



Fall City Farms News

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3636 Neal Road Fall City, WA 98024 (425) 222-4553

Welcome to the Rural World!

That's Farming! or Life in the Rural World

by Debbie Arenth

Imagine standing in water, knee deep, no, not the ocean. If you were standing near our store on November 6th, 2006, you would be standing in river water, nearly knee deep. Look around you and again imagine that water flowing over, what are now, our pumpkin and vegetable fields and gardens.

At that time, they were newly disced and planted fields of cover crop, such as clover, winter rye and vetch. The seeds had been in the ground only 3 days - not enough time to sprout roots that would hold the soil. Now, imagine a ditch longer than two pickup trucks and deeper than same, and add to that dozens of ditches 3 feet deep and 8" wide like multiple crevasses running the length and width of our fields and you will begin to grasp the volume of soil that washed downstream in November, 2006. Too late to plant another cover crop.

Again, with your imagination, hover over the fields and observe the circles of weeds, next to soil scraped away to hard pan and no vegetation. You will see where the eddies of water dropped seeds from very different environments - weeds we have never seen before. Now, like a dragonfly, buzz our river pastures and weave between the sand dunes and over the swales of silt, left for us to redistribute with our loader tractor.

That was 2006, come 2007, we had a normal spring of days of warm and dry, and days of wet and cool. We were able to work with our very poor soil by constantly amending as we planted and the weather continued to cooperate throughout the summer with days and weeks of sunshine just at the time we needed it.

2008 is a different story. The rain would not quit. The cold was record breaking. We had to work wet soil that was actually still mainly silt or sand. We began to see the effects early, with poor and absent germination of some crops, (corn, fennel, carrots, spinach) and damping off or just rotting seeds of others, (squash, corn, potatoes, cucumbers). Poor pollination followed with a continued cold spring and early summer, (snow in June!). The soil we had lost and the silt left behind caused our soil to be easily

compacted - that mattered in this year of no spring dry spells. We waited to plant until we could wait no longer and in some cases, as above, we paid the price. Weeds were rampant and happy and crowded out some crops.

And then came the varmints! Voles, mice and birds ate our pumpkin seeds as fast as we put them in. We planted our pumpkin patches three times! We planted thousands of seeds in pots in hopes of transplanting. The next day, we would find the pots empty and scattered. I tried to imagine the partying and music that those mice and birds danced to as they scratched through our tables of seeded pots! One farmer in the Skagit Valley described his fields as swiss cheese for the tunnels that were under his corn plantings. Because the planting was late in successfully germinating, the weeds were winning.

So here we are, with many successes, tomatoes that won't quit, broccoli as sweet as ever and leeks and onions, welcoming you to our farm and, without much whining, inviting you to share in the knowledge of how your food came to be.

You can also thank Tel, our wagon driver, cider maker, "man about farm", for staying with us and working beside us in this trying season. Madeline, our other mainstay, has gone off to college and we thank her also.



Leisure

*What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

*No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.*

*No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.*

*No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars like skies at night.*

*No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.*

*No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.*

*A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

William Henry Davies

