

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello friends and neighbors!

It's been a drastic change of pace around the farm this month as the days have gotten shorter, the nights have gotten colder, and the vegetable seasons have switched. It's a little sad to see the summer veggies fade out, but we can't complain about getting a break from taking care of them...fall veggies are a lot less needy. Despite that, we've still had plenty to keep us busy this month:

- ❖ Fall veggies were planted and are starting to come in, including lettuce, spinach, kale, bok choy, radishes, pumpkins, and large winter squashes. The cabbage, broccoli, beets, peas, and swiss chard looking pretty good, but still need some time to grow.



- ❖ Summer is still showing its face in some places, as we are still picking yellow squash, green beans, sweet peppers, eggplant, okra, and the occasional tomato or two. We're hoping that they keep up the good work until the first frost!
- ❖ We harvested our first batch of sweet potatoes last week—it's always fun to dig those up and see the fruits (or roots) of your labor from the year! Despite the rabbit nibbles on a few of them, we still ended up with a nice batch of un-chewed potatoes, including one 8 pounder that Anna promptly misplaced...we're not sure if growing or misplacing an 8 lb sweet potato is more impressive. Probably the latter.
- ❖ Winterization of the garden has begun as the summer crops have started to die. Besides cover crops (see the MOW section), this also includes taking down trellises, flattening down the dead plants, making sure all the soil is covered, and of course, weeding.

Meet Our Workers

MOW

COVER CROPS!

Our cover crops have been thriving this month, so let's take a moment to get to know them better and learn about the very important role that they play in keeping the farm up and running:



Job title: soil farmers

Job description: We grow soil. But you shouldn't assume that we are all the same—we all have our own unique roles.

Some of us (sunn hemp, field peas, vetch, clover, alfalfa) make friends with soil bacteria that fix nitrogen (pictured below right), which adds extra nitrogen to the soil when they die.

Others (buckwheat, sunn hemp, alfalfa) add large amounts of biomass to cover the soil when they die. They form an armor over the soil surface to hold in moisture, prevent runoff, and feed soil life. Plus in life and after death, they are good at out-competing weeds, which helps to decrease the amount of time the humans have to spend weeding.

Another group (sunflowers, turnips, daikon radishes) send down deep tap roots that break up the soil, loosen it, and allow for better water penetration and retention. These tap roots are able to absorb nutrients from deep down in the soil and move them up into the body of the plant. Once the plant dies, those nutrients are added to the top of the soil as the plant decomposes, making them accessible to whomever grows there next.

- ❖ Sadly, we lost several 40+ year old plants when the power company came through to clear around the power lines by the house this month. In addition to newer plants, the following treasures were mowed to the ground: a huge clump of blueberry bushes; an old fig tree that fruited for the first time this summer; and a rose bush that had reached at least 30' in height. Each of these was planted by our grandfather and farm's namesake, Jim, and had great sentimental value. But plants can be resilient, so we're hoping that a few of them might send up new shoots next year.
- ❖ We've placed our annual order for apple trees from Century Farm Orchards and are looking forward to visiting the farm to pick them up. The farm has open house days in November where they sell grafted trees and you can wander through the orchards of dozens of varieties of old southern apples. They also sell all things apple: apples, apple butter, apple jelly, and homemade apple turnovers (Chris' favorite!). We'll be adding 15 more varieties to our fields this year and after planting over 100 apple trees between 2014 and 2015, we're glad that we won't have quite as many holes to dig this time!

MOU (continued from pg 1)

Favorite garden food: Sunlight! We also like the variety of minerals available in the soil.

Hobbies: sun bathing, photosynthesizing, fighting with weeds

Goals for the farm: Keep growing soil! Better soil makes our job easier. We want deep, loose top soil filled with organic matter, inorganic nutrients, and bacteria and mycorrhizae (these are our trading partners—we barter our carbon for their nutrients).

Favorite part about working on Jimmy Acres: Unlike on most farms, we get to hang out with other plants and bacteria in a diverse society. We're planted as a polyculture, so there are lots of types of plants around to interact with. Because the soil is not tilled and stays covered year-round, soil bacteria and fungi communities are able to grow and spread and allow us to talk to other plants.

Least favorite part of your job: Dying and getting eaten by worms. But we realize it is an important part of our job on the farm.

Favorite quote: "I thought I was pretty cool until I realized that plants can eat the sun and poop out air." –Jim Bugg



As always, we appreciate your support and interest in our farm, and we invite you to pass this along to your friends and neighbors. Let us know if you have any questions, comments, concerns, suggestions, ideas, critiques, or thoughts...we'd love to hear them!

