

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello Friends and Neighbors!

Happy New Year! Our newsletter is finally back from its 4-month vacation. We made a lot of big steps last year and are really excited about moving into the new year, starting new projects, experimenting with new methods, and growing more food! Some of the things we've been working on since our last newsletter in August:

- ♣ **We added a new hoop house for winter growing.** Lettuce, arugula, kale, beets, carrots, spinach, collard greens, radishes, and peas are settling in nicely in their new home and we can already see a huge improvement in their growth with the added warmth of the tunnel. The 1,400 sq ft of covered soil should help us to extend our vegetable production to close to a year-round schedule!
- ♣ **Out in the garden,** close to 1,500 garlics were planted this fall. This cold-hardy plant is growing nicely and should be ready for harvest by June. We've also set up some low tunnels for added cold-hardy veggie production, with a bit more success than last year.
- ♣ **The woodchips have piled up in abundance this fall!** We've had enough to add another layer around our trees, our garden pathways, and even our entire strawberry patch, with enough left over to cover our asparagus bed once we get around to that project. Whew, that's a lot a wheelbarrows full! In all locations, this will act to cover and protect the soil surface, hold water in, suppress weed growth, make the worms happy, and break down over time into some really nice soil.
- ♣ **We added a new tool to our tool kit recently with the addition of a Broadfork.** This heavy-duty (and very heavy) fork is designed to help aerate and loosen the soil with minimal disturbance to the soil structure. Unlike tilling, which completely disrupts soil biology, the broadfork does not flip or mix the soil at all, it simply is a way to gently lift and loosen tight, compacted soil.
- ♣ **One of the methods we've been thinking and talking about for a while is the use of rock dust as fertilizer.** Attendance of a workshop with Dan Kittredge (founder of the [Bionutrient Food Association](#)) at the Sustainable Agriculture Conference in November finally motivated us to bite the bullet and give it a shot. Rocks are made of a wide range of minerals, and plants need a wide range of trace minerals in order to be healthy. Soils in the Southeast US are notoriously nutrient-depleted from a long history of heavy-tillage farming, erosion from that tillage, use of synthetic fertilizers, improperly managed livestock, and the lack of any recent glacial period to grind up rocks and add minerals back into the soil. We're in the process of spreading our rock dust on our gardens, trees, and pastures, but this is by no means a fast-acting fertilizer and only needs to be applied once per generation. Since plants can't directly absorb rocks, this slow-release fertilizer is completely dependent on a functioning soil food web and thus should become more effective as our soil biological activity increases.
- ♣ **This fall brought our second batch of pasture raised chicken and turkeys.** It was great to have so many animals out in our fields running around and laying down manure! After the rain finally returned following a summer drought, each spot that the animals impacted has turned lush green, laying the foundation for better supporting future crops and livestock. We learned a lot from our spring batch of chickens, and this time around, we had much heartier and livelier birds! For both the turkeys and the fall chickens, we set up more of a true "free range" system, where the only thing confining the birds was our poultry netting, which served as protection from predators. We found that this more open method was responsible for both the happier looking animals and the higher quality end product. We are eager for 2020 poultry production to nourish more life on our landscapes and to nourish many new customers in our community! Contact us to order some for yourself.
- ♣ **We held our first annual Holiday Markets in December at our Chapel Hill farm stand and it was a great success!** Besides our normal food items, we were also able to partner with neighbors and local farmers to bring crafts, fermented foods, and pasture-raised lamb and beef. Thanks to all who came out! With your support and donations, we were able to donate 3 turkeys to House of Prayer, a home in Jamestown, NC, that takes in and supports individuals struggling with addiction. Our cousin, Dylan, lived here during his fight against opioid addiction. We were happy to be able to support an organization during the holidays that brought so much support and happiness to Dylan during a difficult time.
- ♣ **With less daylight for working outside, winter is a great time to put our noses in books and fill our brains with new ideas and inspirations.** Here are a few books we're currently being inspired by:

[Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations](#)—David Montgomery

[Nourishment: What Animals Can Teach Us about Rediscovering Our Nutritional Wisdom](#)—Fred Provenza

[Sea Energy Agriculture](#)—Maynard Murray

[Minerals for the Genetic Code](#)—Charles Walters

[Dirt to Soil: One Family's Journey into Regenerative Agriculture](#)—Gabe Brown

[In the Shadow of Green Man](#)—Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin

- ♣ **With winter also comes planning for the next year.** We are taking some time to reflect and simultaneously look forward to the soon-to-come spring, gathering our thoughts now while the pace on the farm has slowed. We anticipate 2020 to bring many more animals, plants, food and markets than ever before!
- ♣ Oh yeah—Jake and Christy got hitched in November!

Our Year In Review...In Pictures!



Thanks to all who supported us in 2019! Let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions for how we can make 2020 even more successful.

"We have the world to live in on the condition that we will take good care of it. And to take good care of it, we have to know it. And to know it, and to be willing to take care of it, we have to love it."

~Wendell Berry~

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