

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

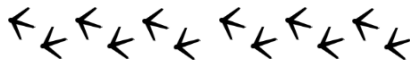
October/November 2014



I'LL HUFF AND I'LL PUFF

I felt like I was in the story of the three little pigs when we began construction of the pigs' house for the winter. Last year we kept the pigs in the barn and, while warm-ish, it was messy. I ended up cleaning their bedding quite often and it was hard to give them access to the outdoors. That is why this year we are changing tactics and bringing the shelter to them in the field. Taik and I built a straw bale hut in the middle of the pig pen out of the hay we bailed earlier this summer. So they wouldn't eat

it, we wrapped the sides of the hut in fencing, kind of like a fence wall. We filled the inside with more straw so they can snuggle down at night. Just in time too because frost is starting to show in the early mornings.



GARLIC PLANTING

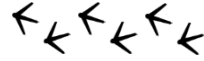
What do the Fourth of July and Halloween have in common? Garlic, of course! Plant by Halloween and harvest by the 4th of July. We started planting just before the end of October. Taik dug trenches with a hoe about four inches deep and placed each clove, pointy side up, in a long line down the trench. As a general rule of thumb, I try to plant seeds twice the depth of their size. So a two inch clove of garlic should be set in a four inch deep trench. We used the garlic we had grown last year as seed. That's something nice about garlic; the seeds are super easy to save. However, if you are going to plant some yourself, don't buy it from the grocery store. Buy it from a seed supplier or from the farmers market. In order to clean the cloves, most grocery stores douse them in chemicals and gauge out the dirt around the roots, which also destroys its ability to grow back.



The garlic will sprout up in the Spring and there's not much to do to it besides harvest in July. However, sometime before July you must pull the scapes – or flower shoots – out of the middle of the plant, or else all the energy will go into the flower and not into the garlic bulb. They are also delicious and have a mild garlic flavor. I am looking forward to next year's batch.

GOODBYE MARKETS

Sadly, the time has come for the summer farmers markets to close. This year has been great for us at Chelsea and Grass Lake and we are going to produce a lot more next year in order to keep up with demand. If you are like me and simply can't wait until next year for your markets, check out Dexter, Ypsi, Ann Arbor, and Saline for the winter markets. Remarkably, you can still find greens in the dead of winter from those farms that practice hoop house production.



WINTER IS COMING

Winterizing a farm is a whole production. At Capella Farm, the process is similar to many other small diversified farms in Michigan. We needed to get everything prepared before the major frost set in, otherwise we would lose many of the crops. The 'shut down' process includes sealing up the hoophouses for the winter and repairing any tears in the plastic. We covered the crops that are still outdoors (cabbage, rutabaga, turnips, and choy) with row cover – basically a very large blanket to trap the heat. Then we pulled all of the crops that are ready – more turnips, radishes, parsnips – and put them into storage, where we can access them and clean them for market as needed. Then there is the mulching of garlic, leeks, and the remaining parsnips with straw in order to keep them from freezing. These crops will remain in the ground until spring, when we remove the mulch in order to harvest. Leaving them in the ground, rather than in the barn for storage, will keep them fresher.

Don't forget to come visit us on turkey pickup day starting at 6 pm on Tues, November 25th. This is the last newsletter for a while, so thank you all for your wonderful support this season. We couldn't have done it without you and we will miss working with you. Until next time, Be Well!

-Stephanie and Taik