

OWN YOUR
FOOD.



CROMWELL VALLEY C.S.A
Organic Community Supported Agriculture

CVCSA Community Newsletter 2009 Season

JULY 11, 2009

Meet Your Farmers: Andrea Anderson

Highlights in this issue:

- Meet our Assistant Farmer
- Learn something at a workshop
- Join us for a potluck
- Go crazy with garlic
- Find out what's going on at the farm

Last month we met our Head Farmer, Matt. This month it's time to meet our Assistant Farmer, Andrea Anderson. Despite the busy-ness on the farm these days, Andrea took a break to tell us a little about herself. Let's get to know her.

Why did you decide to become a farmer?

My family has been farming as far back as you can go on both sides. I grew up in Wisconsin, on my grandparents farm, surrounded by a culture of farming and it was the very last thing I thought I'd end up doing. I went off to college, a little grad school...a little law school...did social work, fought wildfires, guided wilderness trips, climbed mountains, saw total day in Alaska, total night in Iceland, traveled Europe and was working as a litigation paralegal back in Milwaukee when I realized I was spending most of my time staring out of the window in my office thinking about the garden I revived in my parents backyard when I moved back. Around the same time I met a group of people my age that were farming organically on their families previously defunct farms and I started helping out for fun in my off time. I eventually started staying at the farm on week nights, camping in my tent and would drive to work early and shower and change before anyone else arrived. Sometimes I would forget to bring things like dress socks and would sit in meetings smiling because I knew I was secretly breaking the dress code. At that point I decided I didn't value my paycheck more than I valued doing something I actually loved and I left my job to travel and farm.

How long have you been farming?

I've been farming to some extent (baling hay, raising barns, milking cows, growing my own food) for most of my life but this is my 3rd season of intentional organic farming.

What brought you to CVCSA?

I left Wisconsin to pursue an internship in a region with a longer growing season. I did an internship in Charles County, MD and was ready to leave. The farm I was working on was exclusively a market farm because "CSA's don't make any money" but I've always valued the CSA model of agriculture so I was looking for a farm with a CSA. Most of my friends were in Baltimore and one of them happened to be Ali, the CVP field trip coordinator. She mentioned that the CSA was hiring so I went online and applied. I fell in love with the CVCSA the moment I drove up the driveway and I have enjoyed everyday spent out in the fields here.

What is your favorite thing about working for a CSA?

Community is definitely my favorite thing about working for a CSA. Nothing makes me happier than knowing the people I'm feeding.

(Cont'd on page 6)

On Garlic—Notes from the Farm

We hope you all are enjoying the bulbs of new garlic you have been receiving. Wait, back up—what is “new garlic?”

Garlic, when harvested, is typically air-dried in the shade, out of the weather for a period of about two weeks to enable better storage. We do this also, but we also like to simply dig some up and distribute directly to our members around the end of June, early July. Be careful—those new garlic bulbs are strong; you need only half as many cloves as you normally would to achieve the same level of garlic flavor in your dish.

Garlic, or *Allium sativa*, is a member of the Alliaceae plant family, or “alliums” for short. It is a close relative of shallots, scallions, onions, and leeks, or anything that smells like it and looks remotely like it.

Unlike its relatives, garlic is planted in the fall. Optimally it is planted in mid- to late October, which gives the planted cloves enough time to set down a root system but not enough time to make a lot of top growth, some of which would get frozen back in the winter. Thus we minimize the wasted energy put into top growth.

Garlic is planted simply by taking ordinary garlic bulbs and separating them into individual



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user saital.)

sections, or cloves. Each clove is planted with its butt end about an inch and a half down into the soil. It is important not to set the garlic sections upside down or they may not sprout. The soil should be dark, crumbly, rich in humus and nutrients; addition of compost or well-rotted manure is highly beneficial. The garlic cloves are set about six inches apart in rows a foot apart. Once planting is complete, a heavy mulch (six inches of leaves or wood chips, a foot of loose straw) should be added to keep the planted cloves from being heaved out of the ground by deep freezes and helps keep weeds under control.

Garlic will need to be weeded once or twice in the spring. The hard-necked varieties will send up a flower stalk, or scape, which should be removed in order to encourage the garlic to put its energy into developing a larger bulb. Yes, each individual garlic clove that we planted should give us a full bulb the following summer.

(Cont'd on page 5)

Easy Roasted Garlic

Ingredients:

- Whole heads of garlic (as many as you'd like, although if you're going to turn the oven on you might as well roast several)
- Olive oil

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Peel the outer layers of skin off the heads, leaving the individual cloves attached with skin on. Chop the end off the tip of the head, exposing the garlic cloves.

Place the heads upside down on a baking tray or in the holes of a muffin tin. Drizzle each head with olive oil. Cover or wrap with aluminum foil and bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until the heads are soft when pressed.

Allow to cool and then store in an air-tight container in the refrigerator.

(Recipe submitted by CVCSA member Ami Spencer.)

Wondering what to do with that garlic?
Try something different!

Use that Garlic!

Garlic is really versatile. Whether you roast it, crush it, press it, chop it or mince it, it makes a great addition to just about any dish. To get just the right flavor, remember that roasted garlic is sweeter, and the finer garlic is minced the stronger the flavor it will impart. Crushed or pressed garlic will have the strongest flavor because you're releasing the juices within the cloves that give them their smell and taste.

Here are just a few ideas for using up that bold, fresh garlic you've been getting in your shares.

- Toss whole cloves in with mixed vegetables and roast them all together
- Press fresh cloves or mash roasted cloves and mix into your mashed potatoes
- Whisk pressed fresh or mashed roasted cloves into salad dressings
- Add minced, chopped, roasted or pressed to homemade soups
- Stir mashed roasted garlic into butter or dips for a tasty spread
- Mince or press a few cloves and add to any sauté for bold garlic flavoring
- Make a garlicky aioli (mayonnaise spread) for your grilled burgers or vegetables
- Toss pasta with roasted or pressed garlic and some olive oil for a quick dinner

As you can see, garlic is a great food to have on hand at all times and can take something simple like mayonnaise or mashed potatoes from blah to surprising in no time!



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user clayirving.)

Mark your
calendars—
there are only a
few workshops
left! Attend one
and learn
something new.

Workshops

Upcoming workshops will teach you how to store the fresh food of summer so you have plenty in your pantry and freezer for the winter. Workshop details are below:

SUNDAY JULY 19

2 - 4 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

FREEZING FOOD 101

Learn how to deal with the July bounty of squash and other veggies by freezing some for a taste of summer next winter! Basic preparation techniques and freezing processes for optimal taste and nutrient retention will be covered. \$3 CSA members, \$5 non-members

★ KID-FRIENDLY PROGRAM

THURSDAY JULY 23

6:30 PM - 8 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

DISCOVERING WORMS

Worms are COOL, not gross! Learn some awesome facts about worms, how they help our soil and go on a worm hunt. Bring a small garden shovel and a clear, clean wide mouthed jar (at least 1 liter in size) to create your own wormery. Ages 4-8 with adult. Reservations required. \$2 CSA Members/\$4 non-members.

SATURDAY AUGUST 1

10 AM - 12 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

CANNING 101

Tomatoes are ideal candidates for canning: whole, diced, juiced, or made into sauce, salsa...Learn how to safely process and preserve tomatoes as well as other fruits and veggies in glass jars for economical, long-term storage. \$5 CSA members, \$7 non-members includes canning materials.

SATURDAY AUGUST 8

3 PM - 4 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

CHARD-O-RAMA: COOKING GREENS, DELICIOUSLY

Got chard? CVCSA head farmer Matt Belmont will be on hand to demonstrate quick, easy and delicious ways to deal with the bounty of summer greens.

Announcements

Summer Gathering and Americorps Welcome Party

We're having a midsummer potluck to celebrate the arrival of a crew of Americorps volunteers who will be spending 4.5 weeks doing all kinds of fabulous projects around the farm and park! We will also hold a brief and informal "State of the CSA" address, so come on out and enjoy the company of your CSA community.

When: Sunday, July 19th, 4:30-7:30 pm

Where: Sherwood House lawn, Cromwell Valley Park

What to bring: A dish to share, plus your own serving and eating utensils and dishes, plus whatever you would like to drink. Also bring drums and other percussion/instruments!

If you have any questions, please email Michelle (education@cvcsa.org).

Join us for a
community
potluck!

On Garlic (Cont'd from page 2)

After sending up scapes, the garlic will begin to yellow and die down. When it is died down about three-quarter of the way, we should harvest the entire crop by digging or pulling the entire plants and air-drying them in a shed, barn, porch, or other indoor location.

They should be hung in bunches or laid on top of screens suspended above the floor a few feet to allow them to air-dry out of the sun and rain for about two weeks. This process is known as "curing" and will result in bulbs that can be stored for months in a warm, dry place. Do not store them in plastic bags or in the refrigerator. Dirty garlic bulbs can be washed with water but will need extra drying if this is done. For home gardeners, it is better simply to rub or peel the dirt off when the dirt is medium dry.

Use garlic bulbs as you need them. Enjoy!

Matt



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user [thebittenword](#).)

If you see
Andrea, stop
and thank her
for her hard
work on the
farm!

Meet Andrea (Cont'd from page 1)

What would you say is the most difficult thing about being a farmer?

I would say the most difficult thing about being an organic farmer is actually not the endless amounts of work! For me, the most difficult thing about being an organic farmer is dealing with the assumptions that are made about me, as a young female, in the industry and the assumptions made about the reasons and/or motivations I have for being here. I grew up surrounded by life-long farmers who perfected, appreciated and took seriously the art of the trade. Being an organic farmer, to me, means making a conscious decision to be part of an alternative food system that values the environment and health of the community in lieu of profits and mass production. I didn't end up here with the hopes of being able to keep a garden when I'm done. I'm here to feed people.

What are your favorite things to grow and why?

I love a good growing challenge so I'll pretty much try to grow anything once. I took on a bunch of weird projects this spring for some friends growing medicinal and native herbs as well as some touchy perennials. In my personal garden, though, you'll pretty much just find culinary herbs and beneficial flowers. On a large scale I love growing greens, specifically brassicas. Kale is my favorite food.

Thanks to Andrea for sharing her farming life with us. Now that you know a little more about her, if you see Andrea around the farm, make sure to introduce yourself and thank her for her hard work.

In Your Shares

This week's share will be light—probably the lightest of the season according to Matt. Here's what you can expect:

- Potatoes
- Garlic
- Lettuce or chard (possibly)

Farm Update—Letter from the Farmers (July 14 & 18)

Your shares and the early summer trough

I know that many of you are very concerned about the small amount of food you have so far gotten for your money. This message is to address that very legitimate concern.

Most of the traditional summer crops, such as tomatoes, summer squash, cucumbers, beans, and so on, tend to be available mostly in August and September, and I'm happy to report they're doing well. But they can start earlier in a good year, by early to mid-July, especially for beans and squash. While this year's weather has not been horrendous, there is no denying that April, May, and June were among the wettest on record. CVCSA has mainly clay-based soil which turns to glue when wet. Small-seeded crops such as carrots need a finely prepared seedbed which is nearly impossible to accomplish under such conditions. So we just didn't plant any parsnips or spring carrots. Larger-seeded crops such as peas and potatoes can do better, but for a time we simply could not work the ground except just to crack it open with our "subsoiler." So we just threw the seeds on top of the ground and dropped compost or leaves on top of them. Other crops were started from seed in the greenhouse and transplanted. We managed this with some difficulty in our uppermost field, since it dries out more quickly than some of our other fields, but our squashes had to wait until late June before the ground dried enough to work the area. Our first field tomatoes were simply planted in the muck with black plastic thrown over them. All in all, considering the circumstances, these crops are not doing badly, especially the tomatoes, but they will take another 2-3 weeks to mature.

Our greenhouses, on the other hand, are stuffed full of tomato plants gone crazy, and your first tomatoes will probably come from them.

Our strawberries, which started out with so much promise, were ruined by moisture-induced grey mold and small black bugs which loved the water-soaked fruit. We need to devise a means to keep the rain off them when they are fruiting.

Other factors leading to delay include the two months we had to spend fixing our fences, which were mauled by high winds, rampaging deer, and decaying fence posts. We did not finish this until late March, thus delaying the earliest spring plantings. Your peas should have been planted two weeks earlier than they were, but if we had done so, you would possibly not have had any peas at all, since they could have been deer food. Late peas are scarce peas, since they don't like even mild heat very much.

We also gave ourselves more than the usual spring workload by putting time into constructing two new greenhouses and conducting a plant sale Mother's Day weekend. The greenhouses will pay off in earlier and more abundant tomatoes, some winter vegetables, and earlier production of certain crops next year. The plant sale yielded badly needed revenue for the CSA. So I do not regret those two activities. We will simply need to budget our labor-time better next time.

Being a member of a CSA means sharing the risks and joys of farming.

Farm Update (Cont'd from page 7)

It was good weather for greens, at least, until two weeks ago. Then, as the rains stopped, the control box for our pump shorted out due to moisture. So we had no water on our greens and lettuce for nearly a week. This has now been repaired so you should have resumed lettuce and greens production next week. In addition, in our haste to give you something for your money sooner, we started picking these items before they had fully sized up, leading to chronic small quantities. So we have temporarily ceased picking them to let them size properly with our renewed irrigation.

So what now? For this week, I can guarantee only potatoes and garlic, both in good quantity and excellent quality, but that's all. You can judge for yourself if that's worth the drive to the farm. Next week, you will have lettuce and chard back in your shares, and perhaps some scallions as well. The blackberries high on the hill will come ripe. Perhaps late next week we will start to have cherry tomatoes. The following week I hope to see the first of the cherry tomatoes, summer squash, and cucumbers. The week after that (the first week of August) we should start to have large tomatoes and our first apples. By mid-August our raspberries will begin to produce and the tomatoes will start to overwhelm us. Around this time the pole beans will make their presence felt as well.

The week before Labor Day will probably see watermelons, eggplant, and peppers.

I will update this forecast as the season progresses. Fall crop forecast will be given in a month.

So I don't know if it helps you to feel better right now to know you'll feel better in the future, but it's highly probable that you will. If you want to see for yourself the state of our fields and what's in them, please attend the potluck welcoming our Americorps volunteers on Sunday, July 18 (see page 5 for details). I will include, if possible, a midsummer farm tour.

Thank you all for being members of Cromwell Valley CSA this year. You share the risks and joys of farming with us. While delayed gratification is often overstated, in this case its rewards are more certain than usual.

Yours truly,

Matt, Mo, Andrea, and Austin—your farm crew

Attend the
midsummer
potluck to see
the state of the
farm and
what's growing!