

# Colchester Farm

## Community Supported Agriculture



## 2010 Annual Report

### 2010 Board of Directors

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Patty Hartmannsgruber,  
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John Vail

### 2010 CSA Staff

Theresa Mycek, CSA Manager  
Aaron Shier, CSA Assistant Manager  
Sophie Slesinger, Intern  
Nathan Wendte, Intern  
Michael Wessel, Intern

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Dear Friends,

We hope this report finds you itching for spring and the first harvest of 2011. Nevertheless, we'd like to take the opportunity to reflect on the season past.

The 2010 growing season at Colchester Farm CSA was the longest ever in our eight year history; we supplied our 143 members with freshly picked produce for 26 weeks, four weeks longer than 2009. We also had other outlets for our produce: we sold to a few area restaurants, we participated at the Chestertown Farmers Market, and we extended the season slightly beyond the planned 26 weeks by offering hardy fall greens and storage crops for sale directly from the farm once a week throughout the month of December.

The growing season is a wonderful time, but of course, a very busy time for us here at Colchester Farm CSA. Every winter, as time abounds (comparatively), we think, wouldn't it be nice to keep our members abreast of happenings at the farm, perhaps with a weekly newsletter, or flashy blog!? Of course it would be great, we say! Alas, a newsletter has not come to fruition. This is not to say we don't keep in touch: we see you at CSA pick-ups and we communicate our projected harvest weekly by e-mail and sometimes we share a favorite recipe or two and let you know about special events related to Colchester's work.

That said, we hope this annual report serves as the ever-elusive spring/summer/fall newsletters. And how nice, in fact, to have time to reflect and summarize the season at once. Herein, we share the challenges and achievements of the 2010 growing season at Colchester Farm CSA. You may read about our assessment of crop performance and learn about methods we used in our work; we provide detail about our staff and acknowledge the work of volunteers, work share members, donors and our volunteer board of directors; we highlight special programming at the farm and future goals; and we provide a summary of our finances.

We hope to bring you the same great produce in the season ahead, grown with care, using practices safe for the environment, crops and people who consume them. We thank you for your past and continuing support of our community supported agriculture project.

Thank you,

Theresa Mycek, Manager  
Aaron Shier, Assistant Manager



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## Mission Statement

CFCSA is a community-based organization that grows pesticide-free vegetables, provides wholesome food, and offers education on sustainable agriculture to its members and surrounding communities. It strives to be an alternative model of farming, dedicated to maintaining the agricultural heritage of the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

## Vision

CFCSA will lead and inspire a broad movement of people who eat and live in close relationship with their communities and the land. CFCSA will be economically and environmentally self-sustaining and will be recognized as an alternative model of sustainable agriculture by the people of the Eastern Shore.

## Values

The work of CFCSA is driven by a core set of values:

**Land Stewardship** — Farming has been a defining characteristic of the Eastern Shore heritage for hundreds of years. We must preserve farmland and farming if we are to pass on that heritage intact into the future.

**Community** — People thrive in communities which bond them together and provide them support. We will be active participants in a vibrant Eastern Shore community, drawing our support from our neighbors and returning that support through all our activities.

**Support for Our Workers** — The mission of CFCSA is achieved only through the efforts of its employees and volunteers. All work on behalf of the CSA will be highly valued and those who work for pay will have a sustainable livelihood.



## Events and Farm Visitors

### CSA Kick-off on February 27<sup>th</sup>

Returning members and new members alike gathered to share food and drink with the farm staff and board of directors, and sign up for a CSA share (if they had not already).

### “The Real Dirt on Farmer John”

Presented by The Chestertown Spy Marty Fujita Film Project on June 3, 2010 at the Prince Theatre as a benefit event in support of Colchester Farm CSA.

### July 4<sup>th</sup> Potluck at Colchester Farm

An opportunity for CSA members and other Colchester Farm CSA supporters to gather at the farm, share food and drink, and admire the fireworks over the Sassafras River.

### A Tribute to Local Taste

Presented by The Chestertown Spy Marty Fujita Film Project on Thursday, October 7, 2010 as a benefit for the Colchester Farm food education program and a tribute to local farmers.

Local food donated by Colchester Farm CSA, Crow Farm, Lockbriar Farm, Priapi Gardens, Eve's Cheese, Fifer Orchards, and TA Farms was prepared by local chefs: Sisters by Chance Caterers, Angie Griffin, Kent County High School Culinary Arts Program led by John Keller, Robbie Jester, and Beth Rocca

*We extend a warm thank you to all participants in the planning and coordination of the above events and all attendees.*

This year Suzanne Etgen, volunteering her time and valuable skills to serve as coordinator of Colchester Education, and Kelsey Hallowell, Colchester education intern, organized the following educational events at the farm:

### Colchester Farm Food Fest July 19<sup>th</sup>-July 30<sup>th</sup>

“A cooperative farming experience for children 5-10 years old. Through a series of hands-on activities, children and their parents experience life on a local farm: harvest fresh vegetables, collect eggs, learn about the value of locally grown vegetables for health, the environment, and fun!”

### Adult cooking classes and guest speakers

July 19 – Chef Rocca, Seasonal Ingredients  
August 2 – “Bottling Summer: an introduction to canning and preserving”  
August 23 – Dr. Bill Schindler, “Pre-historic Diets”

**Full Moon Silent Meditation Walks** were held here at the farm and led by Rob Etgen on the evening of the full moon from May through October.

### Visitors to the Farm:

Girl Scouts from Camp Grove Point visited and received a farm tour and a chance to harvest some vegetables for their camp program on four occasions: June 29<sup>th</sup>, July 7<sup>th</sup>, July 27<sup>th</sup>, August 3<sup>rd</sup>

A group of high school students from Echo Hill Outdoor School visited and received a tour of CSA operations on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Diversifying Our Operation

Colchester Farm CSA is first and foremost a CSA; we believe in community supported agriculture as a model and we're appreciative of the support of our members/shareholders. Colchester also recognizes our CSA share is not for everyone; schedules, work/life commitments and geography make picking up vegetables difficult for some, and paying in advance of the season does not fit everyone's budget. We believe reaching out and doing business in the broader community and with people for whom participation in our CSA share program is not feasible allows us to meet our mission of making accessible to the many members of our community vegetables picked fresh and grown sustainably, while inspiring a broad movement of "people who eat and live in close relationship with their communities and the land."

We derived about fifty-nine percent of our revenue from CSA memberships. The rest was from non-CSA share sources, the largest (twenty-one percent) coming from farmers' market sales in Chestertown. In 2010, CFCSA participated at the Chestertown Farmers' Market for its sixth year. We also supplied the chefs at the Imperial Hotel in Chestertown, MD with our produce nearly every week throughout the growing season and supplied the Fish Whistle and Brooks Tavern, both in Chestertown as well, with produce on occasion. Also, in December, after CSA pick-ups ceased, we made our produce available for purchase to our members for pick-up Friday and Saturday at the farm.

We could not have met our financial goals in 2010 without the enthusiastic support of both our members and patrons at the market and restaurants in Chestertown.



## Pastured Poultry Project

In 2010, Colchester Farm CSA continued John Arbuckle's pastured poultry project, albeit, on a much smaller scale. Chickens were raised for eggs only; the flock started off with 50 birds, some of them from John Arbuckle's 2009 flock as well as some hens raised in 2009 for laying in 2010.

Our chickens were kept in a mobile coop built out of an old hay wagon at night, but allowed out to graze during the day within a mobile fence. Throughout the season, the coop was rotated (about weekly) through our fallow fields; the chicken manure added nutrients to the soil and the laying hens ate bugs and weed seeds; rotating the coop helps increase the hens' access to forage and reduces exposure to disease by limiting contact with their own feces.

Eggs were sold in the spring at the Chestertown Farmers' market and offered for sale to members primarily at the on-farm pick-up.



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## Financial Statement

<b>Carry-over from 2009</b>	15,660.07
<b>2010 Revenue</b>	
CSA Memberships	54,191.20
Sales (Farm market, restaurant, other)	24,798.36
Charitable Donations	9,146.63
Fundraising Events	2,946.00
Other Income	10.14
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>91,092.33</b>
<b>2010 Expenses</b>	
Personnel	47,736.66
Operations	35,232.23
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(82,968.89)</b>
<b>Reserve for 2010</b>	<b>23,783.51</b>

## Thank you to the following individuals for their generous support:

Robert Bennett	Ann Huessener
Hope Clark	Jane Hukill
Alice and Leland Cory	Ivey and Jeffrey Mask
John C. Duggan	Alfred and Joan Miller
Jan Eliassen	Janice Plotczyk
Rob Etgen	Nancy and Gary Robson
Gayle Folger	Sailing Associates
Georgetown Yacht Basin, Inc.	Beatrice and Jose Samaniego
Carla and Frank Gerber	Mary and David Segermark
Ford and June Hall	Ken and Susan Shumaker
Patricia Hartmannsgruber	Charlotte Staelin
Jenn Hicks and Tom Briggs	John and Elynn Vail

## CSA Member Survey Results

We get a lot of valuable feedback from our members during the season at the weekly pick-ups and through email, but each year we also carry out an end-of-season survey of our members which helps us reflect critically on the past season. We greatly appreciate receiving responses from the 108 members who took the time to share their thoughts.

This survey helps us gather input regarding new ideas or possible changes in our operations. For example, in 2010, we added four weeks to our season, and 92.5% of respondents thought that it was a good idea. Also, many CSA's do not offer their members a choice in what they receive as their share from week to week. This would simplify planning for us and potentially create a more fair distribution of produce among members, but 72% of respondents indicated they would participate only if they could choose. So, it looks like we won't be making any changes in this area for now. We've also tossed around the idea of offering peas, green beans, or cherry tomatoes only as a u-pick option but only 32% of respondents said they would participate in u-pick, so, again that doesn't seem like a viable option right now.

We're pleased to announce that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the 2010 season. Approximately 100% of respondents rated the quality of produce received as excellent or good (the majority selecting excellent); 93% rated the presentation and distribution process of produce as excellent or good (the majority selecting excellent); 93% rated the variety of produce received as excellent or good (the majority selecting excellent); and 81% considered their CSA share an excellent or good value (the majority selecting good).

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## Internship/Apprenticeship Program

Colchester Farm CSA is dedicated to growing new farmers and gardeners by teaching basic farming and gardening skills and exposing willing workers to a small-scale, production vegetable farm; in 2010, it continued to pursue these goals through its farm apprenticeship program, the primary educational program at Colchester Farm CSA and also the farm's main source of labor.

The Colchester Farm CSA apprenticeship is a working/learning opportunity in which the interns work side-by-side with the CSA manager in the field. Interns receive a stipend, furnished housing accommodations, and access to the food we grow in exchange for their commitment and hard work in the field. Interns learn about many facets of vegetable production, including planting and field work, plant propagation and greenhouse management, harvest and post-harvest handling of vegetables, tractor operation, and vegetable distribution through our CSA share program and farmers market sales.

Colchester Farm CSA also supports their interns in pursuing off-farm learning opportunities through programming developed by SAITA (Sustainable Agriculture Intern Training Alliance), PASA (Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture), and other farm-related educational opportunities. Through participation in off-farm workshops, Colchester Farm CSA hopes their interns can increase their knowledge of sustainable agriculture principles, gain exposure to a variety of farming practices, and network with other farmers and interns.



CSA Staff (left to right): Nathan, Michael, Sophie, Theresa, and Aaron.

### We would like to recognize the following work share and volunteer staff who helped us accomplish our goals in 2010.

Nuha Ahmed	Thomas Luttrell
Jack Angiers	Ivey Mask
Christine Betley and family	Laura Menyuk
Doug Carter	Nicole Robinson
Audrey Goldberg	Carl Schaumann
Kelsey Hollowell	Ryder Schnaithman
Tara Holste	Xuyang Song
Wen Chin Liu	Trevor Williams

## Staff Biographies

Interested in learning who grew your veggies in 2010? In addition to volunteers and work share participants (who work in the field in exchange for a share of vegetables), five paid staff worked the field regularly (including two full-time, year-round staff, and three full-time, seasonal staff).

The Colchester Farm CSA team consisted of Farm Manager, Theresa Mycek, Assistant Farm Manager, Aaron Shier, and three interns: Sophie Slesinger, Nathan Wendte, and Michael Wessel.

**Theresa Mycek** served in her fifth season as manager. Farmer Mycek came to Colchester Farm CSA after graduating with a BS in Biology from Gettysburg College, serving in the Peace Corps doing agriculture work in Guatemala, and working at a CSA in Pennsylvania and market farm in New York. She has worked alongside the board of directors to help double the membership, quadruple its revenue stream, and diversify its programming, since she first started farming here in 2005.

**Aaron Shier**, after working alongside Theresa for the entirety of the 2009 growing season, assumed managerial responsibilities in 2010, coordinating restaurant and other direct sales, managing the work share program, leading interns in the field, and assisting the manager in field and intern program planning and communications. Aaron graduated from Colgate University with a BA in Peace & Conflict Studies and Political Science; while working with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, he succumbed to a yearning to learn gardening and farming skills and participated in the work share program at Clagett Farm CSA in Upper Marlboro, MD. Hooked, he found a home at Colchester for the past two years and hopes to continue to engage in agricultural work in his future pursuits.

**Sophie Slesinger** joined us after earning a BA in Cultural Anthropology and Dance at Emory University and subsequently spending a year working at Emory on sustainability issues in their residential facilities. Sophie grew up in a family in which meals were frequently memorable social gatherings, and she carried her passion for food along with her, gaining some experience in the food industry along the way; she hadn't much experience growing food though, and hoped she could learn at Colchester. Considering her interest in sustainability issues, she was inspired by our mission to protect our environment, so we might continue to grow healthy food in the future. Sophie left us at the end of the summer to take work in the food industry in New York City and pursue opportunities to dance.

**Nathan Wendte** joined us for the summer while on break from pursuing a degree from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University (and after a semester studying abroad in France). Nathan grew up in a family that owned a large grain farm in Illinois and had some experience working on that farm in the summer in his youth. He expressed an interest in setting up a farming collective in North Carolina at some point in the future, and hoped to learn about CSA as a business and agricultural model while at Colchester. He left us at the end of the summer to complete his business degree in Indiana.

**Michael Wessel** grew up in Kent County and returned after living and working sixteen years in Los Angeles, CA. Michael graduated from Swarthmore College and worked as a paralegal, as a story editor for Disney, and in real estate. Michael is a well-practiced cook and knowledgeable about food; though he grew up in the highly agricultural Kent County, his family did not farm directly, so he joined Colchester to learn to grow vegetables and learn about how our CSA is run.

## 2010 Field Notes

Our intention in sharing a summary of our field notes from 2010 is to provide interested members with a greater sense of the work we do in the field and to provide a farmer's perspective of the past year at Colchester. And what better time to sit down at the computer and stay inside? It's mid-December 2010, not yet winter, technically, but nevertheless a blustery, bitter cold 25 degrees outside. The ground is frozen and there's little we can do in the fields. It's already flurried a few times the past few weeks and under these conditions it's difficult to conceive of the very dry, very hot summer we experienced here on Maryland's upper eastern shore in 2010.

So what kept us busy in 2010? Irrigation, irrigation, irrigation! Because it was dry, dry, dry! Many of our plantings suffered on account of heat and lack of adequate water, but heat-loving, quick-growing cucurbits such as melons, squash and cucumbers thrived. The drier weather also made it easier to keep to our planting schedule and stay on top of the weeds. We rely mostly on cultivation by hand and tractor to control weeds and this requires dry soil and sunny days to be effective. And, even the growth of weeds tends to slow down in the kind of weather we had—even they need a little moisture to germinate and grow.

Our sweet potato crop was enormous and our potato crop yielded better than ever, the Colorado potato beetle kept at bay by frequent, thorough hand-picking (which benefited our eggplant as well). Also, in contrast to last year, the drier weather allowed us to get our tractor into the potato patch to hill the growing plants. Greater yield and less green spuds resulted.



Peas were great this spring, and we were happy that all of our hard work putting up trellises paid off; both tall-vined and short-vined varieties of sugar snap, snow and shell peas grow best when trellised and are much easier to pick.

Our tomato crop disappointed and eventually succumbed to the ravages of an infestation of tomato hornworms, beautiful insects but unbelievably destructive. We still enjoyed good quality cherry tomatoes, including the trusty sungold, sweet as ever. Our summer green bean crops struggled; bean plants will drop their flowers (and so, no beans!) when temperatures exceed 85 degrees, and we had many such days this year. As usual, we also struggled to control the Mexican bean beetle, which we do not spray pesticide for since sufficiently non-toxic, insect-specific and OMRI approved options don't seem effective for us. Our first bean planting was good and our final bean planting of the season fantastic; however, we had reduced staff during the autumn planting and were only able to pick limited quantities for member distribution.



Generally, we were pleased with the entirety of our autumn crops. We started transplanting fall brassicas (including broccoli, cauliflower, kale, cabbage and collards) later than last year, and pest pressure was significantly reduced. We nevertheless had to monitor for the imported cabbageworm, especially when the plants were at their earlier stages of

development. The small green larvae can quickly do a lot of damage. We used bacillus thuringiensis (var. kurstaki) or BTK, an organically approved pesticide, on multiple occasions when cabbage worms were spotted; BTK is a bacteria which can be found in the soil and its toxicity is insect specific to moth larvae. Once the larvae ingests the bacteria, it produces a toxin which is released in their stomach. For more information visit: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/gypsomoth/whatisbtk.htm>. The same monitoring was required of these crops in the spring, and good monitoring and well-timed spraying (as well as well-timed passes with our wheel hoes to kill just germinated weed-seeds) paid off with a quality spring brassica crop.

We tried a few new crops in 2010. We introduced sweet potato tops, the sprawling, leafy vines of the sweet potato plant, *Ipomoea batatas* (not to be confused with "yam"). We grew a wider variety of mustard greens, some spicy, some mild, some green, some purple; in the past, we planted just mizuna and tat soi, and the new mix proved palatable to many. We planted bulb fennel in both spring/summer and fall, and it performed better much

better in the fall, though the black swallowtail caterpillar slowed down the fennel's growth. We had a more successful planting of okra and a larger planting of lemongrass this year, which provided enough to distribute to members. Broccoli raab constituted a failed experiment. Collard greens were not harvested until the last week of the CSA season.

Overall, I believe we had a good season and were able to offer a good variety. Certainly, some crops weren't available in as much abundance as in years past, but others exceeded expectations. But, that is farming for you... each year is different than the last

with new challenges and opportunities to learn something new and each year seems to favor different vegetables. This year featured heat-loving sweet potatoes and the cucurbit family with an abundance of summer squash and zucchini, cucumbers, and watermelon.

Most of the vegetables grown at Colchester are started by us from seed beginning in late winter in our little greenhouse and grown in our high tunnel protected from wind and rain until they are ready to be planted out in the field. Of course, some of what we grow is sown directly in the field, such as peas, beans, carrots, lettuce and other greens for loose cutting, turnips and radishes, but most of our crops are transplanted.



By February, we'll be back out in the greenhouse, starting onions, the beginning of a new growing season. Though, one might argue the planting season begins in the autumn with the planting of garlic for harvest the following summer. Or from the plant's perspective, life begins with pollination of the flower, fruiting, and seed creation, making a new generation of squash or lettuce or tomatoes possible. I suppose there's no distinct beginning or end of the season for us. It's a continuous cycle of growth and decay and renewal. We hope you'll continue sharing in that cycle with us in 2011.