



# Charlestown FARM

[www.charlestownfarm.org](http://www.charlestownfarm.org)



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## Welcome to Charlestown CSA

The long anticipated month of June has finally arrived with the start of the 2007 season. For those of you just joining us for the first time this year, a very warm welcome to you. We are happy to have you with us. We hope you enjoy your farm experience with us and take advantage of all the extras like workshops, potlucks and movie nights that we are planning for this season. And for those of you returning, a hearty welcome back! It's good to see familiar smiles and catch up.

Operating as a CSA farm, Charlestown Farm makes an agreement with its members. In community supported agriculture the farm team and myself agree to make every effort possible to provide your families with a bountiful amount of the 125 different varieties of vegetables that we grow. We strive to give every crop the best possible growing conditions we can provide. In return for this, you as members agree to pay for vegetables in advance of receiving them with the understanding that there is some inherent risk in farming. Mother Nature is not predictable, and it is realistic to understand that not everything we grow will have a bonanza year. (Although, we are eternally optimistic and hopeful!)

We have invested in more irrigation this year, in view of the dry springs and hot summers that seem to be more the norm lately and that certainly our May has been representative of this year. Strawberries love this kind of weather and are starting to bear in late May as a result. We have also decided to experiment with laying plastic for weed control in some of our beds. Although it is a petroleum product it may provide us with a number of sustainable benefits such as moisture retention, less time weeding/cultivating, less diesel fuel used in maintaining a cultivated crop, a better harvest and less wear and tear on our soils. We are using plastic with storage onions, early tomatoes and eggplant this year. Another on-going study is “no-till” planting, where we don't turn the soil at all. Instead we plant into a cover crop that has been “rolled down” to act as a mulch for the new crop and to feed the soil as it breaks down. This kind of approach works with specific crops such as vine crops and we will initially be working with pumpkins. It takes some tinkering to find the right seeding rate and type of cover crop to achieve the desired results, so we will keep you posted on our trials in the seasons to come.

Each year we try a number of new varieties as trials to see what they are like. This year you will see a new variety of snap peas that needs no staking (yeah!), although it looks like you might have to bend down for this one. We also have husk cherries growing in the U-pick which are golden berries inside papery husks that taste like a “Cape Gooseberry”, sweet and bit wild. Let us know how you like both of these. There are some new paste tomato varieties which include the classic Italian San Marzano and Big Mama (I just love the name!). The U-pick area in front of the barn has been expanded to 150-foot rows to help us more easily rotate crops each year. The entrance has been altered to allow easier access from the barn door and to help us with a safer turn-around area for tractor cultivation. We’ve added another row of golden raspberries to the raspberry patch and look forward to that harvest in the coming years. Construction is being completed on a 12x20 foot root cellar which will house our winter storage crops eventually.

Please feel free to ask any of us questions any time. We love to talk about what we do and how we do it.

—Sue Kilpatrick

## Charlestown Farm — A Small Working Farm

This year we have sold 149 shares, 121 returning shares and 28 new shares. The farm had an 81% retention rate from last year and is holding at the 150-member mark as a sustainable number for the main CSA season. We can support this many families and the market working the available land in cultivation and hopefully get to know everyone a little bit at this size! We are grateful for everyone’s support and are lucky enough to have a sizeable waiting list for the 2008 season.

Our main revenue stream is from our CSA members and with that in mind we plan the growing season in the fields, hoophouse and added value items for sale at the barn. We have had eggs, whole chicken and fruit for sale at the barn in the past and will continue to offer that this year. In addition, we will be adding pork products, beef and salmon and have offered an **independent fruit share with North Star Orchards ([www.northstarorchards.com](http://www.northstarorchards.com))** which starts in August. Some of you may have taken advantage of the meat sales during the winter markets we held in December, January and March. The meat, fish and eggs for sale at the farm are raised or

caught using sustainable methods and contain no antibiotics or growth hormones. Meat chickens, laying hens and beef are all grass-fed which generally are lower in fat and calories, rich in omega-3 fatty acids and are a great source for conjugated linoleic acids or CLAs, another “good fat”. We are conscious of supporting the small farmer and fisherman who are making the extra effort to conduct their business in a manner that humanely considers the animals lives, the impact that they have on the environment, and the health of the customer who makes the final purchase — the true value of good food.

As a small, year-round working farm we build in other revenue streams which help us sustain and expand the farm. Ever since the Farm started in 2001, we have participated in the Phoenixville Farmer’s market on Saturdays from mid-May through November as part of our effort to raise awareness about local food and sustainable agriculture. We also sell to several local restaurants and we have begun to sell to Kimberton Whole Foods, a local retail store when we have quantities left over from market, thus eliminating waste. All of these revenue streams work together with the CSA revenue to help build the most creative, dynamic small business we can generate. If you come to the farmer’s market, shop at Kimberton Whole Foods or dine at Alba Restaurant in Malvern you might encounter something different than the farm offers to members. These other markets give us the opportunity to try things that we are not sure will work on a large scale. Our daily operations are sustained by the working capital the farm generates from all our revenue streams, but major capital investments such as tractors, implements, grape vineyards, blueberry patches, root cellars and property taxes have all been generously provided for by the Andersen family. The farm has grown tremendously as a result of their continued efforts and support and we are grateful to them on many levels.

—Sue Kilpatrick



## The Farm Team

I am delighted to report a terrific all-women farm team this year. There are five of us this year with some eager volunteers working regularly as well. Aby and I have been working full time through the winter of 2006 and we have added **Andrea Grom** from New York, **Rachel Stermer** from Illinois and **Ruth Holbrook** from California. Please get to know these hard-working, creative, smart women. Aby and I are thrilled to have them as part of our team this year.



**Andrea Grom** grew up in Greenwich, a small village nestled in the picturesque farm country of upstate New York. Since girlhood, Andrea has been a friend of nature, an aficionado of fresh foods, and an avid landscaper, gardener, and hiker. Her foray into organic farming began in 2004 at Windflower Farm, where she spent

a fabulous summer working with owners, Jan and Ted Blomgren, and the farm crew, which included Sue. Andrea returned to Windflower Farm during the following two seasons and assisted with vegetable research with Cornell Cooperative Extension in the Capital District region of New York. In addition to farming, Andrea has a strong interest in helping and working with others. In recent years, she has earned a Masters Degree in Social Work, volunteered with AmeriCorps, and worked with nonprofits serving children and families, the homeless, and people with developmental disabilities. One day, Andrea hopes to integrate her passions for farming and social work. For now, however, she is excited to learn more about organic vegetable production and interact with shareholders and community members through Charlestown Farm.

It took **Rachel Stermer** 22 years before she set foot on an organic farm and, since that fateful first step, she hasn't left. Her journey towards sustainable agriculture started in Northern California in the fall of 2005 as a volunteer



with WWOOF (World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) on organic vineyards, Biodynamic gardens, and urban farming projects. That winter, she traveled to India to volunteer in a garden created by an international community and study yoga in an ashram. Upon returning to the States, she moved to Pennsylvania to apprentice at a Biodynamic CSA and live in an agricultural and crafting community for adults with special needs. Rachel joined the team at Charlestown in the beginning of May. She is so grateful to be working with such a dedicated and knowledgeable group of people and living in beautiful PA. In the future, she hopes to collaborate on a community agriculture project with family and friends that centers on the therapeutic component of the work.

**Ruth Holbrook** was born in rural northern California, where she first developed an appreciation of farming in her parent's flower and vegetable garden. At age nine, her family moved overseas, spending time in the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. Returning to the US for college, she attended UC Santa Cruz, majoring in



Environmental Studies with a focus in Sustainable Agriculture. During this time, she worked on several organic farms, and was involved in agricultural research for the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems in the San Joaquin Valley. After graduation, she moved to Philadelphia, where (among other things) she has been working for Women's Medical Fund and the Fair Food Farmstand in the Reading Terminal Market. After almost 3 years in the big city, Ruth is thrilled to take up residence at beautiful Charlestown Farm, gather skills from Sue and Aby, and learn more about farming east coast style. In the future, she hopes to fuse her love of agriculture, plants, and food into her own diversified business/farm/restaurant.

**The flowers in the breeze  
are swaying, swaying,  
The whole wide world  
is out a-Maying**

—Genevieve Mary Irons

For those of you who don't know Aby and myself, here's a little on us:



**Aby Wright**, joined Charlestown Farm as assistant farm manager in 2006. Aby grew up in Glenside, PA, less than an hour from the farm. She owes her green thumb to

years spent in the gardens of her grandmother and mother, but her interest in farming developed at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst as an environmental science major. While her coursework piqued her interest in many environmental issues, such as sustainability, it was a summer's worth of labor at Brookfield Farm that demonstrated the benefits of the CSA model. After graduating from UMass, Aby took time off to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail and then started pursuing farming in this area. She began at Branch Creek Farm in Perkasio and from there she went to the Glasbern Inn in Fogelsville. At the Glasbern, she and the farm manager single handedly grew more than enough vegetables for the Inn's restaurant and also raised sheep, cows, turkeys and chickens for meat and eggs. In 2005, she worked at Willow Creek Orchards in nearby Collegeville.

**Sue Kilpatrick** grew up on a 40-acre farm in Nazareth, PA raising chickens, ducks and horses and growing vegetables. As a long-time organic gardener, Sue has been interested and curious about food and its effects on the body. She worked and studied in New York City in many different avenues spanning video, publishing, design, holistic health and CSAs. Her curiosity led her to the Institute for Integrative Nutrition where she studied various food disciplines from Ayurvedic to whole foods. Her core membership at Park Slope CSA in Brooklyn, New York inspired her to launch full-time into farming in upstate New York at Windflower Farm in 2004. There, she learned the ins and outs of organic vegetable production for a 300 member CSA, delivering into New York City once a week. In 2005 Sue came to Charlestown to apprentice for the Farm's original farmers, John and Aimee Good. She learned the economies of a 150-member CSA, improved her tractor skills and



adopted efficient systems for planting, harvesting and bringing food to market. Sue assumed stewardship of the Farm in 2006. In the the fall of 2006, Sue developed a winter market for members using the new 30'x120' hoophouse.

## June Vegetables

June is the month for greens. You can expect a variety of salad greens — Yukina Savoy, Arugula, Mizuna, Spinach, Chard and our own lettuce mix with 9 different varieties of lettuce in it. So much for the cool spring, now it's so hot that everything has jumped into summer mode. I'm hoping for a good soaking rain in the near future, as we have a lot of the season's crops in the ground at this point, including beets, carrots, turnips, radishes, tomatoes, eggplant, tomatillos, onions, scallions, cabbages, broccoli, various greens, beans, edamame, peas, garlic, squash, cantaloupes, watermelons, cukes, herbs and lots of beautiful flowers. Radishes will be the first to show up in your share. Three kinds of peas (snow, snap and shelling) and strawberries will be available in the U-pick in June. Strawberries are the berry of the month and the perennial herbs are all coming in strong — chives, chive flowers, thyme, oregano, and some rosemary which is new this year. Other additions to the perennial beds will include orange thyme and sorrel for a splash of citrus in your cooking. Watch for the white posts and new signage in the gardens. White posts indicate that a crop is ready to pick.

## How to get the most of your share

- Keep a cooler and used plastic grocery bags in your car. Although we provide you with a canvas bag, many leafy vegetables are best transported in plastic bags. The same leafy green will wilt quickly in the heat of a car in the summer. Having a cooler in the car leaves members free to make a quick stop on their way home from the farm and still have crisp, cool veggies.
- Don't forget to keep a scissors and a jar or bucket in your car for flower and herb bouquets. As soon as a flower or herb is picked it loses the connection to its roots and it wants to wilt. By placing each flower or herb stem in water as soon as it is picked, you will increase its longevity.
- If possible, organize, wash and bag your share as soon as you get home from the farm. Leafy greens will keep best if washed, dried and placed in a plastic

bag. You can create your own bag of locally grown salad mix! Don't forget that beet and turnip tops make excellent greens for cooking. In fact, beets were first grown in the Mediterranean for their leafy tops; the roots were an afterthought.

- At a CSA you receive vegetables at their height of production and freshness. Sometimes this might mean that you will get an unusual vegetable for several weeks in a row. We provide recipes for many of the vegetables that we grow, but sometimes cookbooks and websites can be very helpful. Two great websites to find recipes are: [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com) and [www.foodtv.com](http://www.foodtv.com).
- **Take advantage of the U-pick garden while sharing it with all the members. Each week we will list items that are available for U-Pick.** Some items, such as strawberries and raspberries may have set quantities to be picked. Other items, such as herbs and flowers may not have a quantity listed and you are welcome to pick what you will need for the week. As you pick a bouquet for your table, keep in mind that 149 families share the U-pick garden, Remember that the U-pick garden is open from 7:30 am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, till 7:00pm on pick up days, and 7:00 am to 2:00pm on Saturday. Please remember when there are limits on items, they apply to that week.
- Come to the special events at the farm. We offer a variety of activities to help members try new ways to prepare vegetables, to learn about issues in sustainable agriculture and the environment and to enjoy meeting neighbors and friends.

—Liz Andersen

## Volunteers

A helping hand sure comes in handy on an organic vegetable farm. This spring, we were delighted to have six sets of helping hands:

**Brian Dickerson, Claire Steiner, Steve Maikowski, Michaela Sweeney, Lynn Trizna, and the Andersen family.**

Truly, the hard work from our volunteers is integral to bringing farm-fresh food to your table. In appreciation, we would like to recognize their contributions.

**Brian Dickerson** comes to us as an experienced field-



crop farmer from Illinois and currently lives in West Chester. Brian was present when we used the mechanized plastic layer to prepare beds for our eggplant. His troubleshooting and tractor skills on this project were invaluable. Brian is thinking about the possibility of starting a CSA himself and continues to observe the daily operations at Charlestown whenever he can.

**Claire Steiner**, who will be a senior at Downingtown West, has been volunteering with us every Monday and Wednesday afternoon since December and recently joined us at the Phoenixville Farmer's Market to experience the market. On the farm, Claire has helped us with irrigation, greenhouse work, transplanting, and cultivating vegetable beds. Claire has particularly enjoyed weeding Dock and running drip tape for irrigation. She is a master!

**Lynn Trizna**, who will be a sophomore at the University of Pittsburgh, volunteers with us when she can during her summer break. Lynn has helped us with weeding, transplanting, and mulching the peas and beans. We are particularly grateful for Lynn's assistance with repairing a broken ball valve on the water reel.

**Steve Maikowski**, a friend of Sue's, left his job at NYU Press to join us for three days in April in order to explore a possible career path in farming. Steve helped us with transplanting alliums, direct seeding, and staking tomatoes. Steve says, "*The work was really diverse. And hard, hard work; it's one thing to do lawn work for 2-3 hours on a Saturday; another to work in the fields for 9 hours a day! I was exhausted each night (imagine spending 4 straight hours crawling along the ground on your hands and knees planting leeks, and they don't take breaks!) so my romantic idea of curling up with a book each evening in that lovely farmhouse was not realized.*"

**Michaela Sweeney** completed a two-week practicum with us in May to round out her last year of home-schooling. Micha assisted us in the greenhouse and fields on all tasks, including seeding, weeding, transplanting, and irrigation, and helped us with processing and packing vegetables for the farmer's market. Micha says, "*It is amazing how much work is required to run an organic farm. Most jobs were challenging, and good results depended not only on physical strength but on creativity and improvisation from the managers.*"

Last but not least, the Andersen crew, **Charlie, Bill, Liz,**

**Donald and Marvin.** Marvin is to be noted for his skilled assistance with catching a swarm of honeybees and encouraging us to learn more about beekeeping from Bob Haniwalt, our beekeeper. Bill and Charlie have been busy planting this season's sweet corn crop, in addition to overseeing the construction of the new root cellar, and helping us set up cultivating equipment for better systems in our potatoe field. Bill, Donald and Marvin have all been involved in planting blueberries on the hillside above the grapes (Exciting!). And thanks to Liz for providing us with amazing farmer lunches every Friday — a great way to stay connected, share recipes and enjoy fantastic local food. There's always plenty of discussion over new recipes, techniques, farm news and haikus (see page 7).

Our volunteers have contributed much this spring; their hard work, positive attitude, insight, input, and good humor has made even the hardest of days pass joyfully and productively. Thank you again! —*Andrea Grom*

## E V E N T S

### **Sunday, June 10th, 3:00pm to 4:00pm Field to Fork, Family Cooking Workshop.**

This season the farm will host family cooking workshops once each month. Weather permitting, each session will start with a brief "harvest walk" followed by hands-on cooking activities. Cooks of any age are invited! In June we will make delicious summer rolls with garden vegetables and herbs wrapped in rice papers and some oriental scallion pancakes with dipping sauce. *Please sign up for the workshop in the barn so we have enough supplies.*

### **Thursday, June 28th, 6:30 to 8:00pm We are very excited to host a cooking workshop by Christina Pirello, host of the nationally syndicated PBS cooking show Christina Cooks.**

A leukemia survivor who credits her remission to a change in her diet, Christina's emphasis is on healthful cooking using whole grains and fresh produce. Christina will create an impromptu menu highlighting farm produce. This event is sponsored by Whole Foods Markets and they are requesting a \$5 donation. You can read more about Christina at her website [www.christinacooks.com](http://www.christinacooks.com)

**Summer Potluck — July 14th** - stay tuned for more!

## D E A R A B Y

Dear Aby,

I adopted a chive plant from the farm last fall and now it is flowering like mad. Is this normal? What should I do?

—*Cheery for Chives*

*Dear Cheery for Chives,*

*First I'd like to thank you for taking part in the Adopt-A-Chive-Plant offering last fall. We divided our plants at the farm because they were being moved and needed more space to grow. We wanted to find homes for those plants and are happy to know that they are being enjoyed by our members. To answer your question, yes, a flush of spring flowers on your chive plant is normal. The blossoms should be cut when fully opened. This will send growing energy back into the base of your plant so it can produce chives all summer long. Chive blossoms can be pulled apart and used to dress up any dish. They have a mild onion flavor and are great sprinkled on salads, sandwiches, hummus dips, etc.*

*Please send inquiries about anything farm, vegetable or garden related to [aby@charlestownfarmcenter.org](mailto:aby@charlestownfarmcenter.org) I will answer all questions, but only one lucky winner will be posted in each newsletter. So choose your alias wisely...I'm a sucker for ones like "Vegetable Yours."*

*Sincerely, Aby*

### **Charlestown Farm Center**

In addition to providing our members healthful produce grown in an environmentally sensitive fashion, we have several broader goals to improve our community. We would like to encourage the development of a sustainable local food system, educate members of the community about food issues, and demonstrate how to farm sustainably in a suburban setting. To that end, we have established Charlestown Farm Center, a non-profit organization which will conduct a variety of educational events at the farm. All events will be listed on the farm calendar and most will be free of charge to farm members. Broadwater Farm, a startup pastured livestock operation located across Charlestown Road from the Farm, is also affiliated with the Farm Center.

Charlestown Farm Center hosted a very successful set of workshops on April 28, 2007 presented by renowned farmer and author Joel Salatin. Over 125 people participated, many of whom were local farmers and landowners interested in using their land productively in an environmentally responsible way. —*Liz Andersen*