

Fact Sheet on Abbott Farms CSA

What is a CSA?

A CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is a modern, innovative way for people to buy fresh vegetables (and sometimes other items) directly from the farm where they are produced. The farmer sells shares of the produce to shareholders, who pay an agreed on fee and come each week and pick them up.

What makes a CSA different from buying vegetables at a farmer's market?

1. Reduced food waste! At a farmer's market, the farmer just has to guess how much produce to bring and what will sell, and any unsold perishable produce at the end of the day is often wasted. The USDA estimates that 19% of all vegetables offered for sale in the United States are wasted, and the main reason for this is our market-style distribution system. If all food that was picked had a guaranteed buyer who purchased only the amount of food that they were actually going to eat, this food waste could be practically eliminated. That is exactly what a CSA does.
2. Guaranteed income for the farmer! Selling produce at a farmer's market is always a gamble; sometimes the farmer will sit all day and hardly sell anything. It's very difficult to predict what the demand will be in any given season, which makes it hard for the farmer to plant the right amount of each type of produce.
3. Guaranteed produce for the customer! You don't have to worry about getting to the farmer's market too late and missing something popular that has already sold out; with a CSA, each shareholder gets an equal share of what was grown that week, whether they are the first one to pick up their basket or the last.
4. More variety and specialty crops! The farmer can experiment with novel varieties of crops that may or may not sell at the farmer's market; part of the adventure of a CSA is trying new things and new ways of preparing them.

I've never been part of a CSA before; how do I know if it would be a good fit for me?

You will likely enjoy our CSA if:

1. You cook the majority of the food you eat—and enjoy cooking!
2. You eat vegetables every day, including kale and other greens.
3. You are willing to experiment with lots of different kinds of vegetables and want to branch out beyond the American mainstays of potatoes, carrots, lettuce, and green beans.
4. You plan your week's menu *after* seeing what's in the basket for the week, not before.
5. You get excited about a full basket of lots of different kinds of fresh, local produce.

What makes the Abbott Farms CSA different from other CSAs in the Kalamazoo area?

1. Large share baskets—heaping half bushel for full share and heaping peck for half share
2. Extra produce available either U-pick or pre-picked during peak season
3. More variety—8-14 different vegetables per week, depending on what's ripe
4. Five or six different types of fresh-picked herbs each week
5. Fresh-picked flower bouquet with each share
6. Recipe sheet each week
7. Weekly payment plan available—only a four-week deposit required at beginning of season

How do you grow your vegetables at Abbott Farms?

We grow our vegetables organically, although we are not USDA certified organic because we are a very small farm and the certification process is expensive. Our garden is fertilized with goat manure and compost from our own farm. We focus on keeping our soil healthy because plants grown in healthy soil are usually not seriously affected by insects or disease. We do not spray any type of chemical or natural treatment for insects or diseases. We weed our vegetables by hand and mulch some of them with organic material (old hay, pine needles, etc.). Once our plants are healthy and can out-compete the weeds, we allow some of the weeds to grow as trap crops for insects and to cover the bare soil and prevent soil erosion. We grow heirloom and open-pollinated varieties of most of our vegetables. We do grow some hybrid vegetables if they have unique characteristics that we can't get in heirloom varieties. We do not grow any genetically engineered vegetables. We do save some seeds and will offer seeds to shareholders on occasion.

What types of vegetables do you grow?

What we grow does vary from year to year because we like to try new things. Also, some years the weather conditions will not be good for a certain crop and we may have a failure, and not have any to offer. However, below is an example of what a typical year may look like:

Season-long crops: Kale, Swiss chard, lettuce, mustard greens, New Zealand spinach, herbs

July: Radishes, garlic scapes, kohlrabi, summer squash (several varieties), assorted beans (green, purple, yellow, dragon's tongue), turnips, cucumbers

August: Summer squash, cucumbers, turnips, carrots, beets, many varieties of heirloom tomatoes (red, dark purple, and yellow), several types of cherry tomatoes (yellow, pink, "chocolate cherries," and some "black plums"), ground cherries, okra

September: Tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, summer squash, beets, carrots, turnips, several types of melons (including cantaloupes and watermelons), celery, peppers (green bell, jalapeño, and Anaheim), tomatillos, cabbage

October: Beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, celery, still some tomatoes and peppers due to the late frost, cabbage, potatoes (red, white, russet, and purple), pumpkins, winter squash.

What types of vegetables do you *not* grow?

Since we are a small farm, there are some vegetables that we grow only for our own family and not for the CSA. Thus, our CSA does *not* include snap peas, sweet corn, scallions, leeks, rhubarb, or asparagus. We grow garlic and onions for ourselves and do not always have extra, so we will likely put some onions in the CSA but probably not every week.

What types of herbs do you put in the CSA?

We have several perennial herbs which are available the entire season, including: mint, lavender, oregano and lemon balm. We also grow annual herbs that are available as the season progresses like several varieties of basil, dill, cilantro and fennel. If you like or do not like a certain herb, please let us know so we can either leave it out or substitute.

How much does the CSA cost?

The Abbott Farms CSA costs \$27 a week for the full share and \$16 a week for the half share, with payments due each week when the share is picked up. We request a 4-week deposit (\$108

for full share, \$64 for half share) in advance. The deadline for the deposit is March 31st. We also offer the option of paying up front for the whole season (17 weeks).

How big is the Abbott Farms CSA share?

Our full share overflows a half bushel basket, and our half share overflows a peck basket. Both the full and the half shares contain the same variety of vegetables; the half share is just half as much of each type of vegetable. Each share basket will be slightly different, but as an example, here is what we put in our full share on July 18 and September 19 in 2017:

<p>July 18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large bunch of kale (12 leaves) A large bunch of Swiss chard (12 leaves) A large bunch of mustard spinach (12 leaves) About three quarts of baby lettuce mix Two large kohlrabis with leaves Four medium-sized radishes with greens Two medium-sized zucchinis One large onion Four garlic scapes Peppermint Oregano Dill Lavender Cinnamon basil Parsley Thyme Borage flowers 	<p>September 19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bunch of kale (10 leaves) A bunch of Swiss chard (10 leaves) Four large heirloom tomatoes A quart of cherry tomatoes A quart of tomatillos Four medium carrots Four medium beets with green Two large turnips with greens Four large stalks of celery with leaves One small watermelon Four small mango melons Two large green bell peppers Two large Anaheim peppers Basil Oregano Peppermint Parsley Thyme Cilantro
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How do I know whether to get a half or full share?

Because our full shares are larger than average, we recommend that anyone with less than four people in their household get a half share. A half share will be plenty of vegetables for two or even three people; a full share will easily feed 4-6 people. We do not recommend that two-person households get a full share unless you are planning on doing a lot of preservation throughout the summer, including preserving greens. If you find mid-way through the season that your share is too large or too small, we can work with you to switch from a half share to a full, or vice versa.

How does the CSA pickup work?

You will be assigned a pick up day when we arrange the contract. On your pickup day, which will be either Tuesday or Thursday, we will send out an email to let you know the baskets are ready and what will be in your basket that week. We ask that you pick up your basket before 6 pm, but anytime after you get the email. Bring your empty basket from the previous week as well as any re-useable bags or cartons from the previous week when you pick up your basket. If you

forget your basket, we ask that you please get it back to us by the day before your next pickup. We don't have many extra baskets, and we have assigned baskets to each shareholder so they only go to and from your home.

Do you have any CSA add-ons?

Abbott Farms also sells farm-fresh eggs, goat milk and honey soap and lotion, lip balm, and lotion bars, all of which will be available for sale during the weekly pickup window. If we have extra vegetables, we will also offer those to our CSA customers at a reduced rate, either pre-picked or U-pick depending on how much extra we have.

Will you make substitutions if there's something in the basket I don't like?

We will gladly remove anything from your basket that you don't want; if there's a recurring vegetable that you absolutely hate, please let us know because we would rather give it to someone who wants it than just have you throw it away. We may or may not be able to substitute it with something else depending on availability.

Can I pay for part of my share by doing farm labor?

Yes! We are always looking for people to help with the goats and chickens when we go on vacation, and if you would like to help us weed the garden or pick veggies, please let us know that when you sign up for your share so that we can schedule you in. We do not require anyone to work on the farm and do reserve the right to decide whether or not to allow each individual shareholder to trade labor. You must be willing to be properly trained for any labor you do at our farm, and we are not responsible for any injuries that may be incurred while shareholders are working at the farm. We apply your labor to the CSA fee at a rate of \$16/hr. Essentially, every hour of labor earns you one half share basket.

If you have any other questions about our CSA, please send us an email at scabbott@sbcglobal.net or call us at 269-692-2328. We'll be happy to talk to you more about it!