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**That's right, this is the last week of the regular CSA season.** Will miss seeing all of you coming and going, and just like you, will miss all the good produce.

**But, thank goodness for our Winter Share Program.** If you notice a decrease in your intake of fresh produce in the winter, are concerned about the high cost of produce, and are not purchasing Organic as much as you'd like because of the cost, Sign up now for our popular winter share program!

**WINTER SHARES:** Deadline is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Oct for the November shares. **BUT, you can still squeeze in** if you get your form in this week. It really is a great program – saves money and gives you all you need for organic fruit and vegetables – how can you resist? It is also convenient that you can sign up for as many weeks for each month as you want. See the signup form in the store for details, or go to our website.

**PRESEASON SIGNUPS FOR 2015:** Still time! Quite a few of the folks who usually sign up early haven't, so I'm thinking a lot of you will be doing that this week. We can give the discounted price until the end of October – If you need to wait for the Nov first week paycheck, go ahead and send in your check with a postdated date.

**U-PICK GREENS:** They will remain throughout the winter for members to pick from as long as they stay alive. Pick to freeze – if you haven't frozen a supply yet, you can pick extra greens this week- up to 20 leaves of each kind. Freezing is easy to do. For instructions, go to our website, click on "recipes" and select "greens"

Another Goodbye – This is the end of our 28<sup>th</sup> year as a CSA. As far as I know, we were the second CSA in the US. The first year we had 20 members, and I was the only "employee". The farm grew rapidly after that, and although we could be proud of our success, I realize that the success really is due to you, our members. In the early years, there was nothing here but the land – lots of mud, no power equipment, no driveways, no buildings, no "luxuries" like the Honey Bucket. Most of our members lived in Seattle (no drop sites then), and were willing to drive to this little patch of our earth every week, and pay up front on the promise and hope that they would get food every week. With only 1 acre as a start, we were pioneers of the CSA movement. The price of a share back in 1987 was \$475. The selection and quantity of vegetables was a lot more erratic too, as we learned through experimentation. Some of our members have been with us since the beginning. I often hear a teenage child of a member comment that they remember coming here as a toddler.

The Root Connection has been a model for other farmers to follow and start their own CSA's. Many have failed, but despite that, there are now over 500 farms in Washington that have some form of CSA. The management at The Root Connection has elected to continue with the original CSA model, with most of the members coming to the farm and being able to access the farmland. The development of the inclusion of "u-pick" items was a really good idea, I think. It's been encouraging to see all the people enjoying the farm, and learning about the importance of saving our local farmland. We sell around 400 memberships each year, and with all the people involved, that's probably over 1,000 people who eat right from this 16 acre farm – really remarkable. It's been a tough decision to stick with the open campus model – with pressure coming in recent years from organizations that use a box delivery system composed of not-so-fresh produce purchased from other locations. I know we lost a considerable amount of business (coming to the farm takes time!). But it is gratifying to see people starting to come back, realizing that they want more of a connection to the roots of our food supply.

In addition to our wonderful group of members, another group of people who deserve the credit for our success are our workers! From the beginning, I felt that workers should be viewed as the number one asset of the farm (well, maybe number two after the incredibly fertile land itself). Even in the early years, we have paid our workers a great deal over minimum wage. (And, they get a free CSA share – if they grow it, they should be able to eat it!) It takes an incredible amount of skill and dedication to work a farm like this. True "sustainability" has to include more than being organic, taking care of the land – it has to include the humans too. Unfortunately, according to the Dept. of Labor statistics, farming is one of the 10 most hazardous occupations, and is the lowest paid. Health issues are one of the reasons – on non-organic farms, people who work those fields have bodies that are so full of toxins from the chemicals that when they end up in hospitals medical personnel have to put on Hazmat suits before they can operate on them. Children as young as 12 years old are allowed to work in the fields. Life expectancy for farm workers is comparatively very short. In fact, farmers and their families are in the top percentage of occupations that have high levels of brain cancer, breast cancer, testicular cancer, and miscarriages.

Another component of sustainability is using any possible resources to encourage and support people who need help, and the agencies that are set up to help them. Healthy food is primary – since farmers grow food, figuring out a way that farmers can afford to distribute part of their harvests to these people is sustainable for the community as a whole. In 2009, Root Connection members formed Farms for Life, which is a link from local farmers to those in need. Our members have been very supportive of this organization – thank you! In 2014, with 5 farms involved, FFL donated nearly \$40,000 of produce from local farms to over 13 agencies, including food banks. This was enough food to provide the vegetables in over 80,000 meals for an adult or child. Please think about a year end donation to Farms for Life, [www.farms4life.org](http://www.farms4life.org), so we can keep up and even expand the work next season. And if you or someone in your family is a Microsoft employee, a donation to FFL can be made through the Microsoft Matching Fund which doubles the donation.

So all the components, the land, the members, the workers, and charity work in this wonderful dance. This is a model of true sustainability, and no one here is dying to grow your food. Thank you so much for helping to make it all happen! Please spread the word to others, and come back next year.

