



Canalside Community Food

a community supported agriculture scheme

Summer 2008

newsletter no. 10

HELLO! Well, although these last few weeks have been slightly unsettled, all in all it's been a pretty nice summer so far. We've seen lots of days of lovely warm sunshine, which has not only given the plants a great head start, but it has also enabled the growers to get pretty good sustans too!

We're now well into our second growing season, and have left the Hungry Gap well and truly behind us. In fact, what we were expecting to be a 2 month lull in produce over April and May, actually turned out to be only a 4 week blip at the end of May/beginning of June. By the end of June we were back up to a great looking share of different veg, and the feedback that we have been getting from members has been really positive. So, many thanks to all of you for your patience during this time, and fingers crossed that next year there'll be no such thing as a Hungry Gap!

The 21st June saw our Summer Solstice social event and 1st Birthday celebrations, but sadly numbers were low, presumably due to bad weather in the morning. We had a lovely day anyway, with Kristoff the clown performing his usual magic for the handful of kids and barbeque-eating adults that were sitting around, and it

warmed up plenty enough for our usual walk around the veg fields later in the afternoon.

Our most recent social event, this last Saturday, celebrating the Celtic festival of Lammass and Harvest Festival was a pretty subdued affair too. Again, we had quite low numbers, but it was a lovely relaxing day with the small crowd that did turn out. Many thanks to everyone who came along (and to Kristoff for his usual performance and Jane for her very popular and very impressive corn dolly making workshop!) and especially to those of you who were able to make it for a good morning's work.

For these last 2 social events, we actually erected our larger marquee (30'x30'), which is more than ample enough to provide shelter for a large group of people – worth remembering if you're feeling put off by the weather in the future!

So, while the hard work continues out on the fields, during this our busiest few months of the year, we can all enjoy the fruits of our labours with the bountiful harvests that this wonderful season brings. Happy eating!

Look forward to seeing you out in the fields soon! Caz

Tom's News from the field

Thinking back over the last three and half months, and the beginning of April seems like a long time ago! It's only when we look back that we realise how much we've achieved through the Spring and early Summer. April started off with some extremely cold nights; we had one week with temperatures dipping below -5. Our target for April was to complete the erection and skinning of the two new 'monster' polytunnels. With an enormous amount of work, this was achieved with the last skin going on on the 29th, but this still left us with



two weeks of details to finish before the Tomatoes and Cucumbers could at last be released from their pots and planted out.

The polytunnel mission took its toll on the rest of the field, however, with jobs being pushed back and everything getting delayed. April saw the gradual planting of the six beds of onions sets; these were put in over a number of days with fantastic help from members on the volunteer mornings.



The beginning of May brought with it some lovely warm weather and alongside this the very last of our first season's crops, the Cauliflower. These Cauliflowers were a delight to harvest; large white curds burst from these tired looking plants that had been in the ground for over 11 months. Our only problem was the speed with which they needed harvesting - we ended up picking the whole lot over a four day period which left us with 130kg to work out how to put into the share! Luckily we had just been gifted a shop sized fridge from Gaia, and this proved invaluable as we kept half the harvest for those members collecting at the end of the week.

After all our worries regarding the 'Hungry Gap' we were all pleasantly surprised with how much produce we managed to keep going into the share throughout May and early June. The last 2 weeks in May were the leanest, with just four items in the share, but by mid June we were back on track.

The difference between the beginning and end of June was huge; it really is the month of change in terms of the veg we're able to start harvesting. With only two weeks in the year without carrots we saw them back in the share by mid June, although these tender bunched sweets could hardly be compared to those carrots that had been sitting in the ground all winter! The first of the New Potatoes were dug around this time, too, (with eager anticipation!) and although very small to start with, their taste was exquisite. We've grown six different 'earlies' this year, with one going into the share each week - if there's one that you particularly liked (or disliked!) then please let us know; we've been enjoying the taste tests!



The Summer Solstice saw us celebrate our first birthday; it's quite a feeling to have got through a whole year of weekly veg shares being collected. Just as at last year's Solstice social, the rain came down and sadly seemed to keep some folk away. With the work party, we kept out of the rain by working in the polytunnels, weeding and



winding up the tomatoes and cucumbers.

Soon after the Solstice we cracked into a lot of the transplanting. April and May had seen a mammoth amount of seed sowing as well as potting on and now we had to get these plants into the ground. As is always the case, however, other jobs need doing too and this time also saw the start of the weeding 'party season'! There are three big crops that are drilled direct on the field; Carrots, Beetroots and Parsnips. We've tried really hard this year to prepare 'stale' seed beds before drilling the seeds and this, in theory, should reduce the weed burden as much as possible. However, the stale seed bed was only really effective on the six carrot beds, leaving a sea of weeds on the seven remaining Beet and Parsnip beds. It's at times like this that the saying

'many hands make light work' really rings true. With as few as 6 or 7 volunteers on a Saturday morning we can get through a couple of these beds and we're then able to get the other urgent jobs during the week attended to as well. So, many thanks to those who have been able to respond to the call for help recently to get through these weeds! Tom

general information

* Along with the recent wage increase for all the Canalside workers, and the subsequent price increase of our veg shares, we are also looking to **increase our veg subscription capacity by 20 shares**. At the time of writing, we are currently supplying 85 local households with veg from the farm (be it paying members, workshare volunteers, or growers) and we believe there is enough veg coming off the fields to share between 110. So, **remember to keep spreading the word** amongst friends and family, and if you are non-veg member who has been meaning to sign up for a while, now's your opportunity!

* We also had a small number of new **leaflets** made up quite recently, so if anyone would like to take any to pass around friends, neighbours or colleagues, please help yourself from the pile in the yurt when you next come to get your veg, or if you collect from Bath Place, just let me know how many you would like and I can make sure the growers put some in your veg bag.

* **PLEASE LET US KNOW...** if you would be interested in being **alerted by text message about our Saturday morning work parties!** We realise that some people do not check their emails often enough to get good notice of what work we have coming up, and we also do not often know ourselves until a day or two before either, but we have recently discovered that we can text multiple people for free via a website, so are just wondering whether any members would be up for receiving text alerts about upcoming work mornings. It would be a maximum of 1 text per week, so please don't panic about being inundated with Canalside text messages as well as emails (!). If you would be interested in this, please let me know.

* FYI, one of our members recently gave the project a **notice board**, which we have subsequently put up in the yurt for members to use. Please feel free to use this space to advertise any of your own projects or adverts. For example, you could advertise yoga classes, massage therapy, music nights, or simply put a call out to other members to put together a car-share pool.

* **EGGS!** Simon and Fabienne Peckham, who run Galileo Organic Farm just down the Fosse Way, recently approached us with the suggestion of **offering eggs to our members as an 'extra' to their regular veg share**. We are unsure of exactly how this would work, but would initially like to hear from anyone who might be interested in this proposition. *Please email me a.s.a.p. if you would like to receive a weekly box of eggs (£1.50 per half dozen) so we can get back to Simon and Fabienne and check that they can provide us with the correct quantity.*

events committee

Whilst our social events are generally very lovely occasions, they do also take a lot of hard work to organise! In fact, we have recently decided to halve the number of social events we put on, as we do not really feel that enough people are really attending on a regular basis. Our plan is to stick to the 4 main Celtic festivals of Imbolc (beginning of February), Beltane (Mayday), Lammass (beginning of August) and Samhain (Halloween) and put a lot of effort into making these socials special events. Then, perhaps, we may also have an

informal after work-party picnic and bonfire on the solstices and equinoxes, but this will not be a formal 'social event' as such.

If anyone has any thoughts on this particular issue, please get in touch!

And, if anyone would like to get involved with helping out at these events, please let me know. This could mean anything from helping to put up the marquee the day before the event, or looking after the fire, barbeque, or drinks etc on the actual day. Or, if you have an idea for entertainments, let us know and we can put you on the billing!

For anyone who has found it difficult to make it along to any of our farm work days, by helping out at our social events could be another way for you to fulfil the work share part of your veg subscription. Please contact me for more information.

Work mornings



Please remember we hold 2 work mornings every week. These are on **Wednesdays** and **Saturdays**, from **10am – 1pm**. If there is a specific task to be done, I will notify you in advance, otherwise please just turn up and get stuck in to whatever there is to do on the day. No need to let us know if you are coming, just come!

We have recently noticed that there are quite a lot of people who have not made it along to the farm for any work yet, so we would especially encourage those of you who haven't got involved yet to come along soon. This is our busiest time of year, and we need as much help as we can get! And don't let the weather put you off; if it is raining, there's always plenty of work to be done in the polytunnels! Also, please don't get put off by the prospect of having to come along for a whole 3 hour work session – if you can only spare half an hour when you come to collect your veg, this soon builds up over time and really does make a big difference to the project.

Socials

Our next social event is on **Saturday 1 November**, in celebration of **Halloween** and the Celtic festivity of **Samhain**. The Celts believed that is the time of year when the earth starts to turn away from the light and embrace the darkness, and in fact celebrated this festival as their New Year. More specific details nearer the time, and also on the website.

FYI, social dates for your calendar for 2008 are:

Saturday 1 November

Samhain/Halloween

Please see the website for more information nearer to the time of each event.



Please note that we still have a number of veg shares available – if you know anyone that is interested in taking out a subscription with us, please ask them to get in touch!



Administrator: Caz Ingall
Canalside Community Food, Leasowe Farm, Southam Road, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire, CV31 1TY
t: **01926 423939** e: **mail@canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk** w: **www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk**