

Newsletter #1 May 1, 2006

Berries on Bryan Station Farm

Welcome new members! Thank you for your support and for being excited about this new endeavor! This is the first newsletter for Berries on Bryan Station Farm. This will be one way that I will be keeping in contact with you. My next contact will be by phone to let you know when the first basket will be ready for pickup. I am aiming for May 11th which is a Thursday for the first basket, but it will depend on when the first produce is ready. If I do not call, it will be because the produce is not ready yet. Please be patient early in the season when Mother Nature limits the produce that is available. July, August, and September will be the most bountiful months.

Produce pickup will be every Thursday and Friday between 4 and 8 p.m. You may drive right up to the large black barn. We will have tables set up with the baskets ready for you. Some weeks we will have extra produce on hand for you to have more of one item or less of another one. We will ask you to return your basket at the next pickup for reuse.

Please start saving clear plastic containers that can hold berries or salad makings. We can use and re-use these during the season to hold the more fragile produce within the bushel baskets.

The response to the Ala Carte article in last Sunday's Lexington Herald Leader has been simply phenomenal! We now have about 30 members who have signed up! I decided to stop taking new members and am starting a waiting list. I will now concentrate on making this a wonderful and rewarding

experience for you! Thank you for your check. If you have not yet paid, please make a check payable to: Berries on Bryan Station and send it to: Erik Walles; 4744 Bryan Station Road; Lexington, KY 40516.

A number of families have come for a farm tour. Grant, our four year old, was excited to show off the twelve baby chickens. The breeds that we have include Dominique, White Langshan, New Hampshire Red, and Delaware. The Dominique breed is one that the pilgrims brought with them on the Mayflower. They have a pretty black and white checkerboard pattern on them. Grant welcomes any ideas for names.

Right now about five different types of lettuce have been planted, as well as spinach, sweet peas, red cabbage, green cabbage, okra, beets, radishes, onion sets, garlic, and potatoes. Seeds for cutting flowers have been planted and are sprouting. Gladiola bulbs have also been planted. Red and golden raspberry bushes are coming in nicely and have been weeded. We had a few quarts of berries from them last Fall and since they were planted last June they should bear well this year. The Heritage variety of red raspberries is an ever-bearing one that will produce from about June into September once it is established. Thornless blackberries were planted this January and may give us some berries this year as well. Two rows of strawberries were planted in April of this year and will yield berries next season.

The whole family including my wife Gayle and my two boys Brett (age 13) and Grant (nearly five) have been busy getting transplants ready since early

April. Some of the seeds were quite small, so we needed tweezers to plant them. They will go into the ground around May 12th when the threat of a killing frost is over. Everyone that I have talked to have said that tender plants like tomatoes have to be kept indoors until then in this area. I have been eager to put more transplants into the ground, but I listened to Gayle and held off. There have been a number of cold blustery days and cold nights since then.

Yesterday two large fields were covered with 1 mil thick by four feet wide black plastic mulch. A photo of the equipment that was used to lay down the film is shown. One field is for vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and sweet corn. The second field is for vining plants like melons, pumpkins, squash, zucchini and ornamental gourds. A third field contains all of the cold hardy crops. The fields were cultivated twice, then deep tilled them using a mold board plow. During the winter straw and horse manure were spread on top of the ground. Liquid fertilizers derived from natural sources like fish will be added later in the season through a "fertigator" which is attached to the irrigation system.

Trenching has been completed for the irrigation system with a back hoe. One notable misadventure that I had was unwittingly trenching myself in, then tipping over when I tried to get out. Luckily a neighbor is handy with equipment and was able to remedy the situation by using the backhoe arm to lift the whole backhoe up and over the trench.

I will be clearing the last debris from the trenches with a shovel during the next few days. An electrician is coming

next week to run a line from the well to the large barn. Once the electricity is at the wellhead, the submersible motor will be lowered into the well. There will be a filter, a 119 gallon pressure tank, and a fertigator in line from the 200 psi plastic line coming up from the well. The well is 140 feet deep, but the pump will only go down about 100 feet for now.

I have selected only varieties that have done well in University of Kentucky field trials. I attended the annual Fruit and Vegetable Growers Society meeting this winter and learned all of the latest recommendations for varieties that do well in Kentucky there. I also attended a three day Southern Sustainable Agriculture conference in Louisville where I learned many of the latest organic farming techniques. I also attended a beekeeping school in February. We now have a hive with three pounds of honey bees and a queen bee in it on the left side of the large barn. I will have a bright sign posted on the outside of the hive.

Gayle and I would like to invite you to a picnic potluck supper on Saturday, June 3rd from 5 to 8 p.m. We will provide meat for barbequing. Please bring drinks or a dish to pass.

Again, thank you so much for your wonderful support. I look forward to a bountiful season of fruit and vegetables for you and your family.

Sincerely,

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