

LAUGHING EARTH

FarmShare Member Handbook

2016 Edition



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Welcome to the farm, and to the family. Whether you are a veteran or new member, we hope you treasure this farm as much as we do, and value the farm community as much as we do. Thank you for joining us, so that we can live our chosen mission of providing food and community to those around us. Our vision for this farm is to empower our local community to understand and be a part of a healthy, sustainable food system.

What is FarmShare?

At other farms, this arrangement is called CSA, meaning Community Supported Agriculture. We have consciously chosen to get away from a cumbersome acronym, and start using the more intuitive FarmShare, because we think it is a succinct summation of the relationship we are trying to build with you – we all share in the farm, and the farm shares with us.

Whatever it is called, FarmShare is a very special relationship between a farm and its farmers and the folks who choose to join that farm's community. Members receive fresh produce all season long, and a personal connection to a local farm. The farmers get a guaranteed market, with the harvest sold before it's even planted, and a chance to personally know the people who are taking home the farm's produce. FarmShare members support small-scale local agriculture and receive high-quality, fresh, organic food. There are many variations in the organization of existing CSA's, but the most successful are those in which members and farmers embrace the concept of working together to meet the needs of both. This means that the farmers listen to suggestions from members, and members understand the vagaries of nature facing the farmers.

If this FarmShare model of commerce or this community at Laughing Earth really speaks to you, please consider joining our Core Group, which meets periodically (every couple of months) to help guide us (the farmers) in staying on course with the farm's mission. If you are interested in learning more about the Core Group, just tell one of your farmers, and we will happily add you to the list.

Benefits of Membership

1. Receive a wide selection of fresh, organically-grown vegetables.
2. Have a direct, personal relationship with the farmland and the farmers who grow your food.
3. Protect local farmland by supporting a local farm.
4. Have a personal involvement in an effort to protect and enhance the environment by eating more carefully raised food.
5. Bolster the local economy by supporting a small business in your community.
6. Have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the farm and participate in educational activities, workshops, festivals and celebrations of rural life.
7. Broaden your culinary horizons by receiving varied produce and tips on how to use it and preserve it.

Money Matters

Payments are due on the first of April and first of August. If you aren't sure what you owe, just ask; we record your payments in Quickbooks and it is simple for us to check. You may mail your checks to the farm or give them to the farm staff at the farmstand. An early commitment and prompt payments allow the farmers to plan the crops for the season, and have the financial resources to purchase supplies.

We have a cost-sharing program called the Community Food Program whereby those who are able to donate additional money on top of the cost of their share, and we the farmers match those donations dollar-for-dollar. Those funds are used to cover part or all of the cost of shares for those who cannot afford the full cost. Please take advantage of the Community Food Program if the price of the share places an undue burden on your family!

ON TO THE FOOD!

When to Come

When you are picking up your vegetables, please observe the pickup times. Our distribution days are long and busy. Adhering to the times helps the farm run smoothly.

Wednesday 4:00 - 7:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 - 1:00 pm

Visit any day of the week, sunrise to sunset, to picnic by the creek, hike, enjoy the view from the hill or join us in our work – please just give us a call or email before you come, so we know to expect you.

What to Bring

We encourage you to bring your own bag, basket, or box to carry your share. We provide plastic grocery bags if you have forgotten yours. You may want to bring a container to keep your flowers fresh on the ride home.

We encourage you to bring your weekly compost out to the farm. Any nutrients we can recycle into our soil are a big help to the farm ecosystem. Please only include food scraps, spent flowers, and other like material in your compost – no plastic, glass, metal, etc. If you have leaves or other yard waste in a large quantity, we are happy to take that as well – just let us know to expect it. Meat scraps and bones are fine to put in the compost; we have a very large, hot pile that can digest those items.

When You Arrive

Hopefully not everyone will arrive at the same time during a distribution. There is parking in front of the farmstand and in our parking area at the base of the hill. When these areas are full, parking is available on the blacktop area in front of the farmhouse. Please be aware of incoming and outgoing traffic. Help us keep our farm yard attractive by not parking or driving on the grass. During special events when more

parking is necessary, there is additional space by the greenhouses. Please do not block any roadway or barnyard areas. Tractors and hay wagons need room to maneuver.

DRIVE SLOWLY! Free ranging children and animals are everywhere!

Getting Your Vegetables

1. Head to the farmstand and check off your name each week at the farmstand desk.
2. Take a copy of the newsletter, recipes or other handouts.
3. Check the white board for weekly announcements. Things change each week, so read carefully!
4. Fill your basket according to the list on the chalk board. This is your chance to try some new and strange vegetables that could end up being your favorites! If you won't have time in a week to use an item, or know that it is not a favorite in your house, please make use of the Sharing Bin to "leave a veggie, take a veggie" – whatever you won't use should go in here, so that another member knows he may have more. If you leave it on the table, it will just be left over at the end! If you see something in the Sharing Bin that you want, snatch it up! (Whatever is left over at the end will be donated to Capital Roots' Squash Hunger program.)
5. Browse the Recipe Box for ideas on how to use items that you're not feeling inspired about.
6. Dump your compost in the bin in the Farmstand.
7. If you want them, buy eggs or honey from whichever farmer is around the farmstand.
8. Our chicken pick up days coincide with our veggie pick-ups, every other week. If you are getting chickens, be sure to tell the farm staff person that you're a Farmshare member, so you get your discount! Even if you did not pre-order, we likely have chickens available to purchase.
9. Head over to the Picking Garden for herbs, flowers, and other veggies in season (usually anything "new" is listed on the white board in the farmstand)

If You are Unable to Collect Your Weekly Share

1. Ask another member to pick up for you.
2. You may gift your share to a friend or neighbor. Please explain the system, loan them this member handbook, and remind that person to check off your name.
3. If you are sick or injured, please let us know. We will make every effort to find someone to deliver your share.
4. If you cannot make it on your selected day (be it Wednesday or Saturday) but can make it on the other day, NOTIFY US A WEEK IN ADVANCE, and then you may pick up on the other day.

5. If you really can't make it and can't make other arrangements, let us know so we can either not harvest that produce, or donate it to Capital Roots.

Picking Your Own

Occasionally we may have an abundance of certain crops such as tomatoes, peas, or beans. When this happens, you may be given the opportunity to pick unlimited amounts. Watch the board and keep your fingers crossed for a good growing season!

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Parents are expected to know where their child is at all times!
2. On a farm roadway, farm vehicles always have the right of way. If you are walking, please step off the road to let tractors pass. Remember that a tractor with an implement attached cannot be stopped quickly.
3. The ponds and creeks have some very deep drop-offs. Please watch children closely.
4. The electric fences are on at all times to contain the livestock and to fence out predators. All wires are HOT including the portable plastic fences. While it is not life threatening to adults, it may be quite painful. We are most concerned about babies and toddlers who could possibly become entangled in it, and be seriously injured. Please educate your children to respect it.
5. For the protection of children and farm animals, please do not enter the animal pens or fenced in areas unless accompanied by a farm staff person. Free ranging barnyard hens respond well to quiet gentle movements. Loud voices and chasing cause them stress.
6. Barns, sheds, and greenhouses are off-limits to children unless accompanied by an adult.
7. The gardens and fields- The experience of planting and harvesting is the most basic way to introduce children to the wonders of the farm. They will make mistakes, but how else can they learn? Please teach the children to walk in the paths between the beds and instruct them in the art of picking their own food. Farm staff will be glad to answer your questions.
8. There is a row of beehives by the far hedgerow at the top of the hill. If you or your child has a serious allergy to bees, please avoid that area. Generally, it is safe to walk in this area, but you should avoid it if the day is very hot, as the bees get a little testy.
8. If you must bring your dog, please keep it on a leash at all times. As with children, dogs need to be trained to respect the gardens, the animals, and the electric fences. We prefer if you do not bring your dog to pick-up, to avoid conflict with members and to avoid adding to the general chaos. Well-behaved dogs may accompany you on off-peak-times walks around the farm, preferably on a leash.

Community Aspects of Membership

“Buddy System.” In the 2016 season, we are debuting a new way to help new members connect with the farm and learn how to handle the produce. We are starting a Buddy System where new members can choose to be paired with a veteran member, to receive advice on storing and cooking produce, navigating the picking garden, and getting the most out of membership.

Community Board. There is a tack board in the farmstand where you can share anything you think is appropriate – business cards or other information about yours or your family’s business, flyers about events you are organizing at your church, fundraisers that your kids are running, lawnmowers you want to sell, etc. A volunteer member will curate the board to remove out-of-date items, and we will try to mirror some of the postings on our Facebook page.

Events. The farm community (not necessarily the farmers) will put on events throughout the season, from cooking classes to pesto parties to potluck dinners to hikes around the farm. Keep your eye on the community board for opportunities to participate.

Newsletter. We the farmers will put together periodical newsletters (we won’t swear to weekly), sharing cooking tips and farm happenings. If you are moved to share a recipe or a farm experience, prose or poetry, please let us know; we would be happy to include your voice.

STORING AND PRESERVING FRESH VEGETABLES

We hope the following section will be helpful to you when you pick up your weekly share. Fresh vegetables require some preparation in order to retain their quality and nutritive content until the time they are used. Here are some suggestions that may be useful to you to assure that nothing is wasted and that you can enjoy everything to the last bite! If you have questions on freezing or canning, we will be glad to help you out. If there is enough interest, we will schedule a food preservation workshop for members. Please share any tips you may have!

Snap Beans

Store fresh snap beans unwashed in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. They will keep about 5 days. Freezing: Blanch beans in boiling water for 3 minutes per pound of beans. Chill in ice water (very cold will do) for 3 minutes. Let dry on dish towel. Store in freezer bags. Beans will keep for 6-12 months in your freezer.

Beets

Remove tops and see "Greens" for keeping the tops. Rinse the beets. They will stay in good condition in the refrigerator storage bin for 2-3 weeks. Even if they go a bit soft, they will still cook up nicely. To cook beets, leave 1 inch of stems to prevent "bleeding". Do not peel. Boil, bake (wrapped in foil) or steam. When beets are tender the skins will easily slip off with the slightest pressure. Beets can also be eaten raw, grated on a salad, or grated and then sautéed in a stir fry, although they will color everything else a lovely pink. Canning is a good way to preserve beets. To can, cook beets, remove skin, and pack immediately (sliced or whole) in hot sterilized jars, leaving 1 inch headroom. Cover with boiling water and 1-tablespoon vinegar to preserve color. Adjust lids and process in a pressure canner at 10 lbs. pressure for 30-35 minutes. Frozen beets lose texture.

Broccoli

Keep unwashed, trimming only the large outer leaves. Store in plastic bag in refrigerator, where it will keep for about 5-7 days. Freezing: Wash, trim, peel, and cut lengthwise into 1 inch thick pieces. Blanch for 3 minutes and plunge into cold water for 3 minutes. Drain and pack into freezer bags. It will keep 6-12 months in the freezer.

Brussels Sprouts

Unwashed sprouts keep well for several days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, but their taste does get stronger. To prepare, take a sharp paring knife, remove damaged outer leaves, trim the base and cut in half. Steam until bright green and just tender, or sauté or roast in a 400 degree oven until the outside is browned. Overcooking will turn them mushy. They can be frozen: blanch in boiling water for 3-5 minutes, cool in ice water for 3 minutes. Drain and package in quart freezer bags.

Cabbage

Unwashed, firm cabbage keeps up to two months in the refrigerator crisper bin. Sliced cabbage will keep about a week in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Sauerkraut is a good way to preserve cabbage.

Carrots

Remove tops, wash and place in a perforated refrigerator bag or crisper drawer for up to 3 weeks. In addition to fresh eating, they can be steamed, boiled or braised in butter or broth. Try adding a handful of herbs for a wonderful flavor.

Cauliflower

Refrigerate in plastic bag for up to one week. Freezing: Blanch 2-4 minutes, plunge into ice water, drain and pack into airtight containers. Cauliflower will not be firm when thawed, but it is fine to use in cooked dishes.

Celeriac

You can store unwashed celeriac in a cool, dark place for a month or so. If you wash it, trim its roots and keep it in the refrigerator. To prepare, cut off the top and rooty bottom, and peel off the tough outer skin. There will be quite a bit of waste! The flesh darkens in contact with air; so you should place the exposed pieces into water with a teaspoon of lemon juice or vinegar until you are ready to use it. Celeriac may be cooked alone, but we prefer to add it to mashed potatoes or roasted root vegetables (see rutabagas). It is also wonderful shredded with carrots, served with a vinaigrette dressing. We also dry the tops to have on the shelf to add a little celery flavor.

Celery

Do not wash the celery until you're ready to use it. Store it in the crisper drawer in an open-top plastic bag for a week. If you want to prep ahead, separate the stalks, wash them thoroughly, and let them drip dry before storing in a Tupperware container. They will keep several days this way.

Cucumbers

Use within a few days. Store in the crisper drawer, no plastic bag needed. Aside from fresh eating, there are many cold soups that use cucumbers (check the recipe box). Pickling is the best way to store cucumbers for a long time. There is a recipe for countertop pickles (no canning needed) in the recipe box, too.

Edamame

These soybean treats are best used within a couple of days. Do not shell beans, and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. When you are ready to have a great snack, boil or steam the whole pod for about 4-5 minutes, until the beans inside are tender. Chill quickly in cold water. You can dip them in soy sauce or top with salt (or chili powder or curry powder!) and then slide the pod between your teeth to release

the beans. They can also be frozen by blanching for two minutes, chilling quickly and packaging in freezer bags. When you go to eat them, remember that you've already started to cook them, so they may cook more quickly. You can also shell them and use the beans in stir-fry.

Eggplants

Eggplants are best eaten fresh. Store unrefrigerated at a cool room temperature, or in crisper drawer of refrigerator for up to one week. For longer-term storage, dishes like baba ghanouj and ratatouille freeze well in airtight containers. Eggplant is very versatile. To bake, prick all over with a fork and bake at 400 degrees until tender, about 30 minutes. To stuff, bake only 20 minutes, scoop out the seeds, replace with stuffing and finish baking. To sauté, dip slices or chunks in flour or eggs and crumbs prior to sautéing. Sauté in hot oil until brown and season with herbs, garlic, cheese, etc. Blend cooked eggplant with lemon juice and seasonings for a dip or spread. Grill slices with other vegetables.

Greens

Kale, collards and spinach are cold weather crops. They become sweeter as the temperatures drop. Leave them unwashed and wrap them in a damp towel to absorb moisture. Place in a perforated plastic bag and refrigerate. By changing the towel occasionally, and keeping it damp, you'll be able to store the greens for up to a week. Freezing: Greens freeze well. Wash, then blanch for 2 minutes, drain and plunge into ice water. Chill for two minutes; drain well. Pack in freezer bags and use within 6 months.

Cut lettuce, mustard greens, arugula and Asian greens should all be kept in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator – if the bag isn't perforated, at least make sure it is not sealed, so that moisture can escape. These greens should be dry when they go in the refrigerator, so they don't get slimy. They should keep for about a week. Head lettuce can be kept as a head, in a perforated plastic bag, or separated, washed, and dried thoroughly, then treated as cut lettuce.

Herbs

All herbs can be dried and stored in glass jars. Herbs such as parsley, basil, cilantro and chives freeze beautifully. Simply wash, blot dry, chop and put in labeled zip lock bags. Take out what you need as you cook making sure that you don't thaw the entire contents. We also turn a lot of our basil into pesto, and freeze in ice cube trays or by the spoonful on cookie sheets. Package frozen pesto cubes in freezer bags.

Kohlrabi

Remove the leaves and store separately from the globe. The leaves can be used like collards or kale. The globe will last for one month refrigerated in the crisper drawer. To use, scrub well and trim away any woody or tough portions. It does not need to be peeled. Kohlrabi is excellent cooked or raw. Grate it into salads or coleslaw. Steam, sauté, or add to soups and stews. Grated kohlrabi makes a wonderful pancake, served with applesauce.

Leeks

Store leeks unwashed with roots attached. Keep them dry. Loosely wrap in plastic so other foods will not pick up their aroma. They will keep several weeks in the fridge. If you want to freeze them, wash and chop them, then package in freezer bags, squeezing out as much air as possible. They will still be great for soups and savory casseroles after being frozen.

Melons, Water and Musk

Both kinds of melon can be kept on the counter. The muskmelon is generally less durable, so if it is already soft when you get it, either eat it within a day or two, or store it in the refrigerator. For a soft melon, cut it up right away, then store it in a tightly sealed container in the fridge as a quick snack. If the melon is firm, leave it on the counter for a day or two, then check it.

Watermelons can keep for a week on the counter, if they are firm when you start. If you prefer to eat chilled melon, keep it in the fridge. A watermelon will keep two weeks in the fridge. Wait to cut up the watermelon until the day it will be eaten, to keep it from getting mushy.

Onions, Garlic, and Shallots

Put them in a mesh bag and hang in a well-ventilated, cool, dry place, ideally between 40-50 degrees. To store chives and scallions, put them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator where they will hold for 3-4 days before becoming limp.

Peas

Refrigerate unwashed peas in a plastic bag. They will keep for 4-5 days. Freezing: Snow, Shell and Snap Peas all freeze beautifully. Blanch a scant 2 minutes and cool down quickly for 2 minutes. Drain and package with as little air as possible. Do not overcook them when you take them from the freezer.

Peppers

Whole, unwashed peppers will keep in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Freezing: So easy! Clean, seed, and cut into pieces. Do not blanch. Just put in freezer bags. The frozen peppers will be soft, but are fine for soups or casseroles where the flavor is the prime consideration, or sautéed with onions to go on fajitas or burritos.

Potatoes

Potatoes keep in a cool dark place for many months. The ideal temperature is 40 degrees.

Rutabagas

Similar to turnips, but a little sweeter. Store as you would beets and carrots. To cook: Peel them first and cut them according to their use. They may be braised, stir-fried, steamed or boiled. Add chunks to stews or to accompany roasts. As they absorb meat juices and oils, their flavor becomes richer. They are delicious braised in butter or broth. Try a Bulson family all time favorite: cut in small pieces and roast at

375 degrees until tender, with your choice of other root vegetables, lots of garlic and a little olive oil and thyme or rosemary. The slow roasting turns this combination into a sweet memorable addition to your meal!

Pumpkins and Winter Squash

Leave the stems on. Winter squash will keep at room temperature for about a month. Store for several months in a dry and cool (50-55 degrees) but not cold location. We keep some squash at home under the bed in an unheated bedroom! Sort out any bruised or damaged squash, and use it first. To use squash mashed or as a pie, the easiest method is to wash and cut in half. Place, cut side down on an oiled baking sheet. Bake@ 325 degrees for one hour or until fork tender. When cooled, scrape out the squash. It can then be pureed in the food processor for pie filling, or simply broken up with a fork, mixed with a little butter, maple syrup, and salt, and served with dinner. Buttercup squash is one of the meatiest and sweetest of the winter squashes, and the skin can be eaten right along with the squash!

Delicata Squash

This squash can be eaten skin and all! It may be stir fried or better yet, follow the same instruction above for baking, but cook at 350 degrees for only 20-30 minutes. It is very sweet and tender and gets too mushy if overcooked.

Radishes

Before refrigerating, remove the tops and put the roots in an open plastic bag. They will keep for at least one week. Radishes make a great addition to a salad, but also make a lovely, bright slaw on their own – simply slice thinly and mix with a tablespoon of vinegar, a sprinkle of salt, and a bit of fresh cilantro.

Salad Greens

Leave lettuce whole and store unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. It should keep in good condition for about 3 days. Or, wash and blot dry lettuce leaves and spread them out between dishtowels, bath towel, or layers of paper toweling, in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use as needed.

Summer Squash/Zucchini

Refrigerate in the crisper drawer, and it will keep for about a week. Summer squash **can** be frozen, although it loses its texture – just slice it and bag it raw. It will be best used in soups, as it becomes quite watery, but you can cook it down or squeeze it out to use in stir fries or casseroles. Zucchini is best frozen as zucchini bread, which freezes beautifully.

Swiss Chard

Refrigerated, unwashed, in a perforated bag, chard will hold for about 5 days. Freezing: Do not freeze the heavier stems. They get soggy. Blanch leaves for 2 minutes, then plunge into ice water for 2 minutes, drain and bag. Swiss chard substitutes very well for spinach in most recipes.

Tomatoes

For daily use, hold tomatoes between 55-80 degrees. Do not refrigerate unless necessary. Temperatures below 55 degrees slow down and prevent ripening. Refrigerate only extra ripe tomatoes that you want to keep from ripening further. Not fully ripe tomatoes will continue to ripen stored out of the sun at 60-75 degrees. Freezing: tomatoes can be placed on cookie sheets and frozen whole. When frozen, place in freezer bag. Tomatoes can also be cooked down into sauce and then frozen very successfully. Frozen tomatoes can be used in soups and stews, but do not have the quality of home canned tomatoes. Canning is a little time consuming, but not difficult. Please ask for some help if you want to give it a try!

Turnips

The small white turnips in the springtime should have their tops removed (saved and treated as "greens," if you desire), leaving about ½" of stem, before being stored in an open-top plastic bag in the fridge. They should be eaten within a week, and are great for fresh eating, sliced in a salad, or added to a stir-fry. The large, purple-shouldered turnips in the fall can be kept with your potatoes, as long as they are not washed. They should keep for a month in a cold, dark place. They will still do fine in a soup or stew even if they get a bit soft.

Fresh Flowers

Before you put your flowers in a vase, strip off all of the leaves that would be below the water line, and give the stems a fresh trim. Your flowers will stay fresh almost all week if you change the water daily. Zinnias especially benefit from having the bottoms of their stems trimmed every few days.