

February 16, 2014

Dear Ms. Manney, Ms. Redman, Ms. Bates, Ms. Freemole, and students,

We are excited to be writing this letter to all of you. We heard you were learning about seeds and plants and since we are farmers who grow a lot of vegetables, we thought we would write you a few letters and tell you about how we grow vegetables on the farm. And you can write to us and tell us what you are doing in school!



First of all, let us tell you a little bit about our farm. The name of our farm is Radical Roots Farm and this is our logo. My brother, who lives in New York City, designed it for us. Do you like it?

The farm is owned both of us - we are Dennis Duhaime and Carol Tashie. Here is a picture of us – it was taken at the farmers' market. Do you ever go to the farmers market in Rutland? If you do, we hope you stop by our stand and say hello.



We have been farmers for about five years. Before that Carol was a teacher and Dennis worked in the lumber business. We decided to become farmers because we love to grow food and we love to work outside. We also believe that if there are enough farms and farmers then Vermont can grow almost all of the food we all need to live. What do you think of that?

Here is a picture of what one section of our farm looks like. We grow organic vegetables and if you visit our farm you will see rows and rows of plants growing. Ms. Freemole has visited our farm a few times so she can tell you more about it.





We bet you have eaten some of our vegetables. Your school's chef, Ms. Hanna, buys squash and tomatoes from our farm. We hope you like the meals Ms. Hanna makes out of our delicious vegetables!



A lot of people ask us what farmers do in the winter, when it is too cold and snowy to plant in the fields. First of all, we take a vacation. Since we have to work every day in the spring, summer, and fall, winter is the only time we get to take a nice long vacation. Having time off in the winter is the opposite of what you have as students and teachers. You get a lot of time off in the summer, right?

This year we went camping in Georgia and Florida and we got to see a lot of wildlife. Here are some pictures of some of the wildlife we saw - an armadillo, a white squirrel, a bald eagle, and a dolphin.



But now that we are back from our vacation, we are starting to get ready for spring.

There are many things we have to do now to get ready for planting in the spring. The first thing we need to do is buy our seeds. You would be surprised at how many seeds we have to buy – thousands and thousands of seeds. But that's okay because we know that each seed will grow into a plant and each plant will give us food for our community.

Did you buy seeds to plant at your school? What kind of seeds did you buy?

Once we buy our seeds we have to start planting them. But since it is too cold and frozen to plant anything outside – and the ground is covered with lots and lots of snow - we plant our seeds inside our greenhouses. Do you know what a greenhouse is?

A greenhouse is a small building with clear plastic or glass walls and roof. It gets nice and warm when the sun is shining and it is a great place to start growing seeds and plants.



Here is a picture of our two small greenhouses covered by the snow we got on Friday. Boy that was a lot of snow!

And here is a picture of one of the greenhouses in the springtime. You will see that this greenhouse is very small and is located in the backyard of our house in Rutland City. We have other greenhouses that are bigger; they are located at the farm. But this small one is the just the right size to get started in February!



It is very expensive to heat a greenhouse, so in February, when it is still very cold outside, we only use our smallest greenhouse. Plus we have to use fossil fuels to heat the greenhouse and we know that is not great for the environment. So we try to use as little fuel as possible.

When it is sunny, the sun keeps the seedlings warm. But if the sun is not shining or it is nighttime or it is really cold outside, then we have to use a heater to keep them from freezing. Just like you use a heater in your house to keep you warm in the winter!



Here are pictures of what the inside of the greenhouse looks like. We start our seeds in plastic trays filled with potting mix and we keep them warm and watered inside the greenhouse. Right now we are growing onions, leeks, spinach, lettuce, scallions, salad greens, and artichokes.



Before too long, there will be so many plants growing in the little greenhouse that we will have to expand into our bigger greenhouse.

We will stop writing now. We hope you will write us back and tell us what you are doing in school and what kinds of questions you have. There is a lot we can tell you about farming and growing vegetables so ask us anything you want to know!

Your Farmers,  
Carol and Dennis

