

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

February 2016

2016 CSA

Two Tracks will be continuing its CSA this summer 2016. We begin in June and run through November. The CSA will be similar to last year, with shares that include pork, chicken, or both. Please see the website for more information and for registration details.

www.twotracksacres.com



GETTING READY FOR SUMMER - EQUIPMENT REPAIR

Winter is a time for repairing, planning, and learning. I got a lesson in equipment repair with our neighbor Ben, who invited me to help attach new teeth to the sickle bar mower. This is a scary looking tool, and reminds me of the movie jaws. The toothlike blades slide back and forth to cut the grass for haymaking. Since the old ones were rusted and not very sharp, we replaced them with brand new steel triangles that run all along the blade, like attaching individual teeth on a large saw. This will allow us to cut and harvest a lot more hay this summer.



STEER #2

We've acquired a friend for our baby steer Short Round: another calf that follows him everywhere. The two are inseparable. These are Guernsey calves – a breed best for producing milk. Since they are males, it was easy to convince the farmer to sell us the pair because he can't use them in his milk herd. However, they don't grow as quickly or have as much muscle as the breeds meant for meat. We are excited to start researching heritage breeds and get some meat cows next time.



IN FOR THE LONG HAUL

I'm becoming better at thinking about the farm in terms of long term planting. We are putting in perennials each year; a luxury we have because we own our land rather than lease it. I wouldn't want to invest a lot of money in perennials if there was the possibility we'd have to leave it all behind in a few years. This is an obstacle many beginning farmers face these days, with loans difficult to get and high land prices. It limits the products you are able to produce.



We've ordered grapes, and are looking into peaches and pears. Spring will tell us if the chestnuts survived the winter, and I'm hoping to put in a few more. We will be tilling the weedy patches on our land and sowing white clover to replace the messiness. Clover is amazing. It smothers out the weeds, adds nutrients and pulls nitrogen into the soil, and can act as a green mulch because it doesn't grow too high. Once it's established, I can plant perennials in the clover and not even worry about weeding or mulching. How awesome is that?



Above: A 2nd year grape vine

I love this time of year because it is full of possibilities, as I imagine the projects and things I want to complete over the upcoming year. Some of my big goals include putting up a large fence for the steers, and dividing it with electric wire into paddocks to improve our grazing plan. Applying for a loan to extend our 5-year land contract to a 30-year mortgage for our farm. Continuing to care for our growing family of what will include this summer: 100 turkeys, many many chickens, 2 calves, 12 pigs (maybe not all at once), 3 cats, a beagle, and of course Taik.

Time to get to work!