

# VCAAA Senior Nutrition Farm

October 2023 Newsletter



## In a Nutshell

Honey! In yet another “first” for the Farm, the bees came through and produced more than a gallon of fresh, delicious honey. Local hobbyist beekeeper Clancy Thost donated bees to the Farm last winter and the mighty pollinators made it through the heavy rains and cold Spring temperatures to fulfill their evolutionary destiny. The crops were pollinated, and honey was overflowing in the bee box. Farm Manager Christopher donned the bee suit and wielded the bee repellent to gather the harvest. More than 40 4 oz. jars of honey have been produced thus far.



## Highlights

Our flock of chickens keeps growing! Christina Wolkenfeld of the Wild + Free Home School Community donated a dozen fertilized eggs to the Farm flock. Two of the hens took over the brooding duties. Five chicks hatched from the donation and four have survived and thrived, which brings the flock up to 16. From the hens that are mature enough to lay eggs, the usual yield is 2 ½ to 3 dozen eggs per week. Farm Managers would like to see the flock eventually grow to 24 producing hens.



Farm Managers are also working to secure an additional shipping container to be placed across from the original container. The new container will provide

## Farm Day — November 4

For the third year running, the Senior Nutrition Farm will participate in the annual Ventura County Farm Day. Come out on Saturday, November 4, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. A free guided tour of the farm will begin every 30 minutes. No registration is required. Feed the chickens, see how we grow food for the County’s older adults, and take home seeds of your own!

a defined border for the chicken run and coop area while supplying additional storage space and roofline for solar panel expansion. This new container will have a back door to ensure easy access to the soon-to-be-relocated produce washing station and sinks.



**PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US WITH OUR VOLUNTEER AND DONATION NEEDS (P2-3)!**

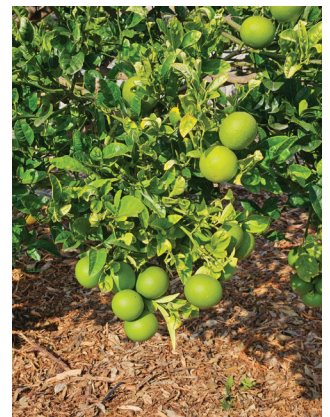
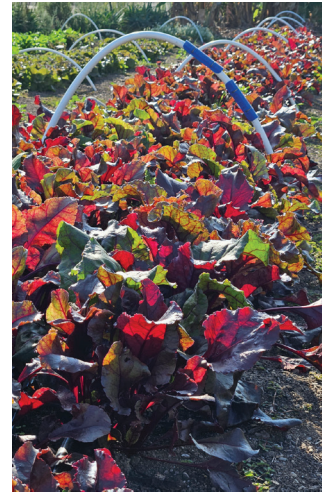
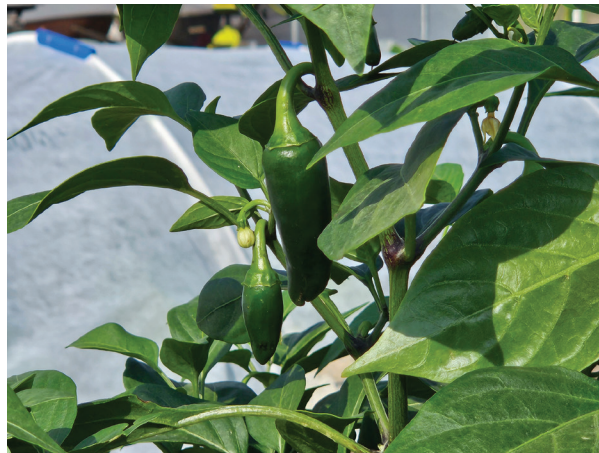
# Harvests & Planting

September has always been a prolific month at the Farm. Farm Manager Christopher estimates that between 800 and 1,000 pounds of produce are currently being gathered each week. This production level is considerably higher than last year's. In fact, this has been the strongest September of the past three years.

Watermelons, squashes, peppers, tomatoes, lettuces, chard, okra, dragon fruit, chayote, cukes, radishes, citrus, berries, figs, and assorted herbs were harvested in September along with fresh eggs and honey. The Farm continues its efforts to provide diversity in the produce provided to Ventura's older adults.

The greenhouse is gearing up for the Fall planting season. At the moment, kale, chard, romaine, and potato seedlings are all underway. But not all of the Fall planting will be done with seedlings from the greenhouse. Over the years, Farm Managers have found that planting seeds directly into the soil can be very effective with carrots, beets, garlic, and peas. Farm Managers continue to experiment with growing techniques to optimize crop yields and greenhouse growing space.

Although not related to crop production, Farm Manager Karl is working on a project to plant native perennials along the dragon fruit fence line. The goal is to create a native border that will visually shield the Farm from the debris basin, attract pollinators, and create a corridor for wildlife. And the best part — no irrigation will be required.



## Thanks to Our Donors

Volunteers Karen and Gary Speck recently donated a lawn mower to the Farm. While grass is in short supply, weeds continue to proliferate. In some areas, particularly in the orchard, clearing the brush with a lawn mower is fast, effective, and satisfying.

All donations to the Farm are greatly appreciated. Tax-deductible financial contributions can be made to the [VCAAA Foundation](https://vcaaa.org).

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



# Our Volunteers in Action

In September, groups of all sizes and affiliations came out to the Farm to help with harvests, farm maintenance, and planting. The Newport Academy, Pepperdine University, Wild + Free Home School Community, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Casa de Vida all sent volunteers to provide much-appreciated assistance to Farm Managers and the core team of dedicated volunteers.

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



And our volunteers are truly dedicated. Most of the volunteers set aside a day (or two!) per week to be at the Farm working in conjunction with Farm Managers. The following individuals have put in long, hot, sweaty hours over the Summer to make a difference in the ongoing success of the Farm:

Annette Reed — Austin Dent — Daniel Smithson — Dellon Strommen — Gary Speck — Jan McCann — Jane Brickner — John Peha — Judy Lucas — Julie Moffat — Karen Speck — Kathy Helms — Katrina Plate — Tracy Sandt-Hill — Mitch Willeford — Peg Walker



All these volunteers have become knowledgeable in the practices of organic farming and their expertise is invaluable. And still more volunteers are needed — especially on Wednesdays and Fridays. If you have a few hours that you can spare, the Senior Nutrition Farm is always looking for assistance!



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