market rockstar and we are nearly out of pork already, although we are due to get some more next week. The Grass Lake Diner – an excellent place to check out for breakfast/lunch if you haven't already – has also been purchasing some vegetables from the farm. Hope to see some of you there!

(Below: Two Tracks stand at market)

(Above: Greta, the new extern, takes tractor lessons from Ben)

