

The Farm Weekly

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2

BLUEBIRDHILLS@VOYAGER.NET

19 JUNE, 2009

INCREDIBLY BUSY HERE ON THE FARM

It seems as though we only stop moving to go to sleep at night. Breeding season has commenced for the alpacas, as has birthing time. Tim is still starting plants in the greenhouse and transplanting others into the fields. Weeds grow inches over night so that cultivating is a priority. With last week's start, picking, cleaning and packing now consume hours as well. We seem to be keeping up fairly well which is a pleasant surprise since we were really concerned about our worker situation this year.

Returning members know that we have used 3 Mexican fellows, a father, Marco, and his 2 sons, Pedro and Hanter for the last 7 years. This year we decided to hire locally and as it turned out, we heard from another grower that applications for visas were being denied, so we couldn't have brought them here anyway.

Sadly, last week Marco called to check on the farm and hopes that he

can find work picking tobacco next month. It was very sad for us to tell them this January that they would not be coming to work for us. Perhaps they can come next year, although I think Tim is happy not to have to constantly work around a language barrier.

So this year, we have 2 full time young men working in the fields, 2 part time gals cleaning, working in the greenhouse, and packing, and 3 part time weeders. The weeders only work in the morning on days when the soil is conducive to weed control.

When I am not busy with all things alpaca, I can be found on the tractor bush hogging which is just mowing on steroids. I absolutely love to mow. I am out in the fresh air, enjoying the sunshine, and you can see what you have accomplished. Yesterday while the barn swallows were taking advantage of insects forced from their grassy perches, I spied voles, rabbits, deer, a red tailed hawk, and a box

turtle! The box turtle was the most notable, for we rarely see them.

Our kids enter the fray with Hannah in charge of tomatoes, stringing the vines, as well as weeding, and picking. Nicky is in charge of the peppers. Luke is on one of the ancient tractors cultivating, and Ian does some odd jobs including helping pack boxes on Thursdays. We all are sleeping pretty well at night.

I have been working on a new project where we are playing vampire with the alpacas, using some of them for plasma donors. We feel that our male alpacas, who are basically pasture potatoes, should be pulling their weight. We draw whole blood just like they do at the blood bank, and spin it down in a centrifuge, separating the blood cells from the fluid portion they are suspended in called plasma.

The plasma is then used to bring the immunity of baby alpacas up to where it should be if they did not get enough antibodies from the colostrum in their mama's milk.

The boxes today are packed similarly to last week's. The plants enclosed are for transplanting just like last week. The aromatic one that has oblong, fuzzy leaves that is the sage. The smooth leafed upright plant is the jalapeno, the tiny leafed plant is the German Thyme, and

the cherry tomato should be familiar to most.

Cherry tomatoes are impractical for the CSA to include in boxes, so this way you still get to enjoy them. There will be one more cherry tomato plant next week, so be sure to include that in your planting plans. The tomatoes and pepper will both benefit from higher fertility whereas the herbs such as the thyme and sage will do just fine in average soil. Also the tomato plants will need a larger space or a larger pot and staking as well.

We have decided on a date for our annual open house. The event will begin at 11:00 AM and go until 4:00. We are scheduling it for Saturday, July 25th. We have horse drawn wagon rides out to the fields of veggies for everyone to take advantage of.

Folks can also go into the pastures with the alpacas or just roam around the farm at their leisure. Members are welcome to bring along friends and family to enjoy the day and we will also have snacks and drinks for sale. If you know of any artisans that might want to set up a booth, have them contact us. We don't charge anyone to set up, but think it makes it more fun for everyone, so have them contact us.

That's all for now, have a safe weekend and stay cool!

This Week's Box

Spinach
Lettuce
Bunching Onions
Peacevine Cherry
Tomato
Jalapeno Pepper
German Thyme
Sage

Next Week

Spinach
Lettuce
Red Pearl Onions
Black Cherry
Tomato
Chives
Oregano