

Thrive

Volume 1, Issue 7
March 2011



Sustainable Agriculture in Calvert County

Welcome

... to **Thrive**, a newsletter focusing on sustainable agriculture in Calvert County, Maryland.

The Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County formed The Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup with members from the Soil Conservation District, the Department of Economic Development, the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Office, the County Health Department, the Department of General Services and the Department of Planning and Zoning to promote agriculture in the County.



Melons in the field –
ACLT Double Oak Farm



Potato field at Lamb's Quarter

Community Supported Agriculture

Does the idea of having a guaranteed customer – willing to pay a negotiated price for your produce appeal to you? How about having cash flow at the beginning of planting season? You're not alone.

Does the idea of receiving a freshly picked box of produce every week, grown locally appeal to you and your idea of healthy living? Does the idea of supporting a local farm, respond to your own ideas of community sustainability?

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is not a new concept. Over the last 20 years, (CSA) has become a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. Here are the basics: a farmer offers a certain number of "shares" to the public. Typically the share consists of a box of vegetables, but other farm products may be included. Interested consumers purchase a share (aka a "membership" or a "subscription") and in return receive a box (bag, basket) of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season.

This arrangement creates several rewards for both the farmer and the consumer.

Advantages for farmers:

Get to spend time marketing the food early in the year, before those 16 hour days in the field.

Receive payment early in the season, which helps with the farm's cash flow.

Have an opportunity to get to know the people who eat the food they grow.

Advantages for consumers:

Eat ultra-fresh food, with all the flavor and vitamin benefits.

Get exposed to new vegetables and new ways of cooking.

Usually get to visit the farm at least once a season.


Find that kids typically favor food from "their" farm – even veggies they've never been known to eat.

Develop a relationship with the farmer who grows their food and learn more about how food is grown.

It's a simple enough idea, but its impact has been profound. Tens of thousands of families have joined CSAs, and in some areas of the country there is more demand than there are CSA farms to fill it. The government does not track CSAs, so there is no official count of how many CSAs there are in the United States. Currently there are two CSA programs in Calvert County.

The Lamb's Quarter (a community supported family farm) owned and operated by the Bourne family provides a 22 week or 11 week CSA program. The beginning and end of the program depends on the needs of the crops.

Continued on page 2



Community Supported Agriculture (continued)

The Bournes also provide a Pastured Meat service. Visit their webpage: <http://www.thelambsquarter.com/>. Call 410-257-4399 or email at: thelambsquarter@comcast.net

The American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) as part of its mission to connect people to the land has expanded its CSA (Double Oak) farm by tripling the land under cultivation and hiring interns for the season. Produce will be available to shareholders from as early in May as weather permits until the end of October. For share information contact Joy Woppert at 410-414-3400 or by email: volunteer@acltweb.org

Information for this article was supplied by Local Harvest – real food, real farmers, and real community
<http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

Planning For The Farm Tour

Three working farms participated in the 13th annual Calvert County Farm Tour on Sunday, October 17, 2010. Special activities and educational opportunities provided a great family outing at Fresh Meadows (Bay Equine Services, Fridays Creek Winery, and Spider Hall Farm. Visitor counts at each farm ranged from 300 to over 900. A partial list of activities included: corn maze, hay rides, petting farm, pumpkin patch, grape stomping, complimentary wine tastings, local meat sales, horse-drawn hay rides, equine demonstrations, pony rides, produce sales and much more.

Because of the increased interest by the farm community in embracing the farm tour, the 2011 farm tour will be expanded into a two-day event set for October 15th and 16th with additional hours of operation on each day. The two days will permit additional farms to join the tour and provide ample time for visitors to see as many farms as desired.

If you are interested in having your farm featured in the 2011 Farm Tour, please contact [Jan Ashworth](mailto:Jan.Ashworth@co.cal.md.us) on 410-535-4583 or ashworjs@co.cal.md.us

Calvert Soil Conservation District Equipment Rental - -

The District's equipment rental program started in 1997 with the purchase of a 10 Foot No-till Drill. This purchase was made through a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Since that time the District has purchased several new pieces of equipment with District funds. All farmers in Calvert County are eligible to rent the equipment. Equipment is rented on a first come first serve basis with equipment rental charged set at a rate that will cover the repair and maintenance of the equipment. Other equipment available for rent: Brillion Seeder, Great Plains 7-ft No-till Drill, Litter Spreader 16-Foot Pull-Type, Wheatheart Post Pounder, Tractor & Trailer w/Kasco Versa-Drill No-till Drill, John Deere 10-ft No-till Drill. If you are interested in renting the equipment, please contact the Calvert Soil Conservation District at (410)535-1521 x3. Further information can be found at their website:

<http://www.calvertsoil.org/>

Calvert Soil Conservation Gets New Equipment

Calvert Soil Conservation District has purchased a sweet potato digger manufactured by US Small Farm Equipment Co., the digger can harvest other root crops including Irish potatoes, carrots and turnips. This piece of equipment will allow Calvert County Farmers to expand into the "Locally Grown" market while reducing the amount of labor needed to hand dig.

This unique digger can harvest root crops planted flat, as well as the easier to harvest, hilled plantings. Discharge height and hydraulically controlled digging depth, the crop can be dug, and loosened from the soil. It is discharged with minimal drop, along with a portion of the soil. This greatly reduces skin damage. The digger requires a tractor with a minimum of 30 hp, a PTO, and external hydraulic connections. Delivery is expected March 2011. The unit will be available for rental for the fall 2011 vegetable harvest.

Check out the new Tater Digger!



D-10T 1-Row Potato Digger
with Sweet Potato Option

**Farmers Markets for the 2011 Season
(Start and end dates to be announced)**

Market	Location	Days/Times	Contact/phone	Email
Solomons	Parking lot adjacent to Riverwalk, north of the Solomons Pavilion	Thursdays – 4pm– 8pm	Kelly Slagle 410-535-4583	slaglekr@co.cal.md.us
North Beach	5 th Street between Bay and Chesapeake Ave.	Fridays – 6pm – 9pm	Stacy Wilkerson 301-855-6681	northbeach@northbeachmd.org
Barstow	Calvert Fairgrounds 140 Calvert Fair Drive Barstow	Saturdays – 7:30am- 12pm	Kelly Slagle 410-535-4583	slaglekr@co.cal.md.us
Makers Market at Annemarie Gardens	13480 Dowell Road Solomons	First Saturday of each month 9am-12pm	Kathy Magiera– 410-326-4640	amgmarketing@chesapeake.net
Calvert Memorial Hospital	Parking Lot “D” (for 2011 this may change)	Tuesdays – 3pm to 7pm	Richard Haefner 410-535-8188 or Kelly Slagle 410-535-4583	richardhaefner@yahoo.com slaglekr@co.cal.md.us

It’s just around the corner folks. Get ready NOW!

If you are interested in selling items from your farm and have questions, please contact Veronica Cristo for Zoning questions at 410-535-1600 x2489 / cristova@co.cal.md.us or Lisa Laschalt for Health Department questions at 410-535-3922 / llaschalt@dhhm.state.md.us



**Twenty Tips for Successful Marketing at Farmers Markets
And Farm Stands**

From a recent presentation by Shannon Dill, Extension and Agriculture Educator

1. Differentiate your product - - Offer at least one item that is different than your competition.
2. Research new varieties and be creative. – Have something new for repeat customers.
3. Extend your growing season. – Plant different varieties with different harvest dates.
4. Add value to at least one product that you sell. – Packaging, sizing options – Gift items
5. Set up attractive displays using colors and fresh produce. – Use flowers, colors and smells.
6. Have legible signs that are appealing and informative.– Advertise your farm –you have 3 seconds to attract the customers .
7. Merchandize by creating a theme with your products. –Be recognizable. Use farm pictures.
8. Merchandize by creating a mood with your products. – Farmers markets are fun!
9. Have a written business and marketing plan and follow it. – Simple, realistic, specific and complete.
10. Use the 4 P’s of marketing - PRODUCT – Include market research, logos, slogans, sizing, packaging.
11. Use the 4 P’s of marketing - PRICE - Consider cost of production, break-even point, market position, supply and competition and time of the year.
12. Use the 4 P’s of marketing – PLACE – Where to sell. Transportation. Plan for excess. Inventory.
13. Use the 4 P’s of marketing –PROMOTION– Unpaid-Positive,public relations. Paid–Advertising,promotions.
14. Manage your finances: Enterprise budgets, cash flow.
15. Practice good customer relations. Repeat customers are essential. Keep area neat and clean.
16. Make a good first impression. SMILE and have good eye contact.
17. Keep detailed records for business, marketing and production reasons. Sales/revenue. Income/expenses.
18. Assess and manage risk. Consider liability insurance to help manage risk.
19. Learn and follow regulations – Weights, measures, food processing, etc.
20. Have fun at the market!

**Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup
c/o Board of County Commissioners
175 Main Street
Prince Frederick MD 20678**

Help the County Save Resources and Benefit the Environment –Receive this newsletter electronically. Send your request to cristova@co.cal.md.us and be sure to include your full name. We will email the link with each new edition. Archived editions are available as well at: www.calvertag.com .



Upcoming Events – Mark your Calendar

“The Mechanics of Going Organic”

Thursday, March 17, 6:00 p.m.
Calvert Library, Prince Frederick



Featuring
Ed Fry
Organic Farmer

Ed has been farming since the '60's and has 400 acres of land in organic production at Fair Hills Farm (located in Chestertown, MD). Part of the Fry family's organic grain crop is fed to their dairy herd and manure is spread back on the crop fields as organic fertilizer. Ed will share his successes and near misses and tips to going organic.

There is a growing interest in organic farm products, fueled by a population interested in better health and farm sustainability.

Whether you grow grain, vegetables or produce meat, find out how to become a certified organic farmer.

Learn tips to successful production and marketing of your organic products.

Call Denise Cherry@410-535-1600x2340 for further information and to reserve your spot at the workshop.



Sponsored by 

Thurs., March 17 – 6:00pm - **The Mechanics of Going Organic** - Calvert Library, Prince Frederick

Sat., March 12 – 11:00am – **Identifying Common Weeds in Your Garden** - Greenbelt Library

Sat., March 19 – 11:00am – **Starting a Vegetable Garden** – Greenbelt Library

Sat., March 26 – 1:00pm – **Herbs to Grow & Cook** – Glenarden Library

Mon/Wed – April 4 & 6 – 9am – NOON – **Canning Techniques for High and Low Acid Foods** – \$35.00 (includes a copy of *So Easy To Preserve*) – UMD Extension Office, 18410 Muncaster Rd., Derwood. Pre-register. Contact: Rebecca Davis – rdavis3@umd.edu or call 301-590-2811.

March Garden Prep (from the MD Extension Service website)

- Clean up beds
- Till beds and vegetable gardens
- Plant seeds indoors (check package for date)
- Turn compost pile
- Transplant trees and shrubs (if no open buds yet)
- Prune roses
- Sharpen lawnmower blade
- Set lawnmower blade higher for fuller, healthier lawn