

McDougal's Farm LLC

What's Growing On !

March 7th, 2018

Farm News

Ten thousand onions have popped and the germinating table is on its second fill. Kept at a toasty 74 degrees day and night, things pop up quickly. The mid-night strolls to load the oversized woodstove in the greenhouse have begun. She eats firewood like popcorn and keeps us on a very attentive 3 hour "feed me!" schedule. People may wonder why we do it this way, but even when the electric goes out, our plants are still quite comfortable in their precarious un-insulated plastic bubble. Either way, we don't sleep at night until nights are warmer:)

We are still accepting CSA sign up forms for the upcoming growing season. If you are interested in joining, we still have room. Sooner is always better than later. We are pleased with the number we have already received and can't express our gratitude enough to all you early birds. Early sign ups help us plan, schedule and also fattens the checking account so we can pay for all the mounting expenses Spring brings. If you have never been a part of a CSA and have questions, don't hesitate to call. ([715-627-4418](tel:715-627-4418)). If you would prefer to speak with a CSA member veteran, we can help set that up as well. Just don't let vegetable fear ever cheat you out of a great experience that is fun, healthy and yummy. Our Helping Hand Fund has also been fattened by generous farm members. If you have a limited income and would like to be part of our CSA, please call to see if the Helping Hand Fund may assist you.

Seeds for thought

If anything can predict the future, it is a seed. Inside lies a microchip that contains all future information needed to grow, prosper and produce the next generation. It knows when to lie still and when it should bust some ground. It contains just enough magic to alter itself when necessary to protect itself from damage and stress. There is great wonder in seed and here on the farm we are seeing a few red flags that make us concerned for their future. We should all be concerned, because our future coincides with theirs. Every year more of our favorite varieties of seed become unavailable. Usually because of lack of vitality or poor seed harvest from the previous year. Could climate change be affecting growth? Maybe, but seed is built for change. Could our seeds be becoming sick? Last year more than any prior year we observed lower germination in our controlled climate greenhouses *and* our fields. A year before we observed spots on our beets leaf from a virus that came in on the seed. They are recommending we wash all our seeds before planting now. Could a sick environment be blamed for sick seeds? What about human intervention? Once in a while us humans get a brainstorm to "better" nature. It was obvious in this year's seed catalogues. Sunflowers without pollen, watermelon without seed, beans with no beans and seedless tomatoes? We were surprised to find only 2 out of about 30 varieties of sunflowers in our favorite seed catalogue that still has pollen. Are seeds and pollen such an inconvenience to us humans, we need to genetically eradicate them *forever*? We are all smart enough to understand the connection between pollen, seed and the human future. Pollen is

a good thing and so are seeds in our watermelon. Without seed, watermelon will disappear too someday. Is that what we want to support? Sweet corn also caught our attention. By trying to make sweet corn, "better" they have created a monster to the environment, the soil and our health. Good sweet corn seed is hard to find without five different fungicides on it now. Three of them systemic. Which means it enters the plant and becomes part of the flesh and fruit. It can't be removed by washing it off. Your food *is* now a fungicide. A seed representative tried to relieve us, "Though some corn seed is treated with a systemic type pesticides (this means it kills all insects that ingest the plant. Can also wipe out a bee colony if the pollen is returned to the hive and your food *is also a pesticide*), our sweet corn seed is not", he stated proudly, Our seed is only treated with fungicides which probably won't hurt your bees." *Study shows it kills things the size of frogs.* Then we asked, "And why do you need to use 5 kinds of fungicides on every kernel? His response, "Because three don't work anymore. Every year more is needed". Could it be because the fungi in the ground has figured out how to out "better" us? Has it learned to change when needed to survive, like the seed? Don't want to sound like a downer here but maybe it would be wise to take a lesson from the seed and fungi and start changing ourselves. We can do better. We can be better.

So what can we do?

We all have busy schedules to keep but we need to take the time to become aware of certain situations. Busy little swallows never see the cat coming. Maybe it means less TV or Facebook time and more Google "be better, do better" search time. Or maybe we just need to sit still? I have found many answers to questions by sitting quietly in the woods, listening, observing. What does a seed do to better itself? It changes *inside*. Sounds like a good place to start.

As your farmers, we can choose smart and clean. We choose your seed carefully with good health in mind. *We grow* with good health in mind. This includes the environments and future generations as well. We don't use chemicals, they are not kind and we find them absolutely unnecessary to grow food. We avoid all GMO seed. If we feel our seed is at risk to smart underground fungi, we treat it ourselves with pungent herbs and hot spices. We grow watermelon, beans and tomatoes *with* seeds. Many of them being heirloom, so we can save and reproduce the next year. We also bought both varieties of sunflowers *with* pollen. We will plant them around the farm and also send them home with all the kids that come to the children's workshop next weekend (3/17). Our way of spreading the goodness.

When you become a McDougal's Farm CSA member, know that some of your "food" homework has been done for you. We have your back and your good health is important to us.

Germinating Kids

Every year we try to do something different for the children's workshop but we always take a few minutes at the end to "germinate" a few kids. We show them how the seed shell doesn't stay in the ground with the plant growing out of it like most think. A seed will stick its toe outside the shell first. Then a leg. Then slide the rest of its beautiful self out with this big heavy helmet of a shell stuck on its head. Now it has to stand up on one leg and push this heavy shell up and off its head. We demonstrate this with a garbage can. We have the volunteer squat on the floor while we put a large 30 gallon garbage can over the top of them. Now all they have to do is stand up on

one leg and push the thirty gallon container off them. Easier said, than done. They struggle, grunt and bang around in there for awhile and then finally the garbage can goes flying off. There's usually a loud shrill and they take off running. Every time. Even the repeats. Everyone claps and cheers. It has to be a thrill to be a seed and finally germinate, we're just glad they don't all take off running.

Upcoming Children's workshop March 17th @ 1:pm March 17th, Saturday at 1pm- **Pollination, Germination,**

Imagination! Come prepared to stay busy and get dirty! We will be watching a short video on pollination so the kids can peek into a world few of us ever see. There will be a bee hive box (without bees) available so kids can see the fancy work of a honey bees and taste fresh raw honey straight from the comb. The kids will also be planting a bee lovin' pollen bearing sunflower and decorating their pots with paint to take home. All willing kids will be germinated! Class held in our big sunny greenhouse. Space is limited, so please call ahead ... cost \$5 w/adult. All supplies included...our gift to a brighter future:)

Other upcoming events

Times may change so always check our website mcdougalsfarm.com

May 18th-20th, Friday thru Sunday 8:00am-5:00pm- **McDougal's**

Farm Greenhouse opens for sales. Open to the public for two- 3 day weekends only. Filled with many earthy mossy delights, rusty accents, hanging baskets and organically grown garden transplants and herbs...many of them heirloom. Love nature? Looking for unique? You will find it here, located at W10835 Bluebell Rd. Deerbrook Wi. Just 5 minutes N on Hwy 45 from Antigo to Cty Rd. B., turn west and then straight onto Bluebell Rd...see you in a mile and a half on the left.

May 18th, Friday at 6pm, **Build Your Own Herb Garden**

Enjoy a fresh brewed cup of tea or a glass of wine as we go around the large selection of herbs and talk briefly about some of the medicinal and culinary uses of herbs and introduce you to some new ones. Then you will be free to design your own herb container garden. Bring your own container, we will have a few on hand. Cost will be determined according to your container size and herb selection. Space is limited. Please call ahead

May 20th, Sunday at 1:30, TBA

May 25th-27st, Friday thru Sunday 8am to 5pm- Memorial Day

weekend. **McDougal's Farm Greenhouse open for sales.** Our second weekend open to the public, good deals on selected remaining annuals. Always adding new plantings. Come see us for unique and all your garden planting transplants. Special deals Sunday 1-5pm.

July 21st, Saturday Farm Tours- Come see your Farm! See how we do things. Where your food comes from. Ask questions. Meet your Farmers. Tours begin in front of the big greenhouse at **1pm and 3pm** and will take about 1hour and 15 minutes. Wear comfortable shoes. Maybe be rescheduled if weather is rainy. Public welcome.