

March 11, 2010

Welcome to spring! I know it's officially still a week or so away, these last few days sure have been a treat, with their sunny blue skies and warm temperatures. We've been spending all our time outside soaking it up – Chris feeding the neighbor's cows and knocking down brush around our fields, while the boys and I clean up the yard, chase the chickens, take walks, throw sticks in the river for the dogs, and scratch the cows' ears. All of our seeds have arrived, and this week will begin our greenhouse work, as we start broccoli and some other brassicas. We have our fingers crossed for more warm and windy weather to dry out the fields – if we can get out there, we'll be able to plant peas by the end of March or early April.

Sunday was the second Nutrient Dense course for Chris. This one was more lecture than hands-on, so not as exciting as the upcoming ones will be – he came back mostly talking about what types of plants prefer more bacterial soil vs. which ones prefer a more fungal environment. For a more bacterial environment you use more composted manure, for fungal you use the inoculants that I wrote about last month. Basically guidance on how to mulch and what mediums to plant in and prep beds with.

Of more interest was a discussion stream that started on one of the email forums Chris belongs to – I think it was the NY Organic Farming one – where a farmer threw out there that he thinks the idea of Nutrient Dense is a marketing ploy, not really better farming practices. We disagree with this opinion, but it got us talking about why we want to farm the way we do and how it is interesting how we as people are resistant to change the way we do things simply because we don't want to believe that something we've thought for a long time might be wrong. Organic farming – the word organic – is a widely recognized standard. It is the easiest way to label yourself for consumers to know what you are NOT doing – you are not spraying with chemicals to control weeds and pests, you are not fertilizing with synthetics, and you are not knowingly using any Genetically Modified seeds. Biodynamic farming is somewhat recognized, but harder for most to understand. You are not doing all the same things organic farmers are not doing, but you are also adding a spiritual element and the idea of homeopathic remedies for the land by way of spraying the preps which connect the land, plants and animals grown on it to cosmic energies for increased vibrancy. The biodynamic farmer is connected to the land. Now, the idea of Nutrient Dense comes into the picture, and it can add something to any kind of farm – organic and biodynamic of course, but even conventional farms would benefit from these ideas. It is the idea of giving good nutrition back to the land, building soil, and growing healthier plants to boot, which will make for healthier land, food and people. Our philosophy is kind of a hybrid – the soil scientist in Chris says that if the land is deficient in minerals and nutrients, external inputs have to be used to get them there (rock powders, microbial bacteria and fungi), and the spiritual side of us likes the Biodynamic principles of knowing your land and using the preps to connect with the greater world. Because no farm is a closed system – nutrients are always being exported, via whatever product that farm sells – there will always be a need to add something back to the land. At the very least, it can't hurt, and at best, it will make all of us healthier!

We will be looking for help again this May with planting potatoes and putting in transplants, for anyone who would like to pitch in. Thanks to everyone who has signed up! We're really looking forward to the new season, and hope you are, too!

Best wishes from your farmers,

Samantha, Chris, Alex & Benjamin