

# THE RHETORICAL ROOT

A monthly farm newsletter



## RIGHT IN THE THICK OF IT

Balancing the many aspects of farming during high season

10 Reasons Why I Love Home

The cutest little thing you ever did see!

## A BALANCING ACT



In a market garden operation, June is really where the rubber starts to hit the road. Different crops are all starting to produce full bore, sales ramp up, and the weeds keep growing. Then there's general maintenance to do like managing pests, pruning, tearing out old beds for second crops, etc. Burnout can be a very real danger, especially when there are only two of us running the whole operation. And burnout is not unique to market gardening. Many farmers work hard days sun up to sun down. Something always demands your attention **RIGHT NOW**, causing other tasks on the to-do list to get pushed back and piled up. Within the constraint of seasons, everything is time sensitive.

So how do you cope? We wish we had the answers. Hopefully several years down the road, we will have the expertise and the infrastructure to ease up on the gas. We also hope to extend our season to level the workload over more, less intense months of growing. But it's tough when you're building a business, literally from the ground up. But self-care is **SO** important. We occasionally Netflix and chill. We take every Sunday off completely. We nourish our bodies with good food and plenty of rest. This year, we have built two break weeks into our CSA to allow us to reset, ease up, or go away for the weekend. And most of all, we take help where we can get it--mostly from Lillie's mom, the garden queen,. How do you practice self care during your busy seasons?

# 10 REASONS I LOVE HOME

1. **My roots are here.** Much of my extended family lives in this area. Something about growing up here has really made an impression on me. Many geographical features of the land invoke memories of my childhood.
2. **The prairie.** I love being able to see for miles and take in dramatic clouds on a wide-open horizon.
3. **Square Miles.** I can be directionally challenged sometimes, so the giant grid pattern that is South Dakota helps me know exactly where I am. It's easy to get around even when you don't know exactly where you're going. I'm also an avid runner, so square miles are perfect for planning my routes without the help of GPS.
4. **Community.** Freeman is a 5-star town, if you ask me. It has just about every business you need and great customer service because everyone is so friendly. I was once handed a flashlight to do my shopping when the power went out at Jamboree. And it goes beyond just customer service. People are really there for each other in a small town like Freeman.
5. **Big Events.** Schmeckfest has always been a special event for me, since I was in the thick of it as a Freeman Academy student. And now the Chislic Fest draws many to the area!
6. **Heritage.** This area continues celebrates it's history, which contributes to a strong sense of identity.
7. **Faith and the arts.** This has long been the slogan of Freeman Academy, but it could be extended to the community as a whole. Music has been central throughout the years, especially within the 4 Mennonite churches in the area.
8. **The Flora.** I love learning the names of all the plants that grow here. One of my favorite things is to observe the ever-changing wild flowers in the ditches while on my runs.
9. **The seasonal changes.** Winters can be harsh, but there is nothing quite like the turning of one season to the next. The rhythm is a comfort to me.
10. **So much space.** Space to grow, to make you feel small, & God feel big, to see the stars, and to practice introspection





## THE ULTIMATE DISTRACTION

*Five little cuties live with their two mamas (a long story) in the bush next to the door and lately then have been coming out more and more to play. It's impossible to pass by them on the way to work in the garden and not stop, coo at them, and scratch their tummies. How could something be made so stinking cute?! The calendulas in the foreground represent another distraction from the veggie work--my flower patch. I've never grown flowers, but I love inspecting for new buds and blooms daily. The calendula and zinnia are in full bloom and the statice, snapdragons, and aster are not far off. Maybe they will make it onto the CSA plus list soon!*

## ONE MONTH INTO CSA

*We are four weeks into our CSA deliveries and finally starting to feel like we are getting the rhythm of things. Each week we must decide: what will go in the box and how much? Can we give cabbage two weeks in a row? How many radish constitute a "bunch?" Should this go in all the boxes or just the full shares this week? There are a lot of considerations for putting together balanced boxes, but once it's all washed and bagged and bunched, our favorite part is packing the boxes and dropping them off for our faithful customers. Each box represents a snapshot of summer and we are privileged to share that piece of our summer with you.*

## DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS...

*At a first glance, the premise of growing vegetables and selling them for a living seems simple and frankly quite miraculous. And it is, but only when you start doing it are you confronted with many of the harrowing details that will either make or break your business. For us, some of the hardest decisions involve pricing. We often go to other grocers and co-ops to compare prices and then cater to our location and product. And we always need to keep sales tax in mind when setting price or else we end up paying that out of our pocket!*

*Another set of tough decisions is somewhat new to us this year: where to sell? Having a couple new outlets gives us flexibility but also increased complexity. We like to think of our outlets in priority brackets: 1st CSA customers, 2nd restaurant and stores, 3rd farmers' market. This gives us a good starting point each week as we look at what is ready for harvest. Years down the road maybe these decisions will be second nature, but now we at times agonize over them trying to find our place in the world of fresh food.*

*-Andre*

