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Happy Friday, Farm Friends! And Welcome to Autumn!

Brrrrr! Does it feel like Fall yet to you? It was 45 degrees here at the farm this morning. We've been breaking out the sweatshirts, heavier socks and knit caps to deal with the chill. Yes indeed, we see you (and definitely feel you) Fall!

All the rain on Tuesday and Wednesday ushered in this cold front but not before dumping almost 5 inches of rain. Some of our fields are soggy, muddy messes. It's a really good thing that we got so much done last week and we took advantage of Monday's dry weather to prep our strawberry field. Composted manure (thank you, Cara & Mia) and fertilizer went down and then Ray was able to incorporate all that good stuff. Next step is to lay out landscape fabric next week and burn 2,000 (!) holes. Then we can plant!



And speaking of strawberry plants, we have some available for sale in our [Online Store](#). They are 4-packs of beautiful Chandler plants. Plant them now for a bounty of sweetness next spring! If you ordered plants at our Fall Plant Sale, we will be contacting you soon to arrange pick-up.



Maggie and Bob have been busy potting up strawberry baskets for next Spring's Plant Sale. We'll be growing these out over the winter and they will look beautiful hanging on your porch.



Think Pink!

We'll be harvesting our ginger in a few weeks -- unfortunately it will be another small crop this year. But we visited Dr. Gouchen Yang at North Carolina A&T State University (NCA&T) last week to check on the plants he is growing as part of his tissue culture research. We are fortunate that we are able to collaborate with Dr. Yang as his "real-life farmers in the field."



Dr. Yang's tissue culture ginger research plants really helped us last year! Due to COVID-19, we faced a serious labor issue like most other small farms in the state. We had very little help, and some of our crops suffered. The seed ginger we ordered was mostly diseased and wouldn't sprout so we eventually dumped it all with a total loss. Because of our collaboration with Dr. Yang, he provided us with some ready-to-go tissue culture ginger seedlings. We planted and harvested from a little over 50 seedlings for teen-baby ginger with only about 3-months growth. Thanks to these plants, we were able to deliver ginger

to our *PlumFresh* subscribers. Based on our observations, we see terrific potential of tissue culture ginger to help provide a reliable source of ginger plants for small farms across the country.

And, in case you missed it, NCA&T's ginger research was featured in a [Fox8 News](#) story this week. Dr. Yang and Dr. Sanjun Gu described this research and showed reporters their amazing ginger crop at the A&T farm. It was a great story -- check it out!

Monarch Madness!

With last week's discovery of the monarch caterpillar, we have now become immersed in learning about how they transform themselves into beautiful butterflies. We are extremely fortunate to have Maggie Monteith volunteering here because she is an expert in this process. When she taught kindergarten, she always had caterpillars in her classroom in the fall to teach her students about this amazing transformation. Now we have Maggie teaching us!

Since we didn't have much leaf material for the caterpillar to eat, we took the one we found to Maggie's house. She has milkweed planted in a flowerbed and already had several other caterpillars munching away. On Monday, she let us know that several of the caterpillars had formed a "J" which means that they will start spinning their chrysalis soon. By Wednesday, one of them had already formed a chrysalis! Yesterday, Maggie brought over a plant with a chrysalis and we will now be able to watch the hatching process!

The entire process from forming a chrysalis to emergence takes about 10 days. Maybe by next week, we'll have a butterfly to show you! We will be posting pictures every day on our [Instagram account](#) to track the journey. Thanks so much, Maggie, our Monarch Mentor! And if you want to

know more about the amazing flight of the monarch, check out [this article](#).



Hay! What Are You Doing?

We got up a few more round bales of hay on Monday and needed to store them in the barn. With all of the other hay there, it was very close to the gate -- a bit TOO close! Mia couldn't stand the temptation. She has spent all week trying to get into that area -- stretching and leaning really hard against the gate. Finally she ended up breaking part of the gate enough that she could reach in and pull off chunks of hay. Before she ended up completely breaking the gate in half, Ray decided that enough was enough -- he would string some electric fencing along the top of the gate to deter her attempts to reach in.

As luck would have it, we didn't have all of the parts we needed for the repair. So a just-before-closing run to Tractor Supply meant that it was a repair

made by headlamp. Mia is NOT impressed.....



Register Now! Garlic Workshop

Our popular "**Growing Great Garlic at Home**" is **filling up!** It will be held on **Sunday, October 10 from 2-5.** People ask us all the time about how to grow garlic. So here's your chance to learn from our 13 years experience of growing this essential crop. If you've always wanted to grow garlic but need some advice to get going or if you want to improve your skills, this is just the ticket! Register now for this hands-on workshop that always sells out -- class size is limited to 10 people. The class fee is \$40 and includes a bag of seed garlic. [Click here to register.](#)



Whew! That's got it covered for this week! Did you know that Sunday is [Johnny Appleseed Day](#)? Yep! A great way to celebrate would be to go to a pick-your-own apple orchard for some delicious, crisp apples. Our favorite orchard is [Levering Orchard](#) in Ararat, Virginia. They'll be having their last apple PYO of the season this Sunday -- just in time for the Johnny Appleseed celebration!

Remember to please get your COVID shot, wear a mask in indoor public places, and be kind. By working together we can get past this new COVID surge!

**Until next Friday,
*Cheryl & Ray***