



MEMBER GUIDE
CROMWELL VALLEY CSA
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Introduction

Welcome to the Cromwell Valley CSA. Your deposit and/or payment was received and you are a member for the 2002 year. Your pickup day is **Friday**. You have joined a wonderful group of farmers and members who are committed to good eating while practicing sustainable farming techniques. As a CSA member, you will learn about sustainable agriculture and participate in the running of a pesticide and herbicide-free farm that provides ecologically grown produce. With our help, you will learn how to cook vegetables you may have never seen before. It is our goal that you will develop a deeper understanding of the mutually beneficial relationship with the land that keeps the Earth and ourselves healthy.

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a movement that directly connects producers (the farmers) with consumers (you). By sharing the risks of farming with members, farmers need not go into debt. Consumers know that their food is healthy, fresh, ecologically grown, and local. By using sustainable practices and reducing the waste of transporting food over long distances, you are directly contributing to making the Earth a better place for all of us.

The Cromwell Valley CSA is a unique version of this movement. Earhome, a nonprofit group concerned with sustainable agriculture and environmental education, founded the CSA. Our farm is located on a public park operated by Baltimore County. This arrangement makes us a public-private partnership that preserves valuable farmland while educating the public about sustainable agriculture.

The CSA developed this guide to help you fully understand the background, philosophy, and policies of the Cromwell Valley CSA. In this guide, you should find all of the

information you need, as well as information on the CSA movement, Earthome, and the Cromwell Valley Park. Please consider becoming an active member of the CSA by participating on the CSA Core Group.

The Cromwell Valley CSA

After the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) acquired the three farms that became the Cromwell Valley Park in the mid 1990's, members of Earthome approached DRP and expressed interest in starting a CSA. Earthome was interested in demonstrating the principles of sustainable agriculture on which it was founded. A lease (now renegotiated for 10 years) was negotiated with Earthome and DRP in early 1998. Earthome agreed to manage about 60 acres of the park as an educational farm, in conjunction with DRP employees (such as the park naturalist and caretaker). Earthome became responsible for the care of two Percheron horses, April and Lorrel; haying and mowing in sections of the park; and other chores on the property. In return, up to 10 acres of the park were set aside for the CSA, as well as housing for the farmers in buildings on the property.

The CSA seeks to educate future farmers about ecologically sustainable agriculture. Each season we select two interns to assist the farmers. They learn about environmentally friendly farming techniques while helping to harvest and grow the CSA vegetables. In addition, the farmers and interns work with high school and college students who want to learn about sustainable agriculture. The interns are paid small stipends provided by tax-deductible contributions from members and other donors.

The CSA has a total of 125 members, 120 paid shares and 5 work exchange shares. Members pay \$475 for the 2002 season and \$35.00 extra if members prefer not to contribute 5 hours of work. Each share feeds about 2-4 people; depending on how many vegetables you eat. Some members split their share among friends or neighbors. A limited number of work-exchange memberships are made available each year allowing people to work for their share rather than pay.

CSA Budget

Members often ask how the share price is determined. Each year the farmers and core group members plan the budget, based on projected costs. To determine a share price, the total expenses are divided by the total number of shares.

We do everything possible to keep share prices low. The CSA has no paid staff besides the farmers. The farmers receive very little compensation and receive none of the traditional benefits other jobs may offer such as retirement savings or health insurance. CSA volunteers do all administrative work such as mailing letters, answering the voicemail, and so on. Also, some volunteers donate mailing and copying costs.

In comparing the cost of CSA produce to similar produce found at the grocery store, the prices are similar. Grocery store produce is kept artificially low by taxpayer subsidies to factory farming, including direct payments to farmers and gasoline subsidies, allowing produce to be shipped long distances without reflecting the true cost. In addition, most agriculture in this country is non-sustainable – it depletes the soil and poisons the environment. Our farm does less harm to the environment, so it’s less “expensive” to the Earth in the long run. By joining the CSA, you get more than vegetables. You become part of a community of people interested in healthy eating, land preservation, organic farming, and improving the quality of life of our next generation.

Below is the 2002 Preliminary Budget Summary

Non-capital Expenses	Amount
Seeds & Plants	\$2,725.00
Soil & Plant Care	\$2,200.00
Growing Supplies	\$1,500.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$1,500.00
Tractor & Truck Fuel	\$700.00
Fees	\$1,500.00
Office	\$1,375.00
Grand Total	\$11,500.00
Capital Expenses	
Building Repairs & Improvements	\$450.00
Tractor & Implement	\$4,350.00
Irrigation	\$3,000.00
Tools and Equipment	\$2,000.00
Loan Repayment	\$2,000.00
Grand Total	\$11,800.00
Total Non-Labor Expenses	\$23,050.00
Farmer’s Compensation	\$36,000.00
Total	\$59,050.00
Income	
120 single shares @ \$475 each	\$57,000.00
Payment instead of work (15 x \$35)	\$525.00
Equipment sale	\$1,500.00
Total	\$59,025.00

Vegetables and Vegetable Pickup

Once we know the date of the first pickup, we will send a letter or postcard to all members. Keep in mind we will not send postcards every week. You should pick up your vegetables every week on your scheduled day once the season has begun. Pickups usually go until early to mid-November.

The CSA grows a wide range of ecologically grown vegetables. Most are started from seed in our greenhouse. A few others are ordered as seedlings from organic suppliers. Many are “heirloom” or open-pollinated varieties not usually found in supermarkets. Farmers choose them for their taste, disease resistance, or other unique characteristics that make them superior to those grown commercially. Most members enjoy tasting the different varieties.

Members often ask whether we grow fruit. In the spring of 2000, we planted 500 raspberry plants, which should bear a lot of fruit this year. The raspberries will be offered as a pick-your-own crop. Blackberries were also planted this spring. There are a number of old apple trees on the property and members are encouraged to pick as many as they like.

Please note that all of the produce grown on the farm is distributed to CSA members only. Currently we do not sell any of the produce. Any uncollected vegetables on harvest day are donated to soup kitchens and homeless shelters if there is sufficient volume.

Here's how the harvest and pickup work: each Tuesday and Friday, the farmers pick everything that is ready to harvest. They then divide the total amount of each vegetable by the number of members picking up that day to determine how much each share should get. Your pickup day is Friday.

Here's what members need to do:

1. Make sure to bring bags. We do not provide bags to carry the veggies (although we try to keep a few extra around for folks who forget. Donations of bags are appreciated.). We suggest you bring several bags, since you may want to bag different vegetables separately.
2. Show up on your pickup day any time between 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. The distribution area is the Apple Shed on the Sherwood property.
3. Check off your name on the check-off list when you get to the distribution shed. This way we can keep track of who's picked up. You can send a friend or neighbor to pick up for you, but make sure they check off your name (and know the rules of pickup).
4. Pick up a weekly newsletter. This one-page newsletter will have a list of the veggies you're getting that week, updates from the farmers, recipes, and a calendar of upcoming events (including work days and potlucks).
5. Look for the signs over the bins in the shed. The signs will tell you what to take. How much you should take of each may be by weight or by quantity -- for example, one head of lettuce, two pounds of kale, or one eggplant. All amounts will be for a single share. If you have a double, double the amounts.
6. Take your veggies, use the scales to weigh out the veggies that need to be weighed. All of the bins of veggies will be labeled so you'll know what's what. There will usually be volunteers available at the shed to help you if you have questions.

7. Use the surplus table. If there is something that you don't like, there will be a table off to the side where you can put your unwanted portion. Other members who like your unwanted veggie can take it. And you can take anything that you like from the table. If you don't like something, we encourage you to weigh it out and put it on surplus table. Last year we had many people who didn't like certain veggies who simply left the unwanted veggies in the bins, and other members who might have wanted them didn't know the veggies were available. Then the farmers are left with uncollected vegetables at the end of the pickup day.
8. Go home and eat. We will try to help you cook unfamiliar veggies with recipes and cooking tips.

Eggs

In addition to produce, the CSA offers members eggs from free-range hens on the farm. These chickens add to the CSA's sustainable farming techniques. Chickens (in small numbers) can both fertilize the ground as well as eat bugs in the fields. You'll see our chickens around the farm in their mobile chicken coop. We have 75 chickens of the heirloom Dominique variety, and a few other varieties. These varieties are particularly suitable because they aren't aggressive, are approachable, and are good egg layers. They lay eggs all year, but the number of eggs drops off considerably in the colder months.

For members who are interested in eggs, they will be available for \$3.00 per dozen. This covers most of the cost of their organic feed. The eggs themselves are not certified organic, however you will notice a considerable difference in yolk color and flavor from eggs bought in the grocery store. The eggs are offered on a rotation schedule during the growing season.

The process for purchasing eggs will be announced shortly before eggs are available.

The CSA Work Commitment

What are CSA work hours? Most members of Cromwell Valley CSA have opted to contribute a minimum of five hours (or ten hours if you purchased a double share) over the course of the growing season. These hours can be done at any time over the growing season from May to November.

A few workdays are organized in advance each season. The 2002 season has workdays on the following dates from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.:

Saturday, May 18, Saturday, June 8, and Saturday, June 22

The reason for the work hour commitment is to get CSA members to come to the farm and spend some time working in the garden. We want members to understand how their food is grown, meet other members and the farmers, and generally feel the greater connection to the CSA that comes from participating actively. The labor contributed by the work hours is very helpful to the farmers, but our main reason for asking for your

time is to educate and engage our members. We've found that most members really enjoy their work hours and many contribute far more than the required five hours.

What kind of work can I do to fulfill the hours? The work is varied. It could include:

- All kinds of work in the garden and greenhouse, including planting and harvesting, and maintaining plants (for example, weeding, tying up tomato plants, etc.).
- Manning the distribution shed during pickup hours (Tuesdays and Fridays, 1-7). It is important that those who work in the distribution shed keep vegetables stocked and the shed tidy.
- Other work around the farm, like maintaining farm equipment and cleaning.

We will do everything we can to find work tasks appropriate for members who have physical restrictions that make work in the garden difficult, or for parents with young children. However, we strongly encourage everyone who can to do at least some of their work hours in the garden.

When can I do my hours? There are plenty of options for doing your work hour commitment. First, the farmers always need help at harvest time (Tuesdays and Fridays starting at around 6 or 7 a.m. and going until noon). Second, the farmers will set up regular workdays - typically, certain Saturdays from 9 - 1. These days will be listed in the newsletter that you will pick up at the distribution shed every week when you get your vegetables. Third, the farmers will be happy to schedule a special time for you to do your work hours. For all of these options, it is helpful to call the farmers directly at (410) 825-3891 to RSVP for a harvest or work day or to set up a special time. Please note this is a different number than the main CSA number.

Can I bring my children to work days? It may be difficult to concentrate on working in the gardens while supervising a small child. We suggest that parents of small children make this a family event: one adult stays with the children while the other adult works. This will give the opportunity for the children to enjoy the park and for adults to rotate between work and child supervision. Parents may also want to take advantage of the Children's Garden Program, which has activities for kids starting at age 5 on Saturday mornings. For more information on the Children's Garden Program, contact the park office on (410) 887-2503. Be sure to call in advance for program activities.

How do I record my hours? It is very important that you record your work hours in the master log. The master log sheet will be in the distribution shed at all times. It will have the name of every member who is supposed to contribute hours, and will have columns for you to record the dates and number of hours when you worked. Since the work hour commitment is an honor system, we depend on you to do this.

What if I don't do my hours? Periodically throughout the season, we will check the master log to see how members are progressing on their work hours. Volunteers will call members who are not recording hours to see if we can help find opportunities for members to fulfill their hours. At the end of the season, members who have not fulfilled their hours will be asked to pay the \$35 that nonworking members must contribute.

The CSA Core Group

The Core Group is a subset of CSA members who make decisions about the CSA and who take care of all the administrative functions of the CSA.

The first important thing to remember about a CSA is that it is your organization. Legally, it is a type of cooperative, meaning that it is owned by its members. And that means you. So as a shareholder, you can and should participate in all the decision-making about the farm and its operations. The vehicle for participating is the Core Group.

The second important thing to remember about the Core Group is that we have no paid staff. The farmers are paid (and not much), but only to farm. Everything else that the CSA does - maintaining membership lists, recruiting members, planning events, sending out mailings, producing a newsletter, managing the accounting and finances - is done by volunteers who are part of the Core Group. We need your help.

Absolutely anyone who is a CSA member can join the Core Group - it is completely voluntary and self-selected. There are no elections or selections of any kind. All you have to do is show up at one of the meetings. We strongly encourage all members to come to at least a few meetings just to get a sense of how things work, and to get more involved if you are so inclined. It can be as big or as small a commitment as you want. There are lots of projects that need to be done - for example, working on the newsletter, organizing member social events, doing outreach to promote the CSA and the concepts it stands for, and working with soup kitchens to distribute leftover CSA produce to homeless and low-income families.

Core Group meetings are usually on the fourth Sunday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Sherwood House (large stone house you pass through when leaving the distribution shed). The meetings take place year-round, since there is still a lot of work to do outside of the growing season. If you cannot make the meetings, let someone at the CSA know that you're interested - we can find ways to involve you without being at meetings.

About Earthome

Earthome, a non-profit educational organization based in Baltimore, is built on the premise the most critical task of the next 50 years is to build a life-sustaining relationship between humans and the Earth. Its members work to make this vision a reality in the Chesapeake bioregion through research and educational projects.

Earthome offers seminars on topics centered around reducing demands on our natural resources: Earth-friendly investment, understanding our bioregion, the environmentally sound household, vegetarian cooking, the safety of our food supply, deep ecology, and genetically engineered food.

Earthome's production of "The Next Industrial Revolution" will be aired on MPT on Sunday, April 21st. Be sure to watch on Sunday evening for this program about the movement Bill McDonough is leading to bring together commerce and ecology to change the world. Shot in Europe and the United States, the program explores how businesses are

transforming themselves to work with nature and enhance profitability. More information is available at www.earthome.org.

About Cromwell Valley Park *(adapted from the CVP website)*

The Cromwell Valley CSA is located on a Baltimore County park, the Cromwell Valley Park. This 366-acre stream valley park is comprised of pasture, open fields, woods, hedgerows, cultivated fields, and floodplain. This diverse habitat makes the park an excellent area for many kinds of wildlife. There are many species of raptors such as the red-tailed hawk, kestrel, and great horned owl, which prey on a healthy population of small mammals such as rabbits, deer mice, and meadow voles. Deer and fox are also plentiful. Songbirds seen in the park include the Baltimore oriole, bobolink, meadowlark, indigo bunting, eastern bluebird, and many others. The belted kingfisher and great blue heron are often seen around the stream.

Located in the Minebank Run stream valley, the area has been settled since the early 1700s and used primarily for farming. Some iron ore mining took place in the stream valley with the largest of at least four mines located at the stream's starting point - hence the name Minebank Run. This valley became a production area for building whitewash and agricultural lime due to an easily quarried supply of Cockeysville marble, which readily turned into lime when cooked. The limekilns in the valley operated until the 1920s and were owned by the Jenifer and Shanklin families. The remnants of several of these limekilns are still visible today in the park.

Today's park was acquired from three property owners between March of 1993 and December of 1994, in a cooperative effort involving Baltimore County and the State of Maryland. Largely funded through the State's open space program, the purchase included land from three property owners, including prominent Baltimore banker Robert Merrick. The Merrick parcel features a house built in the mid-1800s by A.W. Shanklin, who named it the Willow Grove Farm. The Sherwood Farm, which comprises the center 102 acres of the park, was purchased from the heirs of Mrs. Frances Wellington Sherwood. On this property sits the gorgeous Sherwood House, which dates from 1935 and was designed by the Baltimore architectural firm of Palmer and Lamdin. The Sherwoods operated a gentleman's farm, raising chickens, eggs, pigs, dairy cows, apples, peaches, celery, and other produce; most of these products were available to the public for sale. The third property, the "Good Fellowship Farm," was purchased from Mr. Franklin Eck, who operated a Christmas tree farm. The tree farm is still operated within the park, with trees sold during the holiday season.

The Sherwood Farm entrance is located at 2002 Cromwell Bridge Road. The Willow Grove Farm entrance is located at 2175 Cromwell Bridge Road. The phone number at the park office (Sherwood House) is (410) 887-2503.

Directions to Cromwell Valley Park

From Interstate 695 take exit 29A. Turn left onto Cromwell Bridge Road. Go past Loch Raven High School and Recreation Center and look for signs on the left. The Sherwood

Farm entrance is first (2002), and the Willow Grove Farm entrance follows at 2175. To get to the distribution shed, take the Sherwood Farm entrance and follow the road over a very narrow bridge. Bear right after the bridge and then continue going straight. To your right you'll see fields. When you see a white shed in front of you and the Children's Garden to the left you have arrived at the distribution shed.