

# VCAAA Senior Nutrition Farm

April 2023 Newsletter



## Highlights

One recent major initiative that began at the start of the year was a comprehensive soil analysis of the Farm's land. The work, carried out by Fruit Growers Laboratory, provides a baseline analysis of our soil's salinity, consistency (its proportions of sand, silt, and clay), and macro-nutrient composition (Phosphorus, Nitrogen, Potassium).

Having this analysis allows the Farm Managers to amend the soil more precisely, adding nutrients and compost to the soil where it is needed most. It further allows Farm Managers to plant crops in areas that are most appropriate for successful growth. As an organic farm that doesn't use conventional fertilizers, understanding the state of our soil means more successful harvests.

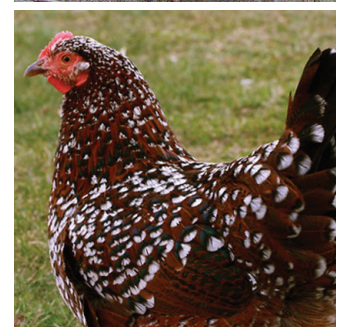


Four more chicks are on their way to the Farm! Farm Manager Mauri says the flock should top out at somewhere between 12 and 15 birds. The Farm recently acquired a second battery for its solar system and now new hatchlings can enjoy 24-hour warmth as they grow into laying hens. The new chicks are going to be beauties as Silver Laced Wyandotte, Speckled Sussex, Salmon Faverolle, and Blue Laced Red Wyandotte chicks will join the existing flock. And those existing hens are doing the work — producing between two and three dozen eggs per week.



## In a Nutshell

All hail the coming of Spring! We're seeing longer and warmer days — especially now that the rains have subsided. Spring has finally made an appearance at the Senior Nutrition Farm. And it's a good thing — the cold and rainy weather that persisted throughout March slowed crop growth noticeably. Crops weren't destroyed, just stunted. Fortunately, the Farm has excellent drainage and no flooding occurred. And, the chickens and the bees came through just fine. Not all farmers in Ventura County were as fortunate.





# Harvests & Planting

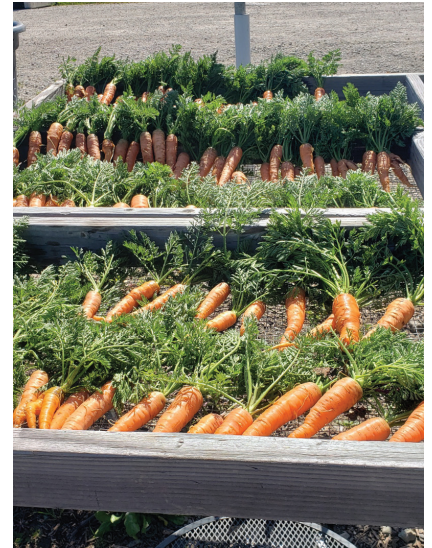


The onion crop reacted to the weather by “bolting” (flowering), which means the onions were picked before they could develop beautifully round white bulbs. Instead, as the picture to the left shows, they just look like gorgeous, enormous green onions. Also from last week’s harvest are luscious carrots and deeply purple beets. Red and green lettuces and dark green leafy vegetables such as kale and chard are still big producers while radishes, peas, citrus, and bananas round out the recent harvests.

Meanwhile, the greenhouse is rocking. The tables are jammed with sturdy seedlings almost ready for transplanting to the fields. Some of the seedlings getting ready for an early plant are cherry tomatoes, okra, tomatillos, jalapeno peppers, poblanos, and serrano peppers. Squash seedlings of multiple

varieties are also thriving in the green house: zucchini, acorn, butternut, spaghetti, crookneck, and cucumbers.

Another sure sign of Spring is the budding and fruiting of our stone fruit trees. The orchard’s peaches, pears, and plums are making the best of the warming weather.



## Our Volunteers in Action

Cold rainy weather is hard on our volunteers, but a loyal and regular cohort has been providing much-needed assistance throughout the Winter. As the weather begins to warm, we are hopeful that more individuals and groups will swing by the Farm to check out all the improvements and help with our Spring planting.

The Farm is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until noon. Come by for an hour or stay for the morning. All are welcome and all are appreciated!

Join us at the Farm by becoming a volunteer!

Contact Leslie Suarez  
at (805) 477-7354 or  
[leslie.suarez@ventura.org](mailto:leslie.suarez@ventura.org),  
or visit  
[vcaaa.org/volunteer](http://vcaaa.org/volunteer)

Farm Hours:  
Monday-Friday  
8 a.m.-Noon



# Thanks to Our Donors

Help support the Farm's operations and future growth by making a donation at [vcaafoundation.org](http://vcaafoundation.org)!

All donations to the Farm are greatly appreciated. Current needs include a 20-32 horsepower tractor, a gator utility vehicle (or similar), and wheelbarrows. If you can help with any of these items, please contact [christopher.fiorello@ventura.org](mailto:christopher.fiorello@ventura.org) or [brian.murphy@ventura.org](mailto:brian.murphy@ventura.org). Financial contributions toward these items can be made to the [VCAAA Foundation](http://VCAAA Foundation).



Thank you to the following companies and organizations!



**COUNTY of VENTURA**  
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Stories and pictures provided by Farm volunteer Kathleen Khirallah