



Trumpeter Swan Farm

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Surviving Winter on the Farm

Winter can be a tough time on the farm. Our animals can take the low temperatures, provided they get food to eat every day to provide energy to keep them warm.

Our chickens stay in the barn, out of the wind. They will go outside, but they really do not like to walk on fresh snow. So they stay pretty close to the barn where it is packed down. Winter is also a time when we lose a hen or two to hawks. Most hawks head south, but a few don't seem to make the journey, and as winter wears on, they get hungry and more brazen. So another reason for the chickens to hang close to the barn.

Our ducks are a different story. They really prefer to be outside, and still want to swim in the pond.

We have an air bubbler that we run to keep a small hole open in the ice. When it's below zero, like in the photo, the ice closes in and the hole become quite small. But it's all they need. A shelter blocks the wind and a tray of cracked corn is available to them in their shelter. On the very coldest days, we do herd them into the barn to get them out of the wind and extreme cold.



The two cats also stay in the barn at night. They like to sleep in the loft in a nest of hay. And they will sleep side by side, keeping warm. They do get cabin fever, and want to go out in the day, even if cold and there is not much to do. They will hang around the house, or go explore the machinery in the Shop, and sometimes visit us in the Process Building when someone is around.

Coming Events

Open House – Saturday, Mar 28, 1pm-4pm

Planting seeds for early transplanting. An opportunity to come see how we plant and germinate our sets for early transplanting. Kids can plant a small tray to bring home with them.

High Tunnels will be interesting to look at, and if the day is nice, you can stroll around the farm to see the “before” picture ahead of planting.

Next Open House will be Sunday, April 19.
Coincides with Baby Animal Fair in Buffalo.

What's Growing

Lettuce, Bok Choi and Kale are growing in the hydroponic system.

We have planted all our onion starts for transplanting. They take 2 to 3 months before they are ready to transplant, so we start in late January, to be ready to transplant in April.

Newer seed trays are spinach, beets and some early peppers.

We actually tilled a field in Hilltop (dries out first) and planted garlic, onions sets, peas, spinach and lettuce. Maybe too early....

In The Field

This was a winter with little snow cover. We did not have enough mulch for our garlic and onions, so we had hoped for a nice blanket of snow. That did not happen. So it will be interesting to see how they overwintered without a lot of protection.



In The Coop

The chicks we got in November are almost all grown up. They moved out of the chick pen to make room for the new chicks we got in February. However, the adult hens are not friendly with younger ones, pecking at them when they try to eat or drink. So we keep them separated by a fence so that can see each other, but not mix.

Finally, last week, the new hens are big enough to mix with the grown hens. Since they have seen each other for a month now, when we take the fence down, it's an easy transition. We should start seeing eggs from them in April.

Equipment Corner – Our Heated Greenhouse

Our original green house is only 8'x10', but it's insulated and heated, with full glass exposure. Once nightly temperatures stay above zero, we can start using it and start plants that love full sun like peppers and tomatoes. Usually, that is mid-February. This year, with below zero cold stretching into March, we could not open it until the second week of March. And now, suddenly, by the mid-March the snow is gone and some fields are dried out already. It's going to be an odd spring.



We are germinating 1 foot square trays of radishes in 2" of potting soil. After they get big enough, we set the trays on the ground in a high tunnel to grow them out. The trays have slotted bottoms, so roots can grow thru. It's a way to get early produce for April.

Farm Personalities

Maggie and Scrappy – The old dog and the young pup.

Maggie, the tan dog, is our 13 year old dog. While she has slowed down, she still loves to lay in the sun and look out over the fields, sniffing smells and watching for visitors. Scrappy, the black dog, is Ash's dog, and comes over during the day. He is 2 years old, and a lot more energetic. It's nice to have him around as it gets Maggie playing and running around more.

