

Solid Ground Community Farming 2023

February 12 – Beginning Together

Opening Inquiries:

- Why are you interested in this project and what are you hoping to get out of it?
- What produce do you regularly eat that can be grown here and are there any particular crops that you want to grow or that you definitely don't want to grow?
- What is your experience with farming/gardening? Are there any particular farming skills or resources that you would be willing to share with the group?
- Do you have any allergies, physical limitations, or other interesting qualities that the group should be aware of?

[Christin's Notes](#)

12th February, 2023: Reflections



On an unseasonably warm, sunny February day in the Hocking River Valley, in the Sunday Creek Watershed just up the hill from the villages of Millfield and Chauncey, 14 (of 18 total) participants – plus a slew of children of said participants - gathered together for the opening session of the inaugural Solid Ground Community Farming program.

Led by the steward of Solid Ground, Weston Lombard, and his vision of strengthening and enriching our community and our region through the model of farm as community hub, each member of this

newly formed cohort - even in various degrees of comfort or experience with gardening, farming, harvesting, processing, and preserving - found resonance in the idea that a farm is a perfect place for individuals, families, and communities to come together to find joy, belonging, meaningful work, support, growth and learning, refuge, and of course,



nourishment, for themselves, and for those applicable, their children.

We spent the afternoon sharing our stories, our ideas, our hopes, and our needs with one another. We walked the grounds and imagined possibilities together. We spread compost from Ohio University on the newly created terraced garden beds, and tamped locust posts into the ground for the creation of a protective perimeter fence for our future fruits and vegetables.



We identified crops we might like to grow, and envisioned the way the rain and sun would move across the land and how to optimize our garden design accordingly. We considered the tools, skills, and implements we have to share, and those we might need to acquire in order to achieve our goals and carry out our plans.

By the end of our time together, the Garden was beginning to shape, and the people were warm, sore, and dirty – tell-tale signs of a day well spent.

Beginnings are so often rich with excitement, possibility, and hope; the beginning of the Solid Ground Community Farm certainly is.



Looking Forward:

-Next session: Sunday March 12th from 1 to 4pm

March 26th (weekly, thereafter)

- Seed orders! Species list generated in the [notes](#) from our last meeting.

-Materials for next session: old start/seed trays and small pots, spud bar, post hole diggers, and garden trowels.

Resources // Notes // References

[Shared Photo Drive](#)

[SG Community Farming Roster](#)

26th March – Starting Seeds

[Solid Ground Community Farming Crop Records](#) (updated sheet 2 with 3/26 records)

[Planting Schedule](#)

Our last planned session was thwarted by a visit from Winter weather - ultimately, likely, good news when thinking about populations of Ticks, Mosquitoes, and other pesky critters that thrive in increasingly mild winters here in Appalachian Ohio.

When we gather around the picnic tables in the Solid Ground schoolyard, it is a quintessential Spring day - the sun is shining, the Daffodils are blooming, the Robins are singing, and layers of clothing are added and removed throughout the afternoon, depending on the moving clouds and one's proximity to a sunny soaked spot around the table.



We are joined by seasoned Farm Manager Dan Knier, who shares his experiences and advice with clarity, humor, gentleness, and humility. The day before, violent winds swept across the region, leaving over one-hundred local residents without power, including Solid Ground Farm, so we rely on the tried and true chalkboard for today's lesson on keeping accurate, detailed records as a means to improve

efficiency and productivity in the Garden. Once the power comes back on, we can transfer our records from the clipboard to the helpful spreadsheet templates Dan shared.



After a short lesson on techniques and strategies for seed germination, we dive in, quickly filling the eastern wall of the high tunnel with flats containing the makings of delicious vegetables-to-be.

2nd April – Building Foundations



Today we are dedicated to a strong foundation: the Soil, our most important foundation, we feed with Compost (from the Ohio University Compost facility); in hopes of protecting our efforts, we build a fence made of sturdy Black Locust posts. We love our White-Tailed Deer, and appreciate sharing the Land with them, but we also know that, if given the chance, they could very well undo all our work with very little effort on their part, so we'd rather discourage them from foraging in our small production Garden – we hope there is plenty of food for them in the abundance being tended for shared enjoyment elsewhere on these 17 acres of Solid Ground Farm and School and the surrounding



Forests and Prairies. Anyhow, that's a note for another journal entry on another day.

Today, we dream of vibrant vegetables, Mushroom houses, and the many meals we'll make together in the months to come.





16th April – Redbuds, Dogwoods, Dandelions, & Broadforks

The beauty of an Appalachian Foothills Spring day is almost indescribable. Those who have experienced it cannot forget it. The air is saturated with sweet smells and sounds of emerging creatures so loud your ears buzz. The Forests and Fields burst with delicious offerings. The joy of our miraculous existence is palpable from the vibrant blossoms to the obstreperous Avian, Amphibian, and Insect choruses that surround us. We and our Garden are coming alive with enthusiasm hard to contain and difficult to channel (especially for our young ones).

On a day such as this, it is easy to remember how blessed we are. The warmth of the Sun and a mid-day Rain remind us of the magic we are surrounded by. Today is a balm for the Winter-weary soul and body, and we soak up as much as we possibly can. Our day at Solid Ground Farm is rich and full -



digging post-holes, carrying Black Locust posts, broadforking in compost, harvesting Nettles and Dandelions, making chips and fritters - the opportunity to experience the newness of the season, to build a brand new Garden, to nourish ourselves with the first tastes of Springtime – we are awash in the wonders of what it means to create in community with one another and the Land we are bound to.



2nd May – Seeds & Sprouts!



At last, our babes have emerged from their protective Seeds and the Soil is ready to receive them (the Brassicas, anyhow; we'll let the Lettuces and Spinach stay safe in the protective shield of the high tunnel a little while longer). We're experimenting with a "moat-garden" in the wet patches of the upper terrace.



Amidst the continued unfurling of this magnificent Spring, it was lovely to witness a community working in collaboration; people offering up their energy and efforts where they were needed; the patient guidance of children by their parents and friends; the effort of small hands performing big tasks; and the dedication



of Rena planting Lacinato Kale in the loveliest, most meticulous diamond pattern that I have ever witnessed.



And I was reminded that we aren't planting Brussels Sprouts, we are planting Butter Spuds.

On a mid-week day between CFG sessions, I caught the most beautiful glimpse of Ariel broadforking beneath the rays of Appalachian Springtime Sun, and it was worth a deep, reverent pause to acknowledge the gift it is to tend this Land and grow within this incredible community of Beings.



21st May – Faces of Solid Ground CFG

I spent May 21st honoring the legacy of my Mom at a handbell choir concert performed by the bell choir she used to direct and play with (she had been a founding member of the group since its inception in the 1970s, and would continue playing with and directing the choir until her unexpected passing in April of 2013). While I was sad to miss a beautiful day in the Garden in my Athens County home, it was a gift to hear music performed in her memory by a group of people who loved her so much.



I seem to have missed “portrait day” at the Community Farm Group – it’s lovely to see many of our special people captured on film on what was such a beautiful Spring day. It’s a reminder of so much of what it is that makes this such a nourishing, life-giving place to call home, and why this Community Farm Group is such an amazing project to be a part of. Featured in the photos are even a few visitors



who came out to Solid Ground Farm – lovely pieces of our community even if they don't get to come to CFG regularly, and a reminder that the “open invitation” to come to the group and to come to Solid Ground Farm at any



given time is part of what keeps this place growing and thriving! (Much was accomplished this week, as well – more planting, watering, composting, selective plant thinning, etc.)



28th May – Good Truck Fun



There's nothing like a truck bed full of compost to get human kids excited. Especially when said children just finished a study in microplastics at the badass school they attend (right here on Solid Ground Farm, in our



case) and are enthusiastic about eliminating these materials from our Soil and Watershed.

Despite the looks of it, today was not about shooting a commercial for the Toyota Tundra, though if the company wants to give us some moneys for the endorsement, we're open to negotiations. No, today was about nourishing our Soil and the growing Plants residing therein; it involved lots of shoveling and wheelbarrowing. It was also a great day for harvesting Kale and stomping in our brand-spankin' new Pond with the copious Amphibians making a home out of this fresh(water) habitat. It was, admittedly, a great day for hanging out in the back of the 'yota.



A cold snap in the Hocking River Valley has us covering our Lettuce, Beet, and Carrot Seeds overnight for protection. But a day of shoveling provides plenty of warmth for People and Plant bodies, alike.



17th July – Catching up from the Summer Whirlwind



In the blink of an eye, we transitioned from Spring to Summer here on Solid Ground and in Appalachian Ohio. It's hard to believe how quickly time has flown, and how much the Garden has grown and changed in this time. I've been slacking on journaling and phenology, and as a collective, we haven't been keeping up with regular photo documentation.



What we do have are massive amounts of Kale and an abundance of Greens we have been eating throughout the month of June, a Garden abuzz with Birds, Insects, and Amphibians, and some photographs to document our experiences over these last few weeks.



It's been a strange Summer, weather-wise – the driest start to the season that I can recall here in Ohio – but the winds have brought their share of good tidings and abundance, as well, including a new family that has moved from Indiana to Ohio to bring more great Land and Community stewardship practices to our blessed community.

I cannot recall the exact date of our very first Tomato harvest here on Solid Ground Farm, but the Tomatoes have been coming (and they don't stop coming) – so for those of us able to enjoy Nightshades, that's been a nice addition to the Summer. Cucurbit blessings have included regular processing parties as a part of the weekly Farm Group activities, and it's been a joy to add live fermented pickled Cucumbers to the daily menu.



30th July – (post Nelsonville Music Festival weekend) – Big Summer Time



'Tis the season in which I never cease to be amazed. One morning, I walk through the Garden, greeted by Cucumbers and Zucchini no bigger than my thumbs, only to return the next day to produce as large as my limbs. It's hard to fathom all we've been blessed to bear witness to over these last few months; hard to quantify the hours spent and energy invested in these rows and in this Soil, but when I stare at a basket full of life-giving food; when I take in the sight of a dozen jars filled with fermenting



vegetables; when I sit down to a meal comprised of ingredients grown by the people I care for and depend on – the gift of our existence seems tangible to me.

Our community has grown new limbs of its own, a consistent pattern of harvesting, tending and processing unfolding in these days of big harvests. We didn't come together with a clear outline of schedules, processes, and responsibilities; we're not keeping diligent records of mapping, planting, and harvesting; we've not measured,

weighed, or counted pounds of food grown or numbers of jars of processed foods; we haven't tracked meals served or money saved on groceries. But this time last year, this Garden was but a glimmer in Weston's eye and I agreed he had another great idea; less than 12 months later, here we are, and I think it is worth celebrating. It's affirming and inspiring to look around and see folks sharing experiences, skills, and interests; coming together in synergy to accomplish what we can. It's been no small feat, and in times of uncertainty, I hope this food nourishes everyone else as much as it does me.

Also, Sesame Plants (and Sesame Blossoms) are spectacular. It's been fun to watch these beauties grow and learn a little bit about them along the way...



2nd August – Disco Cucumbers

Cucumbers are beautiful. Cucumbers are bountiful. Cucumbers are versatile.

Pickled Cucumbers; sliced young Cucumbers; Cucumber-Lemon-Spearmint Water; Cucumber gazpacho; Cucumbers dipped into Tahini sauce;

Cucumber spring rolls.

The collective fondness has grown for Cucumbers, and ours have inspired a sense of stewardship in me.

How do we ensure their success next year?



Paul Strauss says, “Cucumbers love Water”. Cucumbers also love to climb and hang. They seem sensitive and fragile – perhaps just too universally appealing to last long in our hungry, greedy society and our fragmented ecosystems. I dream of a Cucumber tunnel to support and strengthen next year’s crop. This year, we enjoy ‘em while we got ‘em, and dance with them when they go disco.



Also worth noting is a significant Beet, Kale, and Tomato harvest, and a funky but mighty Carrot harvest....



August 3 – Dog Days

“The dog days or dog days of summer are the hot, sultry days of summer.” Named originally for the period following the rise of the star system Sirius (the “Dog Star”) and its alignment with the Sun between July 23 and August 11. It noticeably concurred with the season of heat, drought, sudden thunderstorms, lethargy, fever, mad dogs, and bad luck. Now simply referring to the hottest, most uncomfortable part of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. But, here we are under Sirian skies amidst the hot, sultry, droughtful, fevered days of August 2023.

Ahead of the usual start time, Ariel and I chopped and dropped the Zucchini Plants back into the Soil, added more Compost, and planted Seeds of Lettuce, Spinach, and threw in some Dill and Basil for fun.

This journal keeper had to leave a bit after 1:00; Rena, Tony, Luke, Kyle, Drew, and Ariel did some selective Plant thinning around the Lettuce and Radish mounds. Tony brought “cool little mini scythe type tools” that they worked with in the aisles and around the beds. Many Tomatoes were harvested and stored in the outdoor kitchen fridge for processing // sauce making next week.

20th August – Group Reflections & Garden Adornments

Today we came together for the classic “wish-sandwich session”, in which we discussed what has been going well and what we wish/ed for as individuals and a group. Some great ideas came out of our discussion; including a joke Kyle made about Claude Van Dam (?) and Brussels Sprouts (Butter Spuds) harvesting posture that I didn’t write down. Hopefully that treasure hasn’t been lost forever to the ethers.

Besides the astounding wit of our community; everyone’s impressive ability to remain present and engaged despite incredibly busy times; and a renewed commitment to honesty, vulnerability, setting boundaries, and asking for support when needed, the top line takeaway is that *we have a new time proposed for the*

Schedule for the remainder of 2023 growing season:

Sunday 1:00-4:00

(3:30 = snack/meal time)

Basic outline

1:00 Harvest (all together)

Post-harvest:

TP – Team “Process” – heads up the hill to process & prep

- Washing greens
- Other:

Tomato sauce (Drew will bring supplies for 8/27)

Roasted root veggies

Zucchini Bread (*Jo doesn’t eat gluten, so either gf bread or just save some plain Zucchini for them*)

Soup stock/broth

TT – Team Tend – divides up other tasks

- Watering
- Selective Plant thinning
- Infrastructure improvements

3:30 Snack/Meal time

Share food together – folks who are able to may choose to bring contributions (no obligation); TP shares snack(s) from the day’s harvest; some weeks we may decide as a group to organize a more robust sort of coming together/celebration (swimming, playing music, full-on meal, etc.)

Additional Notes:

No group gathering Pawpaw weekend (September 17)

When using the cabin (during the school year) -- Leave No Trace!!

Also... We began fermenting more Cucumbers, harvested more produce, and hung the Garden Adornments / Deer deterrents made by the youngins last session;



More Seeds of Greens were planted, and a watering schedule for the week was made:

Water schedule (8/21-8/26)

(Seed babes – Lettuce, Spinach, Kale, Radish)

Monday - Weston

Tuesday - Weston

Wednesday - Ariel or Drew

Thursday - Jo

Friday - Jo

Saturday - Weston / Molly Jo



Tomato Processing Supplies (8/27)

What?	Who?	Quantity?
Boiler, Pot, etc	Drew	
Funnel, Jar lifter, etc.	Rina has jar lifter	
Jars	Some at Farm; could use more (MJ can bring some)Rina can too	
Immersion Blender (?)	Rina	

And, we discussed some ideas moving forward,

Potential Autumn projects:

Planting (and tending)

Greens -- Lettuce, Spinach, Beets, Carrots

Plant Garlic (*November is ideal for this activity*)

Asparagus

Cucumber trellis (*Harvest Bamboo; construct trellis/tunnel*)

27th August – Seasonal Savoring

Today was a mellow day, but highly productive. We bid adieu to our Cucumbers, harvesting our last fruits of the season, chopping and dropping the Vines back into the Soil, adding some finished Compost in, and planting new Seeds (Lettuces and hearty Green mix). It's bittersweet to think of the inevitable passing of time; the shifting seasons; the ever-onward spiral, but it feels nothing short of miraculous to bear witness to these cycles of growth, death, and renewal.

Our bounty of Tomatoes became (a couple dozen jars, i think, of) deep red, delicious sauce (thanks to Drew and Eric for leading these efforts).



We enjoyed snacking on Delicata Squash “chips”, sliced Cukes, and a yogurt tahini sauce (until Mr. Tuxedo Kitty helped himself to some)... for our farm friends who were unable to join us today, it was a delight to leave behind gifts of the Garden and the day in the refrigerator (extra jars of Tomato sauce!) for them to retrieve at their next visit to Solid Ground.

Next week looks relatively low-key. We'll need to water, harvest, wash, and do some selective plant thinning. We'll stockpile Tomatoes for a second batch of sauce (that we may even water-bath-can at Farming Group on the 10th?!) – in the coming weeks/months, we'll have the opportunity to engage in other fun projects like Cucumber Tunnel building, building the Compost infrastructure (at the high tunnel/nursery), and more. I am always grateful and excited at the thought of more hands and minds working collaboratively on the projects that nourish me in so many ways!