Farm Girl Field Notes CSA edition May 27, 2013

The start of strawberry season is only a few short weeks away and we are excited to have you as a member of our first Berry CSA!

We have been hard at work this winter and spring, tending our many perennial fruit trees, bushes, and plants. We pruned our raspberry canes, apple trees, cherry trees and grape vines. The straw mulch was removed from the strawberry plants and we have been irrigating for frost protection. We fixed the raspberry trellis and mulched the blueberry bushes to maintain the proper soil acidity. We've planted, weeded, and mulched the everbearing strawberries.

Pickings from the Patch

The strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries are grown in Albion.

Strawberries, strawberries, strawberries! The patch was an explosion of pretty white flowers this spring. Each blossom has the potential to turn into a sweet, ripe strawberry.

The flowers can be damaged very easily by the cold. Whenever there is a threat of the temperatures dropping below freezing, I make sure the irrigation system is set and I get up *every* hour of the night to check the temperature. There were quite a few nights when frost approached and I turned the water on to save the strawberries. The water freezes at 32°F and forms a protective coat around each flower bud. The flowers then can't get colder than 32°F, which would ruin them. You can tell if they've had freeze injury if the center of the blossoms are black instead of the normal cheerful yellow.

This year marks our 30th year at Panek's Pickin' Patch and we are looking forward to the season.
Kerry Panek, Panek's Pickin' Patch

Life on the Ledge

The apples and cherries are grown at Ledge Rock Farms (formerly known as the Smith Farm) in Medina. Next to the cherry orchard, I also have a mini-vineyard, with mostly seedless grapes.

I have been growing everbearing or day-neutral strawberries for five years. When I got married in 2010, I moved my garden to our new house in Albion. Since they are planted every year and require weekly maintenance from May through October, this made the most sense.

This year, we have hand planted 5,000 plants, weeded around them, and mulched the rows with straw. For the first 6 weeks, we remove the flower buds, so that the plant puts its energy into getting well-established. We will be continuing this task through next month. Everbearing strawberries require a lot of work, but it is all worth it when you can have a fresh, local strawberry in August!
Guinevere (Smith) Panek, Ledge Rock Farms

Berry CSA Information

June 11th: estimated start date, pending weather

Based on your feedback, we have selected a main pick up time for each site that worked the best for the majority. During that time, one of us will be there to assist or answer questions. *Those unable to pick up during that time can still get their fruit later, but we may not be there to greet you (we will probably be out tending our plants, canes, and trees!)

There will be a sign out sheet at each location. Please initial next to your name, when you have picked up your fruit each week.

Albion on Tuesdays: **9-noon***
Medina on Fridays: **9-noon* (tentatively)**

If you still owe a balance for your share, please send it within the next couple weeks.