

# CAMP VERDE BUGLE

Thursday, July 3, 2008

## CSA is a win-win for growers and consumers

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Staff Reporter

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Community Supported Agriculture organizations, also called CSA's, are essentially community farms.

Shareholders pay an agreed upon up fee front for a portion of the year's produce. The money goes to the growers. The shareholders get something otherwise unavailable to the typical supermarket consumer.

The concept has its roots in both Europe and Japan

Two years ago, local growers Diane Scantlebury and Denise Gould decided to give the idea a try. And thus was born the Verde Valley CSA.

The first year there were 30 members. This year there are 50 members. There is a waiting list to join for next year.

Shareholders fork out either one payment of \$465 in March or two payments of \$240 in March and July.

In return they get a basket of healthy locally grown vegetables, fruits, honey, nuts and berries every week for 26 weeks.

The cost works out to about \$20 per week.

"It's the greatest deal in town," says VVCSA coordinator Sandy Boyce, "I have taken the similar items and portions to Mount Hope and they would run almost twice as much for comparable organic foods."

The secret, she says, is that the CSA cuts out the middleman.

"I'm not the middleman and not a grower," says Boyce, "I do it because I am a groupie of local foods."

Like Boyce, all of the people who help with the weekly distribution are volunteers. Some get credit towards their master gardener certification with the county Extension Service and some work off a portion of the shareholder costs by helping out.

Along with the food and produce members receive a weekly newsletter with recipes for the items they receive.

On a typical week in the early season the list of items may include fresh blackberries, a blend of fresh herbs, onions, a mix of lettuce, chard and kale, scallions, squash and Armenian cucumbers.



Members of Verde Valley Community Supported Agriculture receive a basket, every week for the 26-week growing season, of fresh farm produce and other natural food items typically worth twice the \$20 price they pay.

Recipes might include fresh blackberry pie, Armenian cucumber salad and pecan pie crust.

Latter in the season the mix may be green beans, watermelon, peaches, bell peppers, tomatoes corn, okra and red potatoes. No two weeks are the same.

"For most shareholders it's an opportunity to get boutique produce. Many of the growers supply heirloom vegetables that simply can't be purchased in a grocery store," says Boyce.

A conference call between Boyce and the growers every Monday sets the menu and coordinates who his supplying what.

Every Wednesday afternoon between 4 and 5 p.m. shareholders pick up their baskets at Windmill Park in Cornville.

"This is really the essence of what local food is all about. It is a win-win for everyone," says Boyce.

Boyce says the organization is not only looking for new shareholders but also new growers.

"The more people participating the better." she says.

Anyone interested in joining the VVCSA can email Boyce at [verdevalleycsa@gmail.com](mailto:verdevalleycsa@gmail.com) or call her at (928) 203-1100.

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