

# Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello friends and neighbors!

Happy Spring! The days are getting longer, the plants are growing, and there's that smell of spring in the air... what a great time to get outside and get your hands dirty in the garden!

- ♣ The two snow flurries we had within a week were successful at confusing our plants a bit, but everything survived and is recovering nicely. It's hard to know when to grow and when to settle in for winter when snow and 80° temps are separated by 3 days!



- ♣ The garden is filling up fast with plants! As usual, we're experimenting with lots of different varieties, planting techniques, and intercropping combinations to see what works best.
- ♣ Construction on our new Bowden Rd farm stand shed made huge headway this month (thanks Chris and Keith!). We're hoping to have it open for business soon!
- ♣ Thanks to all who have stopped by to get plants! We still have strawberries, lettuce, kale, swiss chard, broccoli, and cilantro available now, with tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, and herbs coming along nicely. They should be ready to go within the next 2-4 weeks. Email to order, or just stop by the Chapel Hill farm stand Monday or Tuesday 5-7 pm!
- ♣ Fingers crossed for no more frosty temps! The fruit tree blossoms have amazingly hung in there through a few chilly nights, so we may get some fruit later this summer if we're done with frost for the season.



## To till or not to till?

I was recently asked, "When's the best time to till my garden?" My answer? Never!!

Like many tasks we're presented with, we tend to do things the conventional way simply because "that's the way things are done." But sometimes it's good to take a step back and think about *why* you're doing something and if it really is the best way to get the job done.

Take tilling, for example. What does it accomplish? Common thought is that tilling gets rid of weeds, which may be true temporarily, but what about in the long run? Tilling leaves you with bare ground, which nature abhors, and it brings weed seeds up to the surface. If you think that sounds like a bad combination, you're right. Tilling actually makes weed problems worse! That means more herbicides must be used once crops are planted, or more tilling or hand-pulling must be done to get rid of the new weeds. This loop means lots of bare soil, which means runoff, pollution of waterways, loss of topsoil, and an ever increasing depletion of nutrients and health from our agricultural land.

Another misconception is that tilling loosens the soil, but again, that's just a temporary fix. When soil is tilled, it destroys the soil structure formed by earthworms, fungi, bacteria, and other soil-dwelling critters, so when it's then stepped on, driven on, rained on, or just sits under its own weight, it collapses and compacts tighter than it was before.

The ground is more than just an anchor to hold plants in place. It's a living, breathing, communicating, interacting, complex ecosystem, and when you treat it as such, it does a lot of your work for you. Why break your back digging up your garden when you can recruit worms to do that for you? They're super cheap labor and they have no back to break! All they require is organic matter to eat and mulch on the surface to keep the soil cool and moist. Mulching will also prevent erosion, stifle weed growth, and keep your feet cleaner when you barefoot garden.

As you start to plan your backyard garden this year, consider incorporating a no-till plan to keep your plants happy and your soil ecosystem thriving. We're always happy to answer questions you may have about any gardening-related topics!

There's a whole lot more to the topic that won't fit in a box on a page. If you're interested in learning more about tilling, soil, and how it relates to human and global health, a great place to start is the book *Growing a Revolution* by David Montgomery.

*If you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see in future newsletters, or have any ideas for how we can improve our customer service or your produce-buying and -consuming experience, please let us know! And as always, please feel free to pass this along to all of your produce-loving friends and neighbors!*

*"You should be thinking unconventionally enough that you fail at at least one thing each year."*

~Gabe Brown~