2016 CSA Season Review

2016: Season 7. As usual, our 20-week season ran from mid-June, when we first had enough different vegetables plus berries to make up a share with good variety & quantity, through the end of October, with root vegetables, winter squash, autumn greens & more. CSA membership grew slightly over 2015; most of the increase was in half shares, for a variety of reasons. These include families down-sizing, some folks trying out CSA for the first time, and others using their half share to meet most of their produce needs, then supplementing with pick-your-own or farmers' market shopping. Once again, a good number of full shares were families splitting a share across 2 generations, or groups of friends or neighbors "sharing-a-share" -- 2 great ideas that are here to stay. At weekly pick-ups, we discovered that some of our new membership was word-of-mouth recommendations -- and some of our members happily found out that their work colleagues or neighbors also belong to our CSA!

This year we had 3 "satellite" CSA drop-offs. The University of Hartford, where we deliver several weekly shares for faculty & staff, completed its third season. LEGO Systems of Enfield, returning for a second year, doubled their participation to 40+ half shares for employees. Our newest drop-off location was at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield; several staff members purchased shares for themselves, and the college funded 1 full share whose contents were available to students at no cost. "Satellite" CSA is definitely worth our while, to make it convenient for more folks to have access to our CSA program. It takes enthusiasm & good organization on the part of the on-site coordinator at each location; we've been very lucky to have that. We hope to repeat these arrangements in 2017, and we're open to pursuing other "collective" partnerships with workplaces, organizations, faith communities, etc.. Ask us about this if you have a group that's interested & a shared pick-up location to offer!

Each week's share included several varieties of seasonal vegetables, fruit, & occasionally herbs. Each week we try to offer a "menu-convenient" mix of items that go well together in recipes or complement each other in a meal. A weekly e-mail describes the share contents, to allow for menu planning & grocery shopping; we add hints on cooking & storage, & sometimes recipes -- which often come from our CSA members!

When possible, we also offer "a la carte" add-ons. When any of our veggies or fruit are plentiful, *and* folks might want more than is included a given week (e.g., berries, plums, broccoli, squashes), they can purchase extra amounts and pay for / pick them up with their weekly share.
2016's crop harvest was much affected by weather. Drought from early summer through early fall reduced the volume of vegetable production. Our orchard-fruit yield (plums, peaches, apples, Asian pears), already reduced (in some cases lost altogether) because of the mild 2015-2016 winter (& 1 killing frost in February), was less (in overall quantity, & individual fruit size), due also to the drought. Fortunately, we had a banner year for our blueberry & fall raspberry crops, which helped to make up.

With these limitations, we had to be more flexible in working out the contents of weekly shares. More often than usual, one or more components of the share would vary over the course of the week according to the amounts of those items ready to be harvested for a specific pick-up day. Yet no matter what, each week's share still always included a good assortment of several veggies, and -- except for the last 2 weeks of the season -- 1 or more fruit or berry items. We appreciate our CSA members' willingness to be equally flexible in their menu planning, whenever their beginning-of-the-week e-mail announced "either / or" possibilities. The 2016 CSA Weekly Share Contents write-up reflects these "either / or" adaptations. See Notes at the top of that listing for more explanation.

For a full list of each week's share offerings, and photos from our 2016 season, click the links on our CSA Program page:

2016 CSA Weekly Share Contents   2016 CSA Photos