

Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

Vol. 34
November 2018

Hello Friends and Neighbors!

Lots of things going on around the farm this month...let's jump right in to it!

♣ Hoop house #1 is (partially) up! In true Tommerdahl form, we're figuring out the design as we go along and haven't quite figured out the best way to put the ends on. We have a few ideas to try, but until then, we just have really good ventilation.



♣ The new strawberry patch is finally finished! At least for now...no farm project is every fully finished. So far, the deer have stayed out and the plants are looking happy in their new home. While our berries may not be as big as most modern varieties, they are super sweet, juicy, and packed with flavor. We look forward to having enough to bring to the farm stand this spring!



♣ We also got our garlic in the ground this month. Thankfully, despite all the soggy soil and puddles around the farm, our garden plots were not overly saturated to the point of rotting the garlic cloves before they got a chance to get growing, and they are just now starting to poke their necks up through the soil!

♣ Jake and Anna were able to attend this year's Carolina Farm Stewardship Association annual meeting in Durham earlier this month. Between informative talks, local farm tours, and meeting and talking with many other farmers in the region, we came away with lots of new inspiration for the year ahead to try out new growing methods, new crops, and new ideas for bringing our food to your table. Topics of the conference were extremely diverse, ranging from things like hoop house design and utilization, raising pigs on pasture, permaculture design, starting a farm, and growing truffles. Jake spent a whole session learning the ins and outs of okra (hit it with a stick to make it grow faster!), and Anna got excited about the world of mushrooms and may even try her hand at raising some oyster mushrooms (especially if y'all express any interest in them!).

♣ With the short days and cooler temps, we can finally get ahead of the weeds in the garden. We're experimenting with a mix of cover crops and simply covering the ground with mulch in order to get the soil ready for spring. While cover crops keep roots in the ground, feeding the soil biology and drawing carbon down into the soil, we've found that simply mulching heavily with woodchips or hay makes things a lot easier to plant into in the spring. By suppressing weeds, keeping the soil covered and protected from erosion, holding in moisture and heat, and adding organic matter to be broken down by the soil biology, mulching is another great option for tucking in the garden through the winter. The downside being that new weed seeds can be introduced through imported hay, and you aren't able to keep living roots in the ground, but sometimes you have to take a risk to see what works best!

Nerdy Nature Notes

By Anna

Fall is the time of year that I have a chance to get out of the garden (aka my cubicle) and explore a little. As a biologist, I get excited by nerdy things—recently, we noticed that some of our beech trees down by the creek had a weird looking fungus growing on them (see picture below). We were worried it was a harmful disease, but turns out it is *Scorias spongiosa*, a harmless mold that is feeding not on the tree, but on the sap exuded by aphids living on the tree. The aphids feed exclusively on beech trees, so the mold is only on those trees as well...except when the aphids exude so much sugar that it drops to the ground, allowing the mold to spread along the forest floor. Pretty cool!



♣ Out in the orchard, we're experimenting with deer guards (i.e. plastic drain pipe) and have released a handful of the tallest fruit trees from the wire cages meant to deter deer predation. In their place, we're adding guards to the lower trunk of the trees to keep the deer from rubbing their antlers on them and destroying the bark. Fingers crossed that these trees are getting big enough to start fending for themselves and hopefully this will be enough to keep them safe! ***Have any spare/old plastic drain pipe lying around that you want to get rid of? Feel free to drop it off at either farm stand at any time, or email us to arrange for us to pick it up from you!***

♣ Fall and winter are great times for planning and Jake has definitely been taking advantage of that. As he transitions to full-time Jimmy Acres animal manager, he's been planning out options for bringing in animals in the spring to both help with soil management and provide our customers with high-quality, delicious meat. Pasture-raised pigs, chickens, and turkeys will hopefully be making their debut next year, and we are excited to get started on that next big step! More info on that to come as things progress...

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!

*"We are part of the earth and it is part of us...what befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth."
~Chief Seattle, 1852~*

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