

# Spring 2005 CSA Update



## Waltham Fields Community Farm

Community Farms Outreach, Inc.  
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781-899-2403, [www.communityfarms.org](http://www.communityfarms.org)

Dear CSA members,

Well, the crocuses are starting to bloom as I write this in late March, and even though the mud and frost (and, today, 6 inches of snow) are still in the farm fields, the onions, leeks, lettuce and beets are starting to show their faces in the greenhouse. The CSA season will be upon us before you know it, and so we'd like to take this opportunity to send you some answers to questions that might be lurking in the back of your minds. As always, if you have others, email is the best way to reach me—[farmmanager@communityfarms.org](mailto:farmmanager@communityfarms.org)—but the telephone works as well, and soon enough we'll have the opportunity to speak in person every week!

Amanda

### **Why don't I need to choose a pick up day at the farm this year?**

We are trying something new this year—flexible pickup days. That means that you can come either on Sunday or Thursday of any given week, between 3:30 and 7:30, to pick up your share. Our distributions will start on a Sunday and end on a Thursday, so you won't be able to pick up your share on a Sunday AND a Thursday in any given calendar week; but you can definitely switch back and forth from week to week without letting us know which day you'll be coming. If you are splitting a share, you and your share partner must arrange to come on the same day. We cannot accommodate split shares on different pickup days.

### **Yikes! How will you know how many people to harvest for?**

We will do an extra-large harvest on Sunday mornings to accommodate anyone who shows up on Sundays. Anything that's left over and in good condition will be donated on Monday mornings to our hunger relief partner organizations, who have let us know that they can use quite a bit of produce this year. Shareholders will check off their names with the distribution coordinator on Sundays when they come, so we'll assume that anyone who hasn't checked off their names on Sunday will come on Thursday, and we'll be able to harvest accurately on Thursday mornings. This makes it really important that you let the distribution coordinator know when you come on Sundays!

### **What's this I hear about more choice in the shares?**

We'll be using a new pickup system, where you can choose the veggies that you want from a variety of things that we've harvested. Each week, there will be a greens table (including lettuce, chard, spinach, asian greens, kale, etc.) and an "other veggies" table (including beets, carrots, eggplant, squash, broccoli, etc., depending on the time of the season). You'll be able to fill a bag at each table. We'll provide produce bags. Feel free to take them home or to use them as a measuring device and empty them into your own bags. Some crops, like melons, corn, or early tomatoes, will always be distributed by the piece (for example, "1 per share" or "1/2 dozen per share").



*Matt Kochka lifts a lid off the cold frame while Ellen Gray plows a field. Matt and Ellen are the new Assistant Growers for the 2005 season at Waltham Fields Community Farm. You may recognize Ellen—she was a farmhand in 2003.*

Photos by Kathy Diamond

***What crops are pick-your-own? How does that work?***

Pick-your-own crops include beans, peas, cherry tomatoes, plum tomatoes, hot peppers, herbs and flowers, and strawberries. All but the strawberries are located near the distribution area for ease of harvesting. We'll let you know how much of what to harvest each week, and make sure that the beds are labeled. You do the rest! During the CSA member orientation on May 15th, we'll show folks around the pick-your-own beds and do a quick introduction to harvesting techniques, as well as to some of the crazy heirloom varieties that we're growing this season (Green Sausage plum tomatoes, Fish hot peppers, etc.). If you ever need more information about Pick-Your-Own during the season, you should feel free to ask any farm staff member or your distribution coordinator.

Pick-your-own hours are the same as the distribution times at the farm: Sundays and Thursdays from 3:30–7:30 PM. Please plan to harvest pick-your-own crops on the same day you pick up the rest of your share. Shareholders who pick up in Cambridge and Somerville are welcome to visit the farm on Sundays after 9:00 AM to harvest pick-your-own crops. Please check with a farm staff member when you arrive to see what's available that week.

***Who will I see when I come to pick up my share at the farm?***

You'll most often see your distribution coordinator, a CSA shareholder who manages the distribution each week in exchange for a share of produce from the farm. You may also see various members of the farm staff, including the Farm Manager (Amanda Cather), the two assistant growers (Ellen Gray and Matt Kochka), two interns (Aviva Gerber and Alex O'Neill), two work sharers (Mairead McSweeney and Chrissy Kellogg), our flower garden manager (Linda MacMillan) and her assistant (Tasha Pakan), and dedicated volunteers (like Ben Noeske). Marla Rhodes, our Administrative and Development Manager (and originator of the beloved "pick-your-own what and where" sheets), will also be around the farm. One of the assistant growers will be responsible for each CSA pickup day and, along with the distribution coordinator, will have the most information about the harvest for that day. You should always feel free to approach any of these people with questions or just to hear how things are growing in the fields.

***Who will I see when I come to pick up my share in Cambridge or Somerville?***

Linda MacMillan coordinates the Cambridge pick up site, at 25 A Kelly Road in Central Square from 5:00–7:00 PM on Thursdays. You should plan to bring

your own grocery-type bags for carrying your produce, but plastic produce bags will be available at the site. Linda usually puts the crates of produce on the back of her pickup truck in a shady spot. She'll arrange the produce so that you'll know what goes in the greens bag (see "choice in the share," above) and what goes in the "other" bag.

Molly Baskette and Kerrie Harthan share the task of coordinating the Somerville pick up site at First Church Somerville, 89 College Avenue in Somerville from 4:00–7:00 PM. Pickups will take place on the church lawn in sunny weather, inside the church hall in rainy weather. Two-hour parking is generally available on College Avenue for all, and on side streets for those with Somerville resident parking stickers. Molly will generally be around to greet people, with a break around 5:30, after which you may also meet her son Rafe. According to Molly, "we're also thinking about having a once-a-month potluck on Thursday evenings, say at 7:00 PM, once the growing season gets going, that anybody in the Somerville CSA share can be part of. We have a spacious kitchen and people can throw anything in from their box that they think they might not get to during the week...." Plan to bring grocery bags with you; as with the Central Square pickup, produce bags will be available at the site to "measure" your share (see "choice in the share", above.)

***Can I walk around the farm when I come to pick up my share?***

This is your farm! You should absolutely feel free to walk around the farm, check out the fields and the forests, play Frisbee, eat a picnic, and say hello to the farm staff. Please keep dogs on leashes, and please stay on the pathways if you walk through the fields (if you're not sure where they are, feel free to ask!). Respect areas of the Field Station that are not "ours," especially any that are marked with no trespassing signs. Please ask a farm staff person if you'd like to nibble on a crop that is not marked as pick-your-own. And please be aware that adults and children may only climb or sit on any tractor or farm equipment when a farm staff member is present, and are NEVER allowed to climb on a tractor or piece of equipment that is running. Also, remember that this is a working farm and be aware of moving equipment, hard-to-see irrigation lines, and other potential hazards as you walk around the fields.

***Can I visit the farm at other times?***

The Waltham Field Station is a great place to take walks, have picnics, look for wildlife and enjoy a sanctuary of nature in the heart of the city. As a CSA shareholder, you have a connection to the farm that goes beyond that of a visitor. You should feel free to visit and walk around any time. Farm staff are on

site Sunday through Thursday. As always, please keep dogs on leashes, stay on pathways, and be respectful of farm fields as well as the many other projects going on at the Field Station. Please limit your harvesting of Pick-Your-Own crops to distribution times only, and be sure to ask a farm staff member before you taste any other crop. Please remember the guidelines about farm equipment listed above.

If you'd like to work on the farm, volunteer drop-in hours for farm work vary by the season. Individual volunteers are welcome to meet our staff at the distribution shelter (located behind the red brick building at the Field Station) at the times below to help plant, transplant, weed, harvest or participate in other farm tasks. Children of any age are welcome with adult supervision. Dogs are welcome on leashes.

Please be aware that while you are welcome to visit the site at other times, we can't promise that we'll be available to incorporate you into the work on the farm except at the hours listed below!

### **VOLUNTEER DROP-IN HOURS**

**April-May:** Sun and Tues 8:30 AM or 1:30 PM

**June-Sept:** Sun, Tues, Thurs 8:30 AM or 1:30 PM,  
Wed 8:30 AM only

**Oct-Nov:** Sun and Tues 8:30 AM or 1:30 PM

### ***I'm splitting a share. How does it work?***

In terms of our farm record-keeping, a share that is split between two households is considered a full share with two shareholders "attached" to it. When you check in with your distribution coordinator on Sunday or Thursday when you come to pick up your share, we'll check off your share as having been picked up for the week. That being said, you can make your split share work one of several ways: arrange with your share partner to meet at the farm to divide up your share each week; arrange to alternate weeks that you will pick up the full share; or have one person pick up the share and divide it at their house if you live near one another. However you arrange it, though, you should plan to pick up your full share all at one time and on the same day. Please don't plan to have the distribution coordinator hold half a share for you in the distribution area, or to pick up half your share at 3:30 and have your share partner come at 7:30 to pick up the other half, or to pick up your half on Sunday and have your share partner pick up on Thursday. Please let me know by email if you have questions about splitting a share.

### ***When will share pickups begin?***

Our best guess is that Sunday, June 5 will be the first pickup day. This late spring may affect us by pushing it back a week to June 12; or, if the world sud-

denly warms up and dries up in the next week or so, we may be a week earlier. We will let you know the first pickup day in the following ways:

- Post it on [www.communityfarms.org](http://www.communityfarms.org) no later than May 15 (and probably sooner)
- Send out an email around the 1st of May if we are able
- Include it on our outgoing voicemail message at (781) 899-2403 no later than May 15 (and probably sooner)
- Announce it at our CSA Shareholder Orientation on May 15

Please note: We will not be making individual phone calls to shareholders to let you know when the pickups begin. You must check the website or call the farm office to find out the date of the first pickup.

### ***What happens if I can't pick up my share?***

Because our pick-up sites are staffed by volunteers, we close them promptly at 7:30 (at 7:00 if you are picking up in Cambridge or Somerville). If you arrive late, we will do our best to accommodate you, but we can't make any promises! Any food that is not picked up at the end of the day that is still in prime condition will be donated to our hunger relief partners.

If you know in advance that you will not be able to pick up your share, we encourage you to share the harvest and make arrangements with friends to pick up your share. You do not need to let the distribution coordinator or farm staff know that someone else will be picking up your share; just make sure that whoever will pick up your share checks in with the distribution coordinator under your name. (It is a good idea to have them read the FAQs on our website if they are not familiar with our farm.)

### ***Can I bring compostable scraps to the farm?***

Yes! We would love to receive your table scraps for our compost pile (no meat, please). You can leave them on our compost pile behind the East Field to close the loop and make nutritious compost to enrich our soil (ask a distribution coordinator or a farm staff member to show you the way).

### ***When will apple shares be available?***

Apple shares begin in late August or early September. Our supplier is still figuring out his costs for the season (recent high gas prices have everyone guessing right now), and will let us know what our price will be very shortly. Once we have our produce shares sold, we will make apple shares available to our CSA members (probably in late May).

*Please fill this out if you haven't already!*

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**Community Farms Outreach and Waltham Fields Community Farms  
2005 Member Interest Survey**

Are you interested in joining a community of people committed to farmland preservation and hunger relief? Want to learn a bit more about how your food is grown? Let us know what interests you.

- Farm work
    - Regularly scheduled fieldwork or greenhouse work
    - Occasional fieldwork when extra hands are needed
    - Helping with groups of field work volunteers from local organizations
    - Harvesting for hunger relief (Tuesdays, May-October)
    - Delivering produce to local food pantries
  - Graphics
    - Typeset newsletters
    - Other artistic skills:
  - Carpentry / Construction
    - Specific skill:
  - Clerical
    - Data entry (We could use some help!)
  - Community Building
  - Bulk mailings
    - Newsletter writing, editing
    - Phone calls to remind CFO members of community events
    - Coordinating a 3rd Sunday Gathering
  - Community Expanding
    - Staffing CFO-WFCF table at community events
  - Computer Assistance
    - Database consulting (ACCESS)
    - Systems administration
  - Other:
- Yes, I want to help, but I'm not sure when or how. Please call me.
- No, I'm not interested at this time.

Name:

E-mail address and phone number:

Return this form to: Community Farms Outreach, Member Interest Survey, 240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 or e-mail to [volunteer@communityfarms.org](mailto:volunteer@communityfarms.org).

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**CSA Orientation May 15th at 3:00 PM**

**Old and new CSA shareholders:** Come to an introduction to our 2005 CSA. You'll have the opportunity to meet our farm staff and other CSA shareholders, take a farm and greenhouse tour (including the pick-your-own areas), learn more about our new mix-and-match pickup process, and generally get acquainted with the farm. We'll have a special table set up to connect interested veteran CSA shareholders with rookies for support through their first season. Families are welcome.