

Orchard Updates -Alex Felt

As I write this, it's the last week of July and for the whole month we've been busy picking away! First came on the sour cherries, then the raspberries and red

currants at about the same time, followed only a week later by the black currants ready for harvest. It's been a demanding last three weeks, but today when lunch time rolled around, I knew I wouldn't be back to harvest currants again until next year, and we have but one more pick through of the raspberries until the fall! Our freezers are filling full of fruit for our pies and jam, which means we can exhale and get to our weeds and work on disease and pest prevention methods until the apples come on.

But this is business as usual for the orchard! However, we have been seeing some incremental changes over the last few years here. Brendan has grafted apple trees for the last two springs, and we planted four varieties of strawberries last year as well. We've gotten rid of sod, planting cover crop instead in areas for future planting, and are slowly cherry bushes, and six honey berry bushes as well.

Farmers market has been selling out whenever we supply fresh berries, and we've been able to sell fruit



Photo, Sandy in the redcurrant bushes

from our online store, as well as including fruit shares as a garden box add on. Again, not too new or revolutionary, but some new and exciting ways the orchard has gotten out there, is by bottling fresh pressed apple cider and grape juice. We also highlighted our grapes and apples at the country banquet by including hard cider and an Edelweiss wheat beer as part of our drink menu-- they were quite a hit!

The orchard receives a lot of early attention from our spring school groups, so a big thank you to Youth Initiative High School, Chicago Waldorf School, Avalon, and the Minnesota Waldorf School! This year, we've got crews active Monday through Friday as a part of our day program, with about 20 different people coming in to help out throughout the week! With the growing in size and variety of fruit and products coming out of

continuing this practice. This year, we planted ten sour

it, there is no shortage of energy and enthusiasm in the orchard this year.

The CSA Season -Tony Bodelson

So we're about 7 weeks into our CSA now, and we're going strong. It's a time of year where we pull up our boots, and/or tighten our aprons, and jump into our days head first. The energy around community goes from a bit of a more laid back tread to a full on sprint to get every last zucchini picked, cookie baked or beet pickled before they've all disappeared. Some find it chaotic and overwhelming, others find

it chaotic and exciting, but we can however, all agree, it's a bit chaotic.

Our life changes in a few ways during this season. We spend more time in the garden, getting up at the ungodly hour of 5.30am to start harvest at 6am, moping about our early morning, while forgetting the milkers have already been up and going for at least an hour. We then plow our way through two full days of harvest and cleaning and organizing our way around veggies to feed our family of 250 CSA supporters. I often times feel like we are scrambling to get everything together at a decent hour,

forgetting just how beautiful these boxes look when full with all of our hard work from the previous few days.

The bakery also ramps up! We're so thankful for our homesteader shares because we get to do so much more! We would go from making about 15 loaves of bread and 30 bags of cookies a week to easily 50 loaves of bread and 90 bags of cookies. We crank up some music, start a bit earlier and really start pumping out the cookies and bread like there's no tomorrow. Walking into the bakery mid crew could be quite overwhelming at





first in the summer, with 5 people piled onto one table mixing, scooping, labeling, etc., bowls on the shelves, cookies coming out of the oven, going into the oven, timers going off, sinks filling and draining, and Mackenzie belting out her favorite tunes with the radio with Bruce humming a singing along, but once you get used to it, it's so enjoyable.

There's also the processing kitchen, chugging away through cucumber after cucumber, beet after beet, trying to pickle it all as fast as they can. Fruit is flying

in by the gallon to be made into jam or pies, oh goodness the pies, we better make three more just in case, and don't forget the basil because we better make pesto today! The team gets through an incredible amount of processing to make it possible to keep eating our goodies throughout the year, and it's always appreciated.

We may drive ourselves crazy trying to get as much stuff done in these few beautiful months of summer but, at the end of the day, it's worth it. Every week on deliveries I get to see so many of our

> sites, and have the pleasure of speaking with a few hosts and CSA members, and it's so great to see all the things we're able to provide. Seeing a customer get excited about the first round of potatoes, or tomatoes, or seeing their kid's eyes light up as they sneak into the bag to find the Chocolate Chip cookies inside really makes my day. Then I get home, get to take a slower afternoon and sleep, knowing that the next week will hold a similar chaotic adventure, and I have to say, I'm usually quite excited to see what will come next.



Photos: Kelly, Makinzie and Jackson make boxes, The lettuce looking good! Maresa, Makinzie and Ari in the bakery

Country Banquet -Christine Elmquist

A fancy new, and very labor intensive, tent went up. Every garden pathway was manicured into a lawn. Personal finery was planned for weeks, photos assembled, and beer brewed (yes you read that correctly!) With vegetables harvested and produce delivered to Chefs Sean Jones and Nathan Sartain at St Paul College, we were enthusiastically nervous as always when the day rolled around and the community was filled with white aprons dashing about, admiring the cows and sampling the mint. And then it tipped with rain!

No matter: everyone came. Huddled into tents hastily erected in the flower garden, they scurried between drinks and platters of delicious tidbits, meeting people they were now literally rubbing shoulders with, and enjoying the music played by Lauri and Garth. We now know we can fit 100 people sitting down formally in the community center VERY comfortably. And, should it rain again, we shall surely remember that four coffee pots is one too many for the fuse and, should that happen, Dan Flynn is the guy to fix it.

New this year was a little silent auction, and complementary little cups the pottery group made over the winter. The aforementioned beer, brewed from our orchard was also a lovely touch .As Joseph Elmquist recommended enthusiastically to another guest, "The ale is really good. You'd



never think Brendan brewed it right here!" Er, thanks?

Thank you to Chef Sean Jones who has honed this into a mutually beneficial part of the St Paul College curriculum and to our really super guests whose interest, appreciation and readiness with an umbrella made sure we all enjoyed this amazing event in 2019.

We raised \$10,000 for the apartment fund!

Give Big -Hillary Schauls

We won the Give Big! People made donations to Community Homestead online. I did it too and my family too. We support Give Big. Give Big is important to raise money for buildings, and things for Osceola like the clinic, Arnell Humane Society, Special Olympics, things like that, and so on.

I gave to the Artbarn because we sing at the Artbarn, our choirs does. I gave to Friends of the Library too because it is the new Discovery Center. It is huge inside and I go in every week and get books and CDs and stuff. Kelly and Oscar and myself goes in to check out things. To practice there.

We are raising money for the apartments we are making here. Who will live in the apartments? That is a good question. I hope that those people like to have fun, like games and water stuff at the Landing.

Photos: Alex, Brendan and Chelsea serve beer and wine

H'ors d'ouerves in the garden

Lauri and Garth play for the guests

Rocking Around the Rhubarb Fest -Janice Hienrich

When you agree to volunteer on a farm in Wisconsin you would most likely think of working in a barn or gardening but you would never dream of walking through town in a Rhubarb costume and handing out popsicles to children.

Well, that's what happened to me.

Growing up with American movies I had always seen being a mascot as something kinda cool that's part of the experience so I agreed to be *Ruby Rhubarb* for the annual Rhubarb Fest that takes place in the month of June in lovely Osceola.

Tons of rhubarb are processed into pies, jam, sauces, wine and more to celebrate the sweet 'n' tangy plant. There's music, crafts and a big old bouncy castle but most importantly there's the rubber duck race where friends and families send the bright yellow plastic animals over the Osceola waterfall like a bunch of depressed lemmings. It's fun to watch and I bet it's even more fun for the someone who wins the prize money. As Scott Cummings says it: "It's an awesome fest, man. Awesome lemonade as well." And that guy knows what he's talking about.

While all this happened I was living a double life. There was Janice, the German volunteer selling pies at the Community Homestead booth and there was Ruby, the tall stem of rhubarb waving at people and taking pictures with kids like a celebrity from a YouTube video that parents show their children to teach them about fruits and plants.

Being Ruby was quite the experience. Limited sight and movement came with a refreshing anonymity that allowed me to be my true freaky self and start breaking out into dance on the middle of the sidewalk whenever I felt like it. I didn't make a single kid cry and I didn't faint of overheating so I think I did a pretty good job. Nevertheless I agree with Tony Bodelson who thinks that Osceola needs a new mascot to carry Rhubarb Fest that is *not* a big, creepy stem of rhubarb. Because to be honest, with the closest guess being *you're a beet, right?* I think most people had no idea what I was supposed to portray.

So if you're curious whatever jolly mascot will show up next year for Rhubarb Fest I would definitely recommend you to come with your family, your friends, your date or your dog and indulge in our homemade, organic pies while strolling through downtown Osceola!

You would've missed the chance to meet our one-yearvolunteer Maresa who loves interacting with customers and seeing people buy the pie she so enjoys making but I can guarantee you great customer service anyways. That and great weather. But make it a fifty percent guarantee on the weather, cause you never know...



Photo: Janice aka "Ruby" and Maresa

Coming and Going -Christine Elmquist

Time rolls by so quickly. We are lucky to have so many interesting guests, visitors and volunteers who enrich the fabric of our lives.

This Spring, we enjoyed visits from Grinnell College, Iowa, at Spring Break, Avalon School from St. Paul, Minneosta Waldorf School's 3rd grade, Youth High School Initiative from Viroqua, WI, and the 8th grade from The Chicago Waldorf School.

As summer arrived so did Batyah Selis, and Lauren Borgerding both, as it happens, from California. In July, Amar Shah, another Californian, came to join us for six months along with a trio of Hibernia Waldorf high school seniors from Germany, Julian, Luca and Lukas, for six weeks. The newest person is fellow German Theresa Zoller who is also here for a six-week experience. Still to look forward to in August is the return of Fabian Ruede for a two month visit, and year-long members Malika Obeidi and Yainet Schwenk who are both here from Germany.

Returning for the summer comes Max Simpson, Jackson Bean, and Doran Velaskis, New for the day are Josh Skordahl, Danny and Karin Johnson, and Blake Minikel. Welcome all!

Goodbye to Maresa Janzing, and Niels Krappa who just returned to Germany after a year here. It is hard to say goodbye to people who have become so much a part of our lives and take their smiles, laughter, thoughtfulness and friendship with them. Both are off to study in Germany as is Janice Heinrich who leaves in a few more weeks after her year here. We are so grateful to each one of them and will miss them all.

Zack Grand left for a fellowship in India after coming here for two months, which turned into a year. It was a great year in which Zack farmed, gardened, baked delicious bread and left an imprint of his kind, observant, joyful spirit on our community. We look forward to his next visit! At the end of June **Betsy Campbell** took her next step in life and moved to her sister Linda's house in Osceola where she is enjoying a quieter life of coloring and Packer fandom. We miss her here but are happy to know she is still just right down the road and doing well. Betsy's Monday lunch guests are sure to bring all her news back to the community to share! Say hello to our youngest community member, *Oaken Jonah Flynn*. Born early Easter morn, he's now waking up to the world and quite a delight! -*Chelsea Wagner*



Photo: Maresa and Betsy

A Year at Community Homestead -Maresa Janzing

This year gave me the opportunity to learn, grow and have fun.

When I first came I did not quite realize what I got myself into. I came during the busiest weeks of the year. When the veggies grow, all the CSA boxes need to be packed and a bunch of other things need attention.

I will admit that the first weeks were exhausting and terrifying at times. Community Homestead gave me endless opportunities to fail, make mistakes and then learn my lesson. Looking back I am unbelievably grateful for that!

Summer taught me so many different skills. I have learned to appreciate Mother Nature even more than I did before. I read this quote once "Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh how beautiful' and sitting in the shade" and that is very true. In fact it takes a lot of energy and sweat to keep everything going. Luckily I was surrounded by a whole lot of positive energy and motivation that kept everyone going.

Winter. What can I say? I thought I knew what winter looked like. I've seen snow before. But the Midwest gave me a whole different experience. Luckily Community knows a way to keep everyone busy when the days get shorter and colder, so, so cold.

I took the chance to try as many new things as possible during



Photo: Welcome oaken!

the winter months. From felting, and painting, to making handmade paper, baking and pottery. Once a week we would go outside in the forest to clean up and prepare it for the spring. I am happy I challenged myself. We accomplished a lot out there and I am very proud of all the crews who went outside on those cold winter mornings.

When the snow finally melted in April everyone was ready to get back outside. The spring is the most beautiful time in my opinion. I've never had the chance to really appreciate it that much before. Finally going outside everyday planting, transplanting, watering and then seeing them grow was amazing. Also seeing everyone in Community appreciating spring is beautiful.

And then came my second summer. I was ready this time! I enjoyed the harvest mornings even though it was 6am. It was a lot of fun and again exhausting but in a very good way. And sitting in the fields with good friends filling a big bucket with peas or green beans was very satisfying and relaxing for me. Furthermore it was really amazing to sell our products at farmers markets and see our customers appreciate all the hard work we put in to every single thing we produce.

Even though I had a rough start I stayed and I have to thank everyone at Community Homestead for supporting me throughout my year. Thank you for your patience, kindness and open hearts. I had a memorable time full of challenges, new experiences, new friendships, traveling and a whole lot of fun.

Cow Adventures - Christine Elmquist

On Sunday night we had a huge storm and way up on Easter Hill the cow ladies and their Bull made a dash for cover through the fence. Our neighbor to the east called to report the first sighting of the main group settling down for morning tea on his beautifully landscaped yard. Another more adventurous group packed their bags and headed further east. Our neighbors have been calling for three days, leaving phone messages of cow sightings in a mix of amusement and concern. Thank goodness they are all understanding. So far. By Thursday only number nine is still out, last spotted ducking into a corn field over a mile away. Oscar's apprehension, who comes nose to nose with the cow. As I drive up the dirt road again, Batyah is a distant figure, dancing about and gesturing wildly. "She's here but I don't know what to do," she yells as I pull up.

The troops are rounded up. And now, with the tired kids in the car, the test of patience and kindness begins. After being chased intermittently for a few days number nine is suspicious but these people bring water. Can't be too bad. . Richard, walking slowly backwards, is the Alpha cow. Flanking the corn fields and neighbor's yards on either side are her gradually accepted herd, kind, quiet, slow moo-ving, Julian Luca, Brendan, Batyah, Alex with the bucket, Luigi,



Photo: Steve, Batyah, Isaac, Richard, cow #9 and Luca

With eight guests from Orion joining Morning Glory for dinner on the deck, the ruthless blaze of the sun starting to ebb and all parties revived by food and ice cream, we decide it is home-time for this renegade. Joined by our unsuspecting overnight guest, Luigi, we set off in three cars to search. The children, Isaac and Asa are excited to learn that cow hunting means you get to stand on the car roof for a good view, you get to bellow," coooome on, cooo-ooom on" at the top of your lungs, and run around in the early summer evening instead of going to bed. How exciting,

Less exciting discoveries for two new young German volunteers was that corn cuts when you walk along rows, that you have hay fever you never knew about, and that, boy, is it HOT, even at 7.30pm!

"Ah yes", a neighbor said, "she was in my driveway last night". And is that distant mooing? Nope, just a chain saw. With the search party in the corn field, the Bracketts in their make shift observation tower by the woods, Oscar (more comfortable steadying the 5 gallon bucket of water in the car than bumping into a cow unexpectedly) and I, drive the two mile perimeter scanning and checking in for progress. It is Batyah, five feet tall and sharing some of and Steve, with Hillary the rear guard, wearing what she decides, and tells us often, is definitely her lucky rodeo hat.

We follow with the hazard lights on, a car full of increasingly exhausted children and, as time goes on, picking up the shorter legged members of the "herd". It is a long two miles to walk both for human and cow kind. Little boys decide that walking with Papa would be so much more exciting than watching this movie with a slow plot unravel before us. And then, as the five year old's legs give out and his head melts, he is piled protesting back into the car. The seven year old, red -faced, whose legs barely stumble off the ground, is determined to see his role as a cowboy out to the end.

So here we all are, an odd bunch of people spanning the road, apparently taking our cow for an evening ramble. The sun is setting on the woods and the valley,.We pass the flowers in the verges, the insects whirr ing melodically. The three cars that crawl past give us a good long look and smile indulgently. What a nice neghboohood we live in, Thanks to both human cow- herd and neigbors ,especially from number nine who is glad to be home with her bull, her ladies, and a good trough of water.

Adventures in Maine -Kelly McDaniel

We went to Portland, Maine because Arianna was graduating from her college and she was going to be a dental surgeon.

Me, and Hillary, Oscar, Mary Elmquist and Christine and Richard flew out of Minneapolis airport to Boston- Logan airport. Jose and Marianne and Jacob and Asher came too but they flew out of different airports. And Jessica and her children Riley and Logan came too but they drove.

We went through security and checked in our luggage and it was free because we volunteered. At Boston we got on a squeaky bus that sounded like a chicken and we went to a rental car place. We got a van like Morning Glory's van. We met up with Arianna and stayed at a vacation house for four nights and five days. They had a nice dining room table. It was their house but they let us use it because they were somewhere else. We were not far from Jose and Marianne and Arianna and Asher, about 10-15 minutes.

At the graduation there was a lady talking and a man talking and after, there was, like a wedding reception with cakes, and cream, and vegetables; green peppers, red peppers, yellow peppers, and cookies and crackers. We went to Arianna's good friend Drew's and he invited us to his Open House



Joel and Alex at the Farmer's Market

Madison Trip - Alex Hansen

Richard picked me up at my house to go to Madison. My Dad woke me up. It was dark. Batyah, Maresa, Janice, Niels, Oscar, Scott too, Lauren, Desi too. We met Asher. First we saw Farmer's market. People selling, vegetables. Cool! We saw cool building-the Capitol. It's yellow and quite big. We went on a trail. We had ice cream at an ice cream place by the lake. I had mint. Big orange chair! I carried a cooler with Batyah and Niels. We went to a trail in a park. We saw people running. We ate lunch. Christine made a wrap. Watermelon too. I saw a house by a lake. It was hot. We had big pizza.



Kelly, Oscar and Hillary eating lobster on the dock

BBQ and we met a lot of people because he had a lot of people there like his family.

We also played a werewolf game. We went on a ferry to see more of Portland, Maine. We went to an island . We got off and hung out and the guys played on the beach with the kids. Then we got back on the ferry. We went to a brewery and had beer but I think I liked the dark brown beer best, and the cider more. We walked around on the coast and saw a lighthouse. We were also in the city for a bit.

Everyone had matching T shirts They are screen-printed in blue and when Arianna graduated we all put them on. Congratulations Dr. Elmquist! She is a surgeon now and she works in a hospital in New York state, in Brooklyn. She works more like 7 days a week. I had fun in Maine!



Scott and Desi on State Street

Kids Crew - Chelsea Wagner

Fencing -Richard Elmquist

For the second year in a row, there has been a special, exclusive crew on Thursdays. The growing group meets at the swings for an ice-breaker. They swing as high as the trees and sing a custom version of "Say Say Oh Playmate" until



their leaders are ready to get to business. The members are kids, and their fearless, enthusiastic leaders are grandmas.

When asked about this year's Kids Crew my son Isaac said, "This year, 2019, we've been working on nature. Making things, bird feeders, for nature, and an outside scavenger hunt! We painted our names with bits of plants and stones." His younger brother Elias says, "We painted with balloons, water bottles, and toilet paper rolls! Also, scientifics. We pretend we're like scientists." Both boys like playing out on the hill with their friends the best. They pretend they're tigers in the long grass, a game they started last year, and which has grown in complexity.

Lynne has been dedicated to a fantastic program for her granddaughters, my sons, and two other community children again this year. Complete with science, art, and literacy projects, each theme week ends with a volunteer project around the farm. For our four community boys, Isaac, Isaac, Elias, and Asa, it's a bit of school-like structure they lack in the summer. For her granddaughters Harper and Macy, it is a bit of immersion into farm life and exposure to a diversity of people. New this year, Lois helps with the kids program and even brings along a couple new grandkids to play with!

It is great for everyone here to be surrounded by some kiddo enthusiasm now and then, and trust me, you can hear it from across the farm. Some folks just don't have an involved extended family, and these kids are a tether to uncle-hood, auntie-hood, or grandparent-hood. I for one appreciate that there are a few well-crafted hours a week for my particular kids, when they can play with peers and I can, erm... get a break from them. Standing Cedars is the land trust adjacent and west of our land. It sits between us and the river. Last fall, wanting to study the effect of grazing on prairie restoration, they made available 20 acres of land to us for grazing. Although this land is right in our back yard, we had no good way of moving our cattle through the overgrown meadow and woods between this new location and the current one. So, last fall we started clearing brush, prickly ash, buck thorn, and some box elders out of the old cow lane and meadow. If you are unfamiliar with these plants think of Sleeping Beauty. It is definitely what protected her.

The forestry crew went through the winter; Terra, Alex, Scott, Oscar, Hillary, Brendan, Sebastian, Steve, Steven and me. We made a huge pile of woodchips much valued by the garden, orchard and Community Homestead landscapers! In the spring when the high school students started arriving we started setting fence posts. Youth Initiative from Viroqua, Avalon and then Chicago Waldorf 9th grade in a big way, set around a hundred 6 inch diameter, 8ft long posts into the ground. They had to go down four feet. We used a skid steer auger until it was overwhelmed by rocks and then we got to work. Anything from pebbles to boulders were hauled out. Then we ran about 16,000 feet of high tensile, wildlife friendly electric fence wire. Now the cow highway extends from Easter Hill to the east, to Berry Grove in the north and down to Standing Cedars in the west. It is about a mile from one end to the other end. The little cows have been exploring the woods and the meadow and had two days at Standing Cedars. Apart from the utility of this cow path it has restored a nice, light, clearing in the woods. There are some nice oaks, maples and cherry and it feels like a peaceful, quiet, and cared-for place.



Donations Gratefully Received February through July 2019

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Hillary with the Banquet cups

The House That Built Itself -Brendan Bennett

It has been awhile since the skeleton was put in place (October 2017). As someone who considers himself a novice of the building process, there were several steps to finishing I wouldn't have considered, nor would I have considered the amount of time it would take to complete. That first winter, with a kerosene heater pointed at our work space, we installed the in-floor heat for the main floor. Yes, this process took most of the winter. The following summer was consumed with infrastructure projects you wouldn't see in the finished house. We put in floor drains, leveled the garage and solarium, put in the deck, connected the water supply to the Community Center well, and, the mammoth project headed by Richard, installed our own geo-thermal field! I think it is so neat that we installed our own geo-thermal, and when I am explaining this project to people, it always becomes one of the main points I touch on. It demanded many hands to dig trenches, make "slinkies" (wrapped tubes which fit 400ft of tube into a 100ft trench), lay out slinkies, insulate tubes, and finally fill it all back in.

Suddenly the Summer of 2018 had vanished, so we quickly threw up garage doors on the first frosty day which converted it into the new work space. With a table saw, cross-cutting saw, and of course lights to keep us working past 4pm we were ready to start siding the exterior. Yes, we started siding in the winter. Progress was slow or still as the temperatures which demanded mittens turned out not to be great for siding, but we might be blessed with a warm day and suddenly finish a wall.

As winter waned, our electrician Rodney finished wiring the house which enabled the Chicago Waldorf school to do the insulation and start the vapor barrier. Warmer weather has offered times to do bigger pushes on siding as well as shaping the exterior landscape with bulldozers and skid loaders. Our vapor barrier is now finished and awaiting inspection. The basement is leveled and ready for concrete. Currently, finishing siding is our primary objective, and yes, after several months we are pretty close, which will transition into starting sheetrock on the interior. Sheetrock in many ways marks the dusty beginning to the end, if you don't consider the unforeseen that is.

I'm so impressed with what we've done with this house. I could list all the names of those who have put in hours behind a shovel, ladder, measuring tape, and saw, but it's a lot easier to say the entire community has made this house. No job is too big or too small to be significant. We have simply worked together, and we have been doing a great job.

Community Space!

Our community is ready to invite new people to join us! We have been here for twenty three years and are lucky to have a strong group of younger people who have been here now for about four or five years and who have been discovering and honing their own community gifts and commitment during this time. In their twenties and thirties, they are our new generation of leaders; Alex and Brendan, Shannon and Eric, Tony and Sebastian. Nearly all came via Americorps, "just for a year" and stayed on. We can add to that Chelsea who is ready to lead out a new role (more later!) and Steve Brackett who has recently arrived with his two little boys. It is a WONDERFUL group!

Strong community households are emerging led by each of these couples. As we plan our apartments, which means more separation for some, we have a corresponding wish for more community life for others. Interesting! Strengthening those choices, means diversity within the community, and it is just exactly what we love. In the fall, when Mary and Asger move to the new house, this group is shuffling rooms in houses to create room for three more life-sharing spaces

So now is the moment. If you, or someone you know, likes the sound of community life (friends, support, belonging, and a chance to be part of something big and helpful as well as in finding your own life goal) get in touch. christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org



Photo; Travis prepares for Rhubarb Days