



Whole Circle goes back to nature

*Organic farm boasts blue carrots
and a school bus turned hen house*

By Michael Schultz
Photos by Ted Brown

Johann and Maggie Kleinsasser have operated Whole Circle Farm located in the northwest corner of Halton Hills since 2002.

Says Johann, "We have a Rockwood phone number, an Acton address, and live in the Township of Erin."

Whole Circle Farm is an organic and biodynamic farm. It encompasses 200 acres on the old Leslie farm built in 1882. Johann and Maggie lease their farm from their neighbours the Chapmans. The farm name embodies the biodynamic principle that farmers should balance the inter-relationship of plants, soil and animals without external inputs like chemicals.

The Kleinsassers bank on the work of Austrian cultural philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1924) who believed that 'spirit is not without matter and that matter is not without spirit.'

Wise words when it comes to farming.

"Our goal is to create a self-supporting organism," says Johann.

To do that, they have put 130 acres into cultivation. On the 'main stage' is 10 acres of garden vegetables that are sold directly to customers. It is the smallest acreage and the most labour-intensive

but brings in the greatest return.

When they first arrived at the farm Johann could tell that the land's fertility was low, based on the types of weeds he observed growing. Since then, they have worked to build the fertility of the soil.

"Now we have a different weeds, but it tells us that the soil is more fertile.

"My philosophy is to let things unfold on the farm—we let the farm guide us," says Johann.

The unfolding has worked. In 2010 they won "Sustainable Farmer of the Year Award" in the Waterloo/Wellington area. Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong presented the award this past spring.

Maggie says "it was just like being at the Oscars." Visitors are always welcome. There's a serve yourself store in the old barn where you can pick



up staples like root crops, meats, honey and eggs. Take a mini-farm holiday and cut your own flowers or pick your own berries and herbs. The fresh air is free.

One of their major priorities is the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) program or Community Supported Agriculture. From June through March, the farm delivers vegetables and flour to about 200 families. The selection varies seasonally.

"The most satisfying part of our work is meeting our customers, getting to know their families and seeing how much they are enjoying their produce," says Maggie. The CSA program costs a family of four about \$30 a week.

Eating locally-grown produce is definitely de rigueur these days. In fact, the thinking is that eating locally-produced food helps cut down oil consumption.

The produce is delivered at both the Georgetown and Acton farmers' markets. They even have some unusual produce like ground cherries and as well as red and blue carrots.

One possible area of growth for Whole Circle would be to expand to other weekend markets. Right now, however, they are pleased with their coverage and concentration. Customers from Milton, Georgetown, Acton and Guelph travel to the farm



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