

October 14, 2013

We're wrapping up a rollercoaster of a season.

We knew it would be transitional. As many of you know, Dan works a second job on the maintenance staff of the Sisters of St. Dominic in Amityville. For years he kept a part-time schedule, owing to the demands of the farm and small children, but this year he finally yielded to pressure to work full-time. So I was back in the fields as I haven't been since 2008, and everyone—farmers, kids, volunteers—had to adjust. I'd like to think the transition is going well, but like any transition, it's no picnic.

Then there was freakishly cold and wet spring. As luck would have it, our spring crops were located in the coldest, wettest field, compounding the problem. We rotate our crops every year, and the odds for this placement were 1 in 5. Production-wise, it was our worst spring since 2009, a season we'd rather forget. Unlike 2009, however, we had another banner year for tomatoes, and as we survey the early October harvests, the spring seems a distant memory.

In September, Nassau County announced it would break ground on the farm support building it's been talking about since we signed our first contract in 2007. With the estimated completion 6-8 months in the future, and the 2013 season not fully complete, we haven't done much more than daydream about how awesome it'll be to have a real structure. Come winter, however, we'll spend hours planning how to put the building to the best possible use.

Finally, there is the issue of our contract with Nassau County, which is turning into an annual headache. Our original six-year contract gave us the freedom to establish the farm without fear of losing our lease. It expired last May, and all we were able to secure was a one-year extension. Anything more than a year, I was told, would require either another bidding process (fine with me) or approval of the Nassau County legislature (not likely to happen—politics). I'm unclear on the exact details, as we've lost many of our original contacts, and communication with the county is essentially nonexistent. Our current contract ends May 2014, and I'm waiting (*and waiting and waiting*) to hear from the Parks Commissioner if another extension will be granted. Our genuine belief is that the county is satisfied with us and wants to keep us around. But because we've always kept to the fields, making neither fuss nor fanfare, we don't rank high on anyone's agenda, and getting a firm commitment, or even just another extension, is like pulling teeth. At this point we'd love it if CSA members make use of whatever contacts or influence they have to advocate for the farm and our desire for a solid, long-term contract.

Despite our contract woes, we're making all the usual preparations for next year. In three weeks we plant garlic, we'll have our annual Thanksgiving pickup for early renewals, and seeds will be ordered in December. Again, we're eagerly anticipating a winter of rest, but we also know that next year's harvests will begin in the blink of an eye.

Sincerely,
Caroline and Dan