

2020 Woes Continue - Even on Red Hill I Farm

When people reflect back on the year 2020, they are going to remember the pandemic and wearing face masks to prevent the spread. They will also remember several natural disasters plaguing our world from record hurricanes to massive wild fires along with political unrest and many other negative plights facing our nation. Well, the same holds true for 2020 at Red Hill Farm. Members will not look back on 2020 at Red Hill Farm as a typically successful year because if it could go wrong, it did!

The farm year started out actually better than expected with the Covid-19 pandemic in our midst. We had more farm members than ever, with people wanting to avoid the busy supermarkets and go organic as much as possible. We also had more volunteers than ever with people wanting to find safe ways to get out of the house and do something positive to help the community. Yes, 2020 was shaping up to be a fantastic year for Red Hill Farm but, alas, not even the farm could avoid the dastardly year of 2020.

Soon we had problems with equipment. The well pump gave up during the hot, dry month of July. As the only source of water on the farm, irrigation became impossible. Crops suffered, became stressed, and simply did not thrive. Then the walk-in cooler became temperamental, reaching a temperature of 70 degrees. Not cool at all! Therefore, while we awaited that repair, all harvested vegetables were washed and carried over to the convent to be stored in the walk-in cooler in the motherhouse kitchen. This was not an easy task and put a strain on both the farmers and the produce.

Problems with weather and plant disease also ensued. It is no surprise that weather is always a challenge in farming but 2020 it seemed even more so. Perhaps we are seeing some of the climate change issues which are resonant of what is to come. Extreme rain and humidity at crucial times during the growing season caused crops and seeds to wash away, blossoms to fall off, or fruit to rot. Pests such as the cucumber beetle, army worms, and groundhogs have been equally tough on crops this season. And because the farm does not use pesticides, this can be a huge challenge in and of itself.

Even the feeling of community has been effected by Covid and 2020. All our normal events which drew the members together had to be canceled, including our wonderful farm-to-table dinner, our cooking demonstrations, our children's garden activities, and our annual harvest fest, along with many other gatherings we have become accustomed to over the years. We are so saddened that we could not have these events this year but hope and pray that our events and sense of community will resume in 2021.

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Additionally, Madison Rios left the farm in August to continue study at Temple University. But through it all Margaret Lilley and new farm workers, Carmen Cole and Lana Mejias, pressed on. Working through every setback with a lot of hard work, dedication, and smiles through their frustration. Individuals that have been members of the farm for years no doubt saw the difference with the size and quality of the share despite these continued effort to continue business as usual. But for our new members, we want to assure you that this is not a typical year and that with your continued membership with the farm, we hope you will be pleasantly surprised by what normal farm operation looks like in the future.

As a Franciscan-sponsored farm, we recognize that all of creation is part of the divine spirit—from the heavy rain to the pests. Red Hill Farm is a special part of our community which offers a quiet, contemplative place to escape the hustle and bustle of daily living while providing over 30 types of organic vegetables and a wide array of U-Pick crops, including berries, cut flowers, and herbs. While both the farmers and members have experienced many set backs this year, the farmers continue to love what they do and feel blessed to be a part of the Red Hill Farm community. We hope you do as well!

Florence Smith



Farm-to-Table Dinner on Red Hill Farm.



Harvest Fest is always fun for both children and adults alike.

Live local music helps set the mood during events.



A typical robust share from the farm.

Cooking demonstrations had become a real farm favorite.

Coming Again Soon!!!

"Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

- Joshua Marine

