

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello friends and neighbors!

With the return of cool(er) weather, rain, and the appearance of fall vegetables, I guess it's time to admit that summer is over. Thanks to everyone who helped make it a successful one for us! Some highlights from the past month around the farm include:

- ❖ Fall seeds are finally in the ground and sprouting. So keep your eyes peeled for spinach, lettuce, kale, radishes, swiss chard, beets, and sweet potatoes over the next few weeks. Some of our summer veggies are still holding on (including peppers, eggplant, banana melons, yellow squash, okra, cucumbers, and tomatoes), but productivity has decreased as day lengths have gotten shorter and nights have gotten cooler.
- ❖ We are happy to report that we still have all 19 chickens that we got at the end of last month. Egg production has started out slow but seems to be improving (knock on wood). We're also pretty sure that a snake is stealing some of the eggs...any suggestions for stopping the snakes would be greatly appreciated!
- ❖ We're experimenting with cover crops this fall and have put out seed in part of the garden to (hopefully) add biomass to cover the soil, fix nitrogen, build microbial communities, increase organic matter content of the soil, and decrease weeds in our no-till system. A mix of sunn hemp, daikon radishes, turnips, buckwheat, vetch, and millet has started growing—we'll let you know how it goes!

Meet Our Workers

MOW

Aphid-Farming Ants

This month, let's get to know a group of our workers that goes largely unnoticed if you don't look closely enough. Our aphid-farming ants have been quite active this month and have been spotted on vegetable plants including squash, beans and tomatoes, as well as a pear tree. They were kind enough to take time out of their busy schedule to respond to our interview:



Check out a video of the ants at work on our facebook page! <https://www.facebook.com/JimmyAcresFarm/>

Job description: Raising aphids and keeping their population under control. We bite off their wings so they can't fly, and then we use our antennae to coat them in a chemical that tranquilizes them so they can't walk. This way, the aphids can focus on sucking juice out of plant leaves and secreting a sugary juice of their own that we can harvest to eat. We also cull the herd when their numbers get too big for us to manage.

Hobbies: What's that?

Favorite garden food: Aphids and aphid juice

- ❖ Lance has had a good year for large vegetable pictures, including numerous banana melons (or “banana-loupes” as one customer calls them since they taste exactly like a cantaloupe) and Upper Ground Sweet Potato Squashes--he’s posing here with our largest, weighing in at 27 lbs! Not bad for a squash that is said to only reach 20 lbs.



MOW

Hardest part of your job: Protecting the aphids from predators.

Goals for the farm: Maintaining an ecological community. Yes, we might be allowing aphids to suck some juice out of your plants, but we keep their numbers manageable and reduce their ability to spread through the garden. We help maintain a balance and allow ecology and biology to function as they are supposed to so that the humans don't have to do as much work or spray us (and the plants) with toxic chemicals.

"Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather."

-Rabindranath Tagore

