



# Green Family Nut Farms LLC

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Hello Friends and Family,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Here at year-end, I am taking a little time to reflect on the year that was & to look ahead to 2025, our second full season managing this adventure that we call Green Family Nut Farms. 2024 had its share of accomplishments and failures as one would expect in any new endeavor. Some of the highlights to celebrate & thank God for:

- 26 of the 62 hazelnut trees that are planned for our Test Planting in Millersburg were successfully transplanted this spring (only 1 of the 27 planted trees failed to bud out)
- We raised and processed 98 pastured poultry in our first year with a mortality rate much lower than other growers told us to expect in Year 1 (6% vs. 12% or more)
- Our little farm provided 21 customers (and their families) with nutritious, locally grown food & was able to bless additional families through our local food pantry
- We designed a custom chicken tractor and proved that it could be used to run pastured poultry between the 15 ft wide rows of our future hazelnut and chestnut orchards and
- Our children learned a little more about where their food comes from and how hard work can be rewarding to those who are willing to make the effort.

The year also included many opportunities to learn from failure. I'll mention just a few of them:

- The 2 chickens who got run over by their farmer and died just days before going to the processor because he was late for work and in a hurry when moving their tractor to a new patch of grass
- Slow growing Freedom Ranger birds really do need that extra week to reach full weight and
- Sales to farmers of items to be used directly in the production of agricultural products for sale are exempt from Indiana sales tax. You just need to file the right form with the right people.

## Farm News

Inessa continues to experiment with her sourdough baking craft. The latest creation seen in our kitchen was an artisan loaf with Christmas tree figures baked into the loaf's crust. I am suggesting that she offer this artistry as an optional upcharge for those who would like to purchase a delicious AND visually appealing loaf for an upcoming dinner party. If you agree, please let her know that her husband has an occasional good idea or two.

On Thanksgiving morning Zach and I picked up a used 330 gallon IBC tote for \$30 from a local farmer which we will use next

## DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER CONTENTS:

|                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| Farm News            | Pg 1-3   |
| Heard on the Farm    | Pg 3     |
| The Farmers' Library | Pg 3     |
| Bonus Photos         | Pg 4 & 5 |





year to build an automated drip irrigation system for the test planting. This was an example of how the Lord often directs our steps through something as simple as suggesting “turn here” to us by His Holy Spirit as we go about our daily lives. All summer I had been looking locally for a used tote because I didn’t want to spend \$500 to buy a new one and the only used ones that I could find were hours away from home. Just before Thanksgiving we were at the farm to complete our end-of-year survey of the hazelnut trees (more on that later), and afterwards I wanted to take the family out for ice cream in Shipshewana. On the way I had the “random”

thought of going a different way than we normally would. Not 4 miles away from the farm we passed this tote sitting on the side of the road with a For Sale sign on it. The guy had purchased it as part of a storage unit and was looking to get rid of it because he had no use for it. Now Zach, Merci and Ruth won’t have to tote 5-gallon buckets of water each week to water the hazelnut trees!



In November we took the opportunity to conduct an end-of-year survey of our hazelnut trees in the Test Planting. The family and I measured tree heights, counted catkins and took photos of every tree that was planted in the spring. This first year we intentionally used different planting techniques, fertilization methods & amounts and types of weed control throughout the orchard. The data that we collect will help us to evaluate best practices that can then be applied on a larger scale in our future 10-20 acre hazelnut orchard. We also had fun at the



farm one last time before winter! See the Bonus Photos at the end for more photos from that beautiful day.

While reading a good book recently (see The Farmers’ Library below) I learned about a trick to make better compost with less effort. Talk about a win-win situation! By drilling holes in PVC pipes and placing



them vertically about 1-2 ft apart in your compost pile, you ensure that the pile remains aerobic (i.e. oxygenated) and is producing beneficial fungi instead of the harmful fungi that results when your pile turns anaerobic. After a few days the fungi stabilize the structure of the pile to the point that you can remove the pipes leaving an open, vertical shaft where the pipes used to be. These vertical shafts continue to allow air into the center of the pile; they also funnel water into the pile to help keep it moist. A moist, aerobic pile results with very little effort on the part of the farmer. Most importantly, no more turning of the pile is required! Because this is a

slower process than regularly turning a pile that you jumpstarted with an accelerant like bone meal or blood meal, you do need to keep several piles going to always have a finished pile available when you need fresh compost. However, with little maintenance required for each pile, the only limiting factors are available raw materials to compost and space for multiple piles.

An exciting development for 2025! We will begin using Mailchimp to improve communication with our customers and supporters. This will help us to better manage our growing email list and will allow us to gather important feedback from current and potential customers through short, thoughtful surveys sent at different times throughout the year. **Look for our first survey sometime in early January**; all who return a completed survey will receive a credit towards their next purchase with us in 2025. We value the feedback that we've already received from many of you, but we do need to hear from you about specific topics that will help us to become better farmers and to better serve our friends and community. Thank you in advance for your shared wisdom!

Another new development is the addition of a new feature in our newsletters that we are calling **The Farmers' Library**. In this mini featurette we will be offering a quick synopsis of a book that we are either currently reading or have recently read and that we think you might enjoy reading as well. The goal is that each book would have some relevance to the farming journey that we are embarking on as a family; however, we may slip in a book or two that are totally unrelated but were just that good of a read. For example, in the future I intend to write about the book Team of Rivals which I recently read & would highly recommend to anyone who loves history. Check out the first edition of The Farmers' Library below!

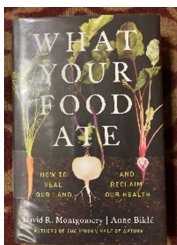
Finally, here are some things to look forward to in the upcoming year!

- A Green Family Nut Farms website complete with the Green Kids' blog
- Delicious recipes utilizing pastured poultry in healthy, creative ways
- Revised pricing of our pastured poultry that is based on the lessons learned in our first year
- An earlier opportunity to order your pastured poultry for the entire year; look for more information in January's newsletter
- Cooking lessons by Inessa – an evening of good food and fellowship while learning her secrets for baking sourdough and preparing a whole, bone-in chicken.

## *Heard on the Farm*

Absolutely nothing. The farm is resting. Shhh!

## *The Farmers' Library*



What Your Food Ate by David Montgomery & Anne Bikle

We've all heard the adage, "You are what you eat." This thought-provoking book asks its readers to consider the reality that we are what our food ate. It traces many of the current health issues plaguing Americans today to the food we eat which lacks the minerals and phytochemicals that our bodies need because of how it was grown or raised. It examines the damaging effects of a food industry that remains focused on increasing yields and improving shelf-life but not on growing healthy, naturally nutritious food for its consumers. The authors "reveal why regenerative farming practices hold the key to healing sick soil and untapped potential for improving human health". [The cover design is by Tim Green. Who knew Dad had such talent? 😊] - **David**

The Year Money Grew on Trees by Aaron Hawkins

A captivating story about a boy who takes over an apple orchard from his neighbor's deceased husband with intricate diagrams depicting specific aspects of apple growing - **Merci**



## Bonus Photos



Putting away the tractor for winter with friends (Fall Chicken Day)



21, 22... Wait! Argh!... 1, 2, 3







*And I thought that they were working...*



*In case anyone thinks that farming is all sunshine & blue skies*