

A Step

inside

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www.ostgardens.com

libland@peconet.net, 641/495-6367

The greenhouse has been filled, emptied a bit and filled again. Since I last wrote, the mass of snow that



blanketed the state of Iowa this winter– and more specifically the mounds and mounds that has accumulated all over this farm - has miraculously melted away with minimal complications. Our seasonal transition was followed by a warmer than usual beginning to spring. Farmers all across the state are finding themselves just a tad ahead of schedule. That's a nice change over the past couple of springs where we've wrestled through lasting cold and wet conditions to start the planting season.

We began our spring crew the week of April 12...and it rained all day!
But we had plenty to do anyway.

In orienting the crew to the upcoming schedule, we reviewed our planting plan and week after week builds upon itself with long lists of vegetables to be planted. At this writing (5/2/10) our first batch of baby chicks are now 2 weeks old (see insert photo), we've gotten a good start on our early planting, and Tim's completed a major fencing project. But... there is still the greenhouse full awaiting more planting. May is a month full of more planting as we pass concerns of frost and move into transplant of our more tender crops.



What members need to know as start of deliveries draw near.

First delivery is set for first week of June. Des Moines and West Des Moines members receive deliveries on Wednesdays. North Iowa deliveries are on Thursdays.

EOW shares are scheduled differently for different sites. Because of the number of EOW shares, we alternate these deliveries among the various sites. A list of *10 Questions and Answers to introduce you to Your 2010 Farm Membership* is being emailed to our members with further detail. If, for some reason, you did not receive this list, contact the farm.

Shares are still available – It's not too late to sign up for a season of great eating! If you haven't signed up, do so today. If you have, please let your friends and colleagues know. We do hope to meet our goal of 140 members

and ask our members to help get the word out. You can direct folks to our website, or if a hard copy is helpful, please just let us know.

Chicken orders – Farm fresh chicken, raised on pasture and organic feed with great care – that’s what we offer. If you are interested in purchasing chicken this summer, we direct you to our website, under “Products” tab you’ll find our 2010 order form. We are taking orders now. First supply will be available mid-June.

Calendar of Events!

- [Wednesday, June 2 and Thursday, June 3](#) – First delivery of the season!
- [Sunday, August 8, 2 – 5 p.m. Farm Anniversary Celebration](#) – Mark your calendars now and plan to join in the fun and celebration marking the farms 15th anniversary. The event will be full of opportunities to enjoy everything the farm has to offer from relaxing in the breeze and chatting with others to exploring the gardens and sampling some of the best food around through a potluck. Stay tuned for more details.

Seed Issue Connected to Complexities of Agriculture

3rd of 3 in a series on *The Seeds of Change* - This series looks at the dramatic changes/consolidation in the vegetable seed industry over the past 10 years, potential concerns, and how this impacts the decisions we, as your farmers, make about our seed selection/purchase. First and second installments are available in February and March issues of “A Step Inside”.

In this final column on consolidation in the vegetable seed industry, I want to wrap up with a comment on how we, as a small family farm are impacted and what we are doing.

As much as possible, our commitment to sustainable agriculture involves not only our farming practices, but also what other practices our own purchasing habits support. We buy from organic seed sources and diverse suppliers who are committed to the Safe Seed Pledge. This pledge ensures us that these companies do not knowingly carry any genetically engineered seeds. Fedco Seed, one of our favorites, is a cooperative that goes even further, using a code to identify the source of seed – whether from a multi-national company or a small, independent farmer. Our seed selection criterion has focused on flavor and productivity; now it also includes seed source.

Since Monsanto began to move into the #1 position among vegetable seed companies, we have dropped varieties that went with those purchases. Just last year, we grew more than four different bell pepper varieties in an effort to replace a variety that was included in Monsanto’s recent purchase. Supporting diverse growers through our purchases is an important step that helps keep viable options open. Iowa’s own Seed Savers Exchange, in Decorah, IA, is a gem of community support and commitment to genetic diversity of the world’s food crops.

Sifting through the immediate impacts of vegetable seed consolidation such as needing to trial new varieties is just the tip of the complexities that continue to emerge surrounding food system issues. The interest by corporations in the vegetable seed industry stems from the perceived profit potential. Positioning to profit from the basic public good of our food source is a troubling concern at the core of this issue. We hope, as our farm members, you will see deeper into these issues when you encounter them in the news...as they most certainly will continue to be covered.