

# VCAAA Senior Nutrition Farm

August 2023 Newsletter



## Highlights

Having the proper tools for a job makes the experience so much more rewarding. In August, new and temporary tools are making a huge difference for Farm Managers and volunteers alike. The Farm has leased a powerful tractor for two weeks and it is getting a workout! Farm Manager Karl has graded the area along the dragon-fruit fence on the northeast edge of the Farm so that truckloads of mulch and/or compost can easily be positioned for row maintenance. Moving so much material by wheelbarrow was time-consuming, heavy labor.

On a more permanent basis, the Farm has acquired a top-loading washing machine that will be converted into a "salad spinner" to accelerate the drying of newly harvested and freshly washed lettuces and greens. And a cement mixer has been repurposed into an industrial-sized blender of nutrients and planting materials for use in the greenhouse as the team starts work on seedlings for the Fall planting. Both of these creative re-purposing of common tools will bring efficiencies to the Farm's workload.



## In a Nutshell

Think of a farm, and most people envision a large plot of land with rows upon rows of fruits and vegetables, planted close to the earth and reaching for the sky. And while the Senior Nutrition Farm has that in spades, it also is building out its orchards and vines. Over the past year, the banana trees have gone bananas, the stone fruits had a respectable harvest, the dragon fruit has been abundant, and the citrus trees continue to produce lemons, limes, oranges, and grapefruits.

Yet the team has dreams of greater diversity in its orchards. Farm Managers have recently received budget approval to purchase a variety of new trees thanks to a grant from CalFresh. Haas avocados, box pomegranates, bay laurels, pluots, Asian pears, cherry trees, mulberry trees, and fuji apples are all on order. And just to keep the berries diverse, the team is procuring additional blueberry and thornless gooseberry shrubs. Crop diversity brings new flavors (and hearty nutrients) to food boxes for the County's older adults.



**PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US WITH OUR VOLUNTEER AND DONATION NEEDS (P3)!**



# Harvests & Planting

The month of August always means prolific harvests. Peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, lettuces, corn, and squashes of every size, shape, and color have been abundant. Peppers, tomatoes, and squashes will continue to ripen well into September. Volunteers also picked our first grapes, blueberries, and blackberries. The overall weekly yield is running at over 600 pounds of produce during August.

Our first group of hens are laying nicely, while the more junior group are still growing. They'll reach their full egg-laying potential in the Spring.

Unfortunately, this year has been terrible for cucumbers as ground squirrels and gophers have devastated our cukes. Pests are a continuous challenge at the Farm. Whether it's crows, rabbits, squirrels, or gophers, the Oxnard Plain is rife with hungry wildlife.

The first seedlings of the Fall planting are set and growing in the greenhouse. Using the cement mixer to combine the soil and nutrients into an efficient growing matter, Farm Managers have trays of kale seedlings prepping for planting. For more on the Fall planting, check next month's Newsletter.





# Our Volunteers in Action

Regular and semi-regular volunteer groups that came by in August included the Wild + Free School, the Cub Scouts, and Goodwill Industries. Groups and individual volunteers are always welcome and much appreciated. If you have some free time, join us.

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)!



Local organizations have been exceedingly generous over the past few weeks, meeting needs large and small. A local landscaping company, The Outside Edge, donated more than 200 cubic yards of badly needed mulch, while local grower Darren Sasaki provided chard and beet plants for the fall harvest. Agricultural supplier Agromin trucked in compost, and Patagonia provided outerwear and uniforms for Farm Managers.

All donations to the Farm are greatly appreciated. The Farm's greatest current need is a 20-32 horsepower tractor. Farm Managers rented a tractor for two weeks in August, saving hundreds of man hours of labor, but renting a tractor is not financially sustainable long-term. If you can help with the Farm's drive to purchase a tractor, please contact [christopher.fiorello@ventura.org](mailto:christopher.fiorello@ventura.org) or [monique.nowlin@ventura.org](mailto:monique.nowlin@ventura.org). Tax-deductible financial contributions can be made to the [VCAAA Foundation](http://VCAAA Foundation).

Thank you to the following companies and organizations!



**COUNTY of VENTURA**  
Human Services Agency  
Area Agency on Aging



Stories and pictures provided by Farm volunteer Kathleen Khirallah