



December 11, 2008

Greetings CSAers,

The Left Foot Board met this week and approved a budget for the coming year. It is our first budget over \$200,000 and embodies these goals:

- Maintaining our current level of production and distribution through our established marketing channels (CSA, farmers markets, Coop sales, and donations to food banks, meals programs, and local non-profit fundraisers)
- Raising \$32,000 from our annual Fun Farm Formal event (a goal of 12% more than 2008 year), and increasing individual donations to \$28,000
- Invest in increasing the quality of the support and mentoring we provide for the people with intellectual disabilities and disadvantaged rural youth we serve by adding a half-time Vocational Support Coordinator to our staff.

It's an exciting and challenging plan, but one I feel we are ready for. I hope you'll feel the same and want to join us in making it happen.

What's in Your Box

- Buttercup Kabocha Winter Squash
- Potatoes -- Yellow Finn and Rose Finn
- Leeks
- Cilantro
- Carrots
- Salad mix -- lettuce, arugula, mizuna, mustard greens



Beth's Farm News: What's Growing On

We've been preparing for the winter weather that's coming this weekend. Kelly, Glenn, Ty, and two volunteers have been setting up plastic tunnels over the chard. Jane and Michael continue to box up winter squash, and we are moving produce out of the big greenhouse into the main building.

Wednesday we said farewell to Evergreen intern Ty and celebrated his graduation. Each staff member and grower emphasized our appreciation for his hard work and willingness to try anything and work with anyone. It's been a pleasure to watch him grow in his awareness of organic farming and working with diverse populations. We wish him the best in his future.

Sharon's Corner

I just read an article titled "Soil Health, Plant Health, Our Health" by Rex Dufour, of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (*ATTRA News* December 2008, Volume 16, Number 6). I thought about the article in light of increasing rates of cancers, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, autism, and allergies in the U.S.. Left Foot produce is grown on healthy soil, where the micro-organisms and nutrients are in a natural balance. Healthy soil grows vegetables with lots of nutrients also in a natural balance. And those vegetables, in turn, grow healthier bodies with good nutrition and strong natural defenses against disease. Read the article below, and enjoy your good health!



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"Soil Health, Plant Health, Our Health," by *Rex Dufour, NCAT Technical Specialist*

We are what we eat. This folk wisdom relates to plant health as well as to human health. Any organism that is provided a poor diet will be susceptible to a variety of ills and unable to grow well and be vigorous.

The soil is the primary source of nutrition for plants. When the soil is unhealthy, with low levels of organic matter, poor biological activity, and subsequent imbalances of nutrients, plants growing in that soil are likely to be more susceptible to attacks by various pests and diseases, and less able to respond and recover from these attacks. Plant pest problems may only be symptoms of an underlying problem—poor soil health.

The soil is the most complex ecosystem on earth, and we are only beginning to understand how this complexity relates to plant health. Consider that plants have evolved over hundreds of millions of years in non-agricultural systems. Over the millennia, plants have developed strategies and partnerships with soil organisms that enable plants to access the water and nutrients needed to successfully grow and reproduce.

Many soils around the country are in poor shape from excessive chemical and physical disturbance. Adding synthetic chemical fertilizers to these soils creates a situation in which a few nutrients suddenly become available in amounts that plants are evolutionarily unprepared to deal with. In some cases, such as the use of anhydrous ammonia, the act of fertilizing is directly destructive to the soil ecology. (See *Agronomy of Grassland Systems* by C.J. Pearson and R.L. Ison, 1987, Cambridge Univ. Press, p.77)

The effects of good soil management on plant health can be difficult to quantify because we are just beginning to understand enough to ask the right questions. However, the harmful effects of bad soil management are obvious, particularly when plants are under stress.

It's clear that good soil management has many positive impacts on plant health and likely on human health, too. The take-home message is that maintaining and increasing soil organic matter promotes soil health as well as the health of plants and humans.

Some interesting tidbits from peer-reviewed articles about effects of pesticides and chemical fertilizers on soils and pests:

- This study showed a significantly higher occurrence of insect-harming fungal diseases in soils from fields of organically managed farms. "Effects of farming system, field margins and bait insect on the occurrence of insect pathogenic fungi in soils" by I. Klingen, J. Eilenberg, and R. Meadow in *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment*, 2002, 91(1/3): 191-198.
- Several fungal diseases, such as rust and powdery mildew, are enhanced by high levels of nitrogen, particularly in the form of nitrate. Many bacterial diseases are promoted by high nitrogen levels as well. "Nitrogen form and plant disease" by D.M. Huber and R.D. Watson in *Annual Review of Phytopathology*, 1974, 12:139-165.



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- Glyphosate (Roundup™) has been shown to enhance the development of root disease and inhibit the systemic acquired resistance response. "Glyphosate treatment of bean seedlings causes short-term increases in Pythium populations and damping off potential in soils" by R.C. Descalzo, Z.K. Punja, C.A. Levesque, J.E. Rahe in *Applied Soil Ecology* 1998, 8:25-33.
- Plants that are high in nitrogen also support large aphid or leafhopper populations and are often more susceptible to virus infection. "Cropping practices and virus spread" by J.M. Thresh in *Annual Review of Phytopathology*, 1982, 20:193-218.

Recipes

Looks to me like a salad with thinly sliced leeks and grated carrots to go along with a hearty soup for the cold weekend ahead. Don't forget to check the [Recipe](#) section of the website for Carrot Curl Salad, Baked Eggs with Creamy Leeks, Caribbean Pumpkin and Black Bean Soup, as well as many other recipes.

Enjoy!



Compost turning is warm work!