

Fall Greetings Friends of Lansing Urban Agriculture

Summer 2020 has officially ended. It will be sad to see the long days and sunshine go. But despite all the COVID-related anxiety and disruption, it has been a remarkably productive season agriculturally. Let me tell you a bit about what has been growing on at Urbandale Farm and with the Lansing Urban Farm Project.

LUFPP's home field (i.e., the site of our past Harvest Galas) has been farmed again this year by Aliza Ghaffari and Nate Kermiet of Magnolia Farms, two exceptionally talented and socially conscious, young farmers. They have deliberately worked to create an equitable, stable, and economically viable business plan. In fact, they are the very first urban farmers, we know of, whose diversified sales have put them in the black by mid-summer. Please visit them at the [Allen Street Farmers Market](#) on Wednesdays – say 'hi' and buy a carrot or a hard squash.

This year, too, Aliza and Nate have partnered with herbalist, Un Jeung, who as founder/owner of the Apothecary, has successfully brought her first medicinal product - a milky oats tonic – to the market.

Sarah and Tony Browne of Highwater Farms have also doubled down on their commitment to urban agriculture. In a beautifully worded reflection on their 2020 season, Sarah writes,

Our market season was challenging but rewarding. Navigating the market season during a pandemic with health issues was challenging and sometimes it was near impossible to get succession plantings in on time, to keep weeds down, and to see the farm reach its full potential. As hard as this situation has been on us all, it did help us reflect on our farming practices and those reflections led us to some important changes. We decided to start farming naturally, meaning that we will no longer be purchasing compost, fertilizers, or any inputs from third parties. Our goal is to make all of these inputs on our own and from the things that we grow. This is the essence of regenerative farming. We have also gone to great lengths to eliminate plastic in our fields and in our packaging. We plan to expand our operations next season and we will continue to focus on heirloom, open pollinated, and nutrient dense varieties of fruits and vegetables.

Efforts like these, leave no doubt that urban food and farming offer enormous entrepreneurial opportunity for cultural, economic, environmental, personal, and community well being. They are as much a part of urban development as bricks and mortar projects and, as such, they deserve our support.

The Lansing Urban Farm Project has also been busy. We have committed ourselves to showcasing and promoting local farms now more than ever. To this end, we are using social media. Admittedly, it's been a steep learning curve, but we've begun to get the hang of it (check out [Lansing Grown](#) and [Urbandale Farm](#) on Facebook).

This summer, too, we purchased the home field from the Ingham County Land Bank. As a result, we now own (and pay taxes on) the farm house and the adjacent property – approximately three

quarters of acre in all. This chunk of urban real estate, dedicated to agricultural activity, will require us to do some strategic planning. Do we want to lease or sell it to a beginning farmer; should it be used as an educational site for city farmers or the general public? Could it offer resources currently in short supply like produce storage facilities or transplant production facilities? Should we partner with other organizations to leverage ideas, labor and financial assets? These are the kinds of questions we will be asking ourselves (and answering) throughout the coming fall and winter. It is an exciting time for LUFP as we work to create a permanent, visible, and valued place for locally grown food and food self-reliance within the city. Stay healthy and stay tuned.