



BIG HEAD FARM

South Haven, Michigan

269.605.9527 * BigHeadFarm.com

Simply growing fruit, vegetables
herbs and flowers...naturally



USDA ORGANIC RULES & BIG HEAD FARM

It is with deep, heartfelt disappointment that we announce that we will soon voluntarily and temporarily remove the word "organic" from our logo, website and advertising. We have not abandoned the concepts and rules of organic farming. As a matter of fact, we're taking this action based on the requirements of the organic certification process.

Organic farming guidelines specifically outline how, when and where the word "organic" can be used. A farm may say they are "organic" if they follow standardized organic procedures and sell less than \$5000.00 in products annually. If the farm sells more than \$5000.00, the farm must acquire the organic certification or stop using the word "organic".

Big Head Farm follows the guidelines of organic growing and has no plans to stop. We're taking this action because

we have exceeded \$5000.00 in sales but do not yet have our certification. All the money collected through CSA memberships went directly into farm infrastructure and operations - seeds, compost, fertilizer, fuel, vegetable flats, greenhouse plastic, wood, etc. and the organic certification process costs are not financially feasible at this point. We have committed to acquiring the organic certification at some point in the near future.

Big Head Farm would, again, like to emphasize that we have no intention to abandon our organic beliefs. We are not going to start using any of the herbicides, pesticides or genetically modified seeds (GMO's) we so strongly object to. We will continue grow vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers with natural, organic methods.

SECOND NEWSLETTER

May/June, 2010

What's Growing

Tomatoes

Mortgage Lifter Heirloom

The story behind the name of Mortgage Lifter heirloom tomato drew us to this variety, but the sweet and rich taste makes it a favorite.

Mortgage Lifter heirloom tomato was developed in the early 1930's by a man named M.C. "Radiator Charlie" Byles. Byles was a radiator repairman who, like many of his countrymen, struggled to keep his finances in order during the Great Depression. As the story goes, Radiator Charlie cross-bred the largest tomatoes he could find in his hometown of Logan, West Virginia, and sold the resulting plants for a dollar each. The profits he earned were substantial enough that he was able to pay down his mortgage with them!

Mortgage Lifter is an indeterminate tomato variety, which means that the plants will grow vines and continue to grow taller as the season progresses. To allow the plant to focus on growing higher yields of fruit, we pinch the suckers on the tomato vine, and stake the plant well.

Thomas Jefferson grew Mortgage Lifter tomatoes in his extensive vegetable gardens at Monticello from 1809 until his death in 1826. Indeed, many gardeners fall in love with this tomato, growing it year after year in backyard vegetable gardens all over North America.

Yes, an investment in a first-year organic farm has more risk than an investment in an existing farm. It's ultimately up to you to decide how much risk you're comfortable with.



During the recent CDW "be Green" event in Chicago I was asked in several different ways about the risks associated with investing in a first-year farming operation. "How do you know your plants will grow?" "Will I lose my money?" "What makes you qualified to be a farmer?" "Do I look fat in this?" Those questions are what I strive to answer here along with some risk minimizing facts.



It really depends on how you look at it. In its' most simple terms, you will not lose your money. I say this because the purpose of your investment is to fund what we do, not for the purpose of paying us for the service. That concept is often lost during the financial transaction.



No matter what happens here on the farm, your money has gone directly into the production of vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers. Your money has been invested into operational needs such as seeds, compost, fertilizer, fuel, vegetable flats, plastic for the greenhouse, screws, plastic repair kits for the plastic on the greenhouse (we had a storm), professional tree trimming (to prevent further need for plastic repairs), more fuel, additional grow lights, wood, nails, fuel and...well, you get the picture. Your investment builds, grows, fertilizes, trims...your investment keeps us operational. Your money does not pay us a salary or even a one time stipend.



Yes, there is a risk that something will go wrong. Your vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers might not grow (they're already growing in the hot-house, greenhouse and on the farm). Or, that it won't rain all summer (we have a well and 2, 1000 gallon water tanks). Or, that packs of hungry critters will eat everything (we use lots and lots of animal repellents). Or, that a tornado will clear us out (ok, I don't have an answer for that other than insurance). It's easy to see that a scenario of complete failure is plausible, but unlikely none-the less.



If you haven't read the "About" section of our website you wouldn't know that we have, literally, sold or lives so that we could be farmers. You might say that we intentionally scuttled our ship. Comparatively, in 1519 some of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés de Monroy y Pizarro's men, still loyal to the Governor of Cuba, conspired to steal one of his ships and escape to Cuba. To ensure the mutiny didn't happen, Cortés scuttled his ships. Nothing makes one more motivated than the need to survive.



Succeed and we'll be back next year stronger than ever. Fail and we will keep trying until our fingers are frost-bitten and the ground is frozen solid. We'll still be back next year - stronger than the year before. We're in this for the long haul.



You'll never know how much two people and a small farm appreciate and value your investment. : -)

Thank you.

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What's Growing

New things are coming up daily at Big Head Farm. Do you have a favorite? Let us know! If we can get the seeds for it we will grow it for you!

Brussels Sprouts

It's no surprise that Brussels sprouts look like perfect miniature versions of cabbage since they are closely related, both belong to the Brassica family of vegetables. Brussels sprouts are available year round; however, they are at their best from autumn through early spring when they are at the peak of their growing season.

Brussels sprouts grow in bunches of 20 to 40 on the stem of a plant that grows from two to three feet tall. Right now those plants look like little cabbages!



Squash

Round French Zucchini

Also known as 8 Ball Squash, these are round zucchinis of exceptional flavor. They are most delicious steamed at 3 inch or stuffed at 5-6 inch.



If you have questions, want to find out about something, offer suggestions, heck, if you just want to stop by the farm-here's how to get ahold of us:

Location:

61020 8th Ave South Haven, MI 49090
Telephone +1 269 605 9527

www.BigHeadFarm.com (link)

[Our Blog](#) (link)

[On Twitter](#) (link)

[On Facebook](#) (link)

[On YouTube](#) (link)

Me and You and a Pile Named Poo...

It's Amazing What One Can Realize While Staring at Manure (by Jody Warner)

Pease of mind can be found in a giant, steaming pile of cow manure - at least for me.



In late May we had a massive load of cow manure delivered to the farm via dump truck. Cow manure is one of a few different types of organic matter we use a fertilizer since "Miracle Grow" and "Jobes Plant Spikes" are out of the question. Manure adds fertility to the soil by adding organic matter and nutrients, such as nitrogen, that are trapped by bacteria in the soil. Other organisms then feed on the fungi and bacteria in a chain of life that actually creates soil - the whole process is called composting. Haven't you ever wondered where dirt came from?



As Big Head Farm's Director of Operations (it's not that cool, there's only two of us) I'm responsible for the "get 'er done" part of farm projects. So, when we need fertilizer I collect the different components for compost and start the process - I pile it up. Then, when the right combination of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and water is reached, bacteria begins to eat away at organic material in the pile. This biological process is exothermic (it gives off heat) and the pile can actually steam. Steam is the indication that our pile is composting. The whole process can take a year or more to complete.



As I stood there, looking at our steaming pile of poo, I began to smile and thought to myself, "This is cool, we're making dirt." I had never

considered that cow manure, when combined with other stuff, would make me so content. I have achieved poo-chi and become one with all cow poo in the universe.



I am one with poo.



Me recently photographed in front of our source of fertilizer, one with poo.



Rinse chicken, pat dry, and sprinkle all over with paprika. Heat oil in a 4- to 5-quart pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken pieces, a portion at a time; cook, turning as needed, until browned on all sides. Remove from pan and set aside.

Add garlic, chiles, onion & carrots to pan. Cook, stirring often, until vegetables begin to brown lightly. Add mushrooms, tomatoes, cumin, thyme, wine and currants; then add chicken and any accumulated juices. Bring to a boil. Then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until meat near thighbone is no longer pink; cut to test (about 40 minutes).

UNCLE JODY'S "CHICKEN W/ CURRANTS AND JALAPENOS"

Recipe

- 1 chicken (about 4 pounds), cut up
- 3/4 teaspoon paprika
- 2 T olive oil or salad oil
- 5 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
- 2 fresh jalapeno chiles, seeded and minced
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 medium-size carrots, sliced
- 4 oz fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 can (14-1/2 oz) stewed tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon dry thyme leaves
- 3/4 cup dry white wine or regular-strength chicken broth
- 1/2 cup dried currants (raisins are ok)



“Pray for rain...no no, not THAT much rain! Pray for the rain to stop! Stop, rain, stop! Ugh, we lost the spinach and maybe some tomatoes but the celery may survive!”

Karen Warner
Founder of Big Head Far

KAREN'S RHUBARB PIE

Rhubarb Pie

4 cups chopped rhubarb

1 1/3 cups white sugar

6 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon butter

1 recipe pastry for a 9 inch double crust pie

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C).

Combine sugar and flour. Sprinkle 1/4 of it over pastry in pie plate. Heap

rhubarb over this mixture. Sprinkle with remaining sugar and flour. Dot with small pieces of butter. Cover with top crust.

Place pie on lowest rack in oven. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C), and continue baking for 40 to 45 minutes. Serve warm or cold.