



Farm News

SUMMER 2026 ISSUE

Farm Report

As we moved into summer, we wondered what weather we'd have to contend with this year. Thankfully, last year's drought has not repeated itself. Instead, the early months of summer have been warm and wet.

Many times we have planted out on a dry warm day only to have heavy rains through the night. We couldn't have asked for much better, really!

The team – which was quite new at the time of the last newsletter – has settled in well. We have welcomed a new seasonal grower, Millie, who has done sterling work across the farm. We have also been joined by Ethan and Steff, who are helping regularly throughout the summer. Ethan joined as a seasonal grower last year and we are very happy to have his help once again on the farm. It feels like a strong team right now with additional help from an incredible number of volunteers.

We'd like to say a special thank you to the volunteers who have often gone above and beyond. For example, just recently, the sweetcorn has needed protection from wildlife and a fantastic group came in for an extra day to complete the fencing in the middle of a heatwave. It was hard work, but it was a real reminder of what can be achieved when people come together.

The sweetcorn itself has had quite a story. Shortly after germinating, a rat discovered the seedlings, and we had to resow the crop twice, increasing the protection each time. Eventually we resorted to

suspending the trays from the roof of the polytunnel—a solution that, thankfully, outwitted our unwanted visitor.

As we enter July we've come through what growers often call the hungry gap – that period between the end of the overwintered crops and the arrival of the summer harvests. It's a reminder that much of what you're enjoying now was sown, planted and cared for many months ago. While summer feels abundant, it rests on a great deal of unseen work carried out through late winter and spring.

As temperatures continue to rise, our attention is turning from planting to irrigation. Although there is still rain in the forecast, we know how quickly conditions can change, and careful water management will become one of our main jobs over the coming weeks.

We also enjoyed a lovely gathering of the farm team and volunteers to celebrate the summer solstice. These informal get-togethers are becoming a welcome rhythm through the growing season and are a chance to pause, reflect and enjoy the place we all work so hard to care for.

The land at Hawkwood and Oakbrook is a special place. It is a privilege to work here, and exciting to imagine what the coming seasons—and years—might bring.

- The Farm Team



Volunteering on a Wednesday morning



Every Wednesday morning, volunteers have been busy helping out alongside the farm team. As you'd expect, what we do follows the natural cycle of the growing season, and we're grateful to the farm team who help guide and encourage us. Earlier, there was plenty of sowing in trays down at Oakbrook and preparing the soil; later, planting out in the polytunnels and fields.

I'm sure everybody has their favourite task (and probably favourite implement, too!) - for me, there's nothing more satisfying than planting out in the fields, and it beats growing at home for sure.

Ruth, as well as coordinating all of our efforts, inspiring us and preparing the most welcome cup of coffee or tea for our break at 10:30, shared with us her (secret?) technique for planting quickly and effectively. Apparently, 5 seconds per plant is the benchmark to aim for, though I certainly have a way to go. More recently, weeding has come to the fore, whether it's hand-weeding around delicate seedlings in the polytunnels or hoeing and lifting out clumps of rye grass from amongst the garlic in Sycamore field. The weeds have been enjoying the abundant sunshine.

Alongside this, we regularly help Simon with a huge range of other practical tasks around the farm: creating net curtains for the polytunnels, stabilising water pipes for the irrigation systems, repairing the trailer, or badger-proofing the corn growing area (with electric fence and chilli oil!).

Occasional baked treats, sometimes to celebrate a special day or just as a way of sharing with each other, are most welcome. And at the end of a productive morning, we're guided in some gentle stretching and movement by Elles, Claire, Sophia, or another embodied member of the group.

Week to week, new members join us, we wish others safe travels near or far, and we welcome back familiar faces, like James who returned recently from WWOOFing in Italy. What we do each week, while driven primarily by what's needed on the farm, tends to adapt to each volunteer's needs – more gentle or more vigorous, more experienced or not so familiar. That's particularly the case when we have a larger party and can break into small groups with different tasks.

Whatever we're doing, the benefits of working with others side-by-side, the soil, and making use of our bodies, all contribute to a sense of well-being that's pretty tangible. It's clear to those who come along that the contribution volunteers make to the running of the farm is greatly appreciated by the farm team, and we benefit too.

If you're interested to help out, whether on a Wednesday morning, or at some other time, feel free to get in touch.

- Mark



Stroud CSA needs YOU!

We know you love Stroud Community Agriculture's delicious veg, heart-warming events and really appreciate our hardworking growers. **But did you know we're looking for volunteers to help spread the love even wider?**

In a world that can sometimes feel heavy, SCA is making positive change: creating healthy local food, restoring nature, and building a community that genuinely looks after one another. And our volunteers are at the heart of it all.

We've got so many amazing opportunities to help our beautiful farm thrive - whether that's helping organise events, strategising our finances, becoming a core group member, or helping out with practical stuff around the farm. Many hands make light work, and we need your energy and enthusiasm now more than ever!

Why get involved?

Well, you'll be helping keep the dream of community-owned and run agriculture alive and thriving, for starters. But there's more!

Helping out at CSA means you can make new friends, see old friends, connect more with the community, learn skills that can open new paths, be part of something hopeful and purposeful - and, of course, have fun. All while making making a real difference and building a resilient local food system that nourishes our town!

Join in

To keep this vibrant community thriving, we're inviting members to get involved in ways that suit their interests, skills, and time. You don't need experience, just enthusiasm.

Choose what sparks your interest and let us know via the short form:

- Love numbers, spreadsheets, or **accounting**? Help us manage the farm's finances and business model
- Enjoy bringing people together? Join an **events** team and create joyful moments
- Have **coaching** or HR experience? Help our farm flourish through mentorship and wellbeing training
- Curious about being a **director** in a team? Help guide the long-term strategy of SCA
- Prefer hands-on **practical** tasks? Join in with maintenance jobs and essential improvements
- Got a gift for **communication**? Help us recruit new members and spread the word.

Interested?

Just fill in [this short form](#) and we'll get in touch.

Let's grow this farm together. Join the SCA Farm Community today!



Pack shed update

Pick Your Own is back! The flowers are blooming, the crops are growing, and we're delighted to open up our Pick Your Own area once again. It's such a treat to take home a bright bunch of beautiful flowers alongside your veg each week.

Our veg shares continue to offer fantastic value. Since we started benchmarking against Soil Association prices last October, the average share value has been £18.18 (vs a weekly share price of £16.76) - excluding pick-you-own and bonus items that we put out from time-to-time, such as plant plugs. That's especially encouraging considering this period includes the "hungry gap," when produce is naturally at its most limited, and is a testament to the amazing work of growers past and present.

As we move into the height of summer, with expected abundance of tomatoes, beans, courgettes and cucumbers, we expect that value to increase even further. Now is a fantastic time to introduce new people to the farm, so please spread the word to friends and family.

One of the biggest challenges we're facing at the moment is keeping the wonderful produce fresh. Our chiller has unfortunately broken down (not ideal at the best of times, but especially not in a heatwave!), and we're currently exploring the best options for repair or replacement.



In the meantime, our neighbours at Oakbrook Farm have very kindly lent us some cold storage space. If you're able to collect your share earlier in your collection window, we'd really appreciate it, as it helps us keep everything as fresh as possible.

Finally, we're excited to have an amazing new product available to purchase in the pack shed: **3 varieties of Almazara Olive Oil**. Produced by a family split between Stroud and Spain, this is early-harvest, cold-pressed olive oil of exceptional quality. It's packed with naturally high levels of polyphenols, making it as good for your health as it is for your summer salads. It's a real treat and we're thrilled to be able to offer it.

- Jamie



Update from the Core Group

I don't know about you, but for me, this year so far has felt fresh and exciting. As I look out over fields and hedges, a strong breeze is blowing and the searing heat we've been experiencing is now becoming a memory. Of course, we all know that the heat will be back, but I'm struck by how much change is going on. Positive change, exciting change.

The fresh breeze reminds me of sailing with my father as a young boy up on the Northumberland coast - the power of nature harnessed and put to use. It also reminds me, with a bit of a chuckle, of our well-worn phrase: "the SCA is about more than just veg"!

What of the core group itself? Well, having put together a realistic budget that sees us move through the year in good shape, we're working with the farm team to actually steer through the realities of the growing process this year. Every year it's different, with a unique set of weather patterns, pests, and technical challenges presenting themselves.

Of course, the usual suspects often appear, and one of the things we're looking to improve with time is getting better at 'expecting the unexpected'. Making our navigation easier.

Food poverty action appeal

Speaking to many locals passing through at the Hawkwood May Day festival, it was wonderful to hear how greatly appreciated our local, sustainable food is. But food poverty is a key theme at the moment, ensuring that such benefits are shared as widely as possible.

While the SCA has always been considerate of this with our offering of bursaries, perhaps there is more that we can do? We on the core group are really here to represent the members' interests, and this is one for you. If broadening access to the SCA's shares of local organic, biodynamic produce is something that you as a member feel strongly about, please get in touch with us to help inform our understanding or perhaps even get involved in making that happen?



Part of this might be working more closely with other local CSAs and growers to pool both knowledge and resources, or looking further ahead in terms of resourcing. It's the traditional CSA concept, where growers and local community members join together in commitment for 'a season' and look a bit further ahead - indeed, the SCA has now been growing for nigh on 25 such seasons!

Connected to some of this year's challenges, we've been exploring external sources of funding to help cover some of the bigger 'surprises', like a van that won't start and can't economically be fixed. Funding presents us with a wonderful opportunity to look beyond our own hedges and build stronger relationships with other local and national organisations that genuinely wish to support what the SCA does.

Like a gust of wind, it's been inspiring to see the events group, conceived only yesterday it feels, put on a fantastically successful barn dance, and have fun doing it! More chances for us as a community to get together, celebrate, and connect are in the works - be it camping on the farm, workshops, or end-of-week informal gatherings around a fire watching the sun go down.

And every Wednesday, come rain or (blistering) sunshine, many eager volunteers have joined the farm team to help out. It's pretty hard to understate how fortunate we all are to have such opportunities for connection with a both community and the land.

- Mark

Our Spring Barn Dance

What could be better than a barn dance in a real, working barn? That's what a bunch of us got to enjoy at the end of May.

It was a beautiful sunny evening, perfect dancing weather, with music by Finnegan's Wok to keep us lively, a barbecue and cake stall to keep us fed, and a barn serving local ales to keep the dancers refreshed and cheerful.



The whole event demonstrated the farm's community at its best, with people of all ages across our community sharing in the fun.

We'll be making this a regular feature of the life of the farm so please put **29th May 2027** in your diary now for next year's barn dance!

- Molly

Help save the Exchange community co-working space!



What could be better than owning your own farm? Maybe owning your own community workspace might nearly match up?

You can do that now by investing in The Exchange, a thriving community workspace for incubating social businesses, supporting NGOs, and providing affordable workspace and a convivial venue for the people of Stroud.

Stroud Common Wealth refurbished and has run The Exchange successfully since 2008. The owner wants to sell so we need to find the funds to buy it as a community to continue the good work.

Help The Exchange to continue to provide community benefit and economic, social and cultural renewal for Stroud district.

Find out more [here](#).

Twinning update



On the last Sunday of June, the farm hosted our Somali Kitchen twins for a summer visit. The theme of the day was games, and it was heart warming (and at times hilarious) to witness everyone involved in some silliness. While the sun was shining, we played potato-and-spoon races, welly wanging and farm-themed SPLAT!

This was Mateo's last event as Twinning Coordinator for SCA. He's sad to be signing off, but rest assured - it is our familiar face and ex farm-worker Eva who is now fully taking over the role. Thank you to everyone who's supported and attended Twinning events over the last 18 months.

Our next Twinning Event will be later this summer and likely consist of a beach trip to the Gower. Watch this space!

All the best and see you soon!

Mateo and Eva, Twinning Coordinators

Could you join the Core Group?

Most recently, the winds of change have been stirring up the core group too. At the coming AGM in Autumn, most of the remaining members will be stepping down, having helped guide the SCA for a number of years now, and leaving just one member remaining. In the meantime, both myself and David Buxton have been 'co-opted' to the group to help provide a transition, but there is still a strong need for more members.

On the night of the barn dance I stood in the lower grass verge at Hawkwood, ready to direct cars to their parking spaces, high-vis jacket donned, next to the inimitable Mark Harrison, who contributed immeasurably to the SCA's founding and subsequent growth. As we watched the golden hour play itself out across the valley I asked him casually about how the core group has worked out over the time of the SCA. He said, "Oh, people always come out of the woodwork..."

Well, yes, indeed they do. For myself, I simply acknowledged that, if I value this community - the people, the place, and what we do here - despite inevitable reservations and doubts, I should be willing to at least put my hand up and see what happens, rather than hoping for (or expecting) someone else to do it for me. If the SCA means more to you than just veg, perhaps you'll consider doing the same.



But perhaps that's not you? Maybe you've just joined, or maybe your life already feels full to the brim. Or maybe the core group just doesn't feel like a space you're moved to explore. Of course that's fine, but I'd still encourage you to draw in a bit closer in, somehow.

There's something about the people on and around the farm, I think. A sense of value and mutual respect that's increasingly precious in our society. You meet that when you offer a bit of time to volunteer; when you take a moment to strike up conversation in the pack shed while picking up your veg; or when you see parents sharing and exploring the peaceful space with their toddlers around the great tree at the weekend... Great or small, thank you for your ongoing contribution to this.

- Mark

Recipe Corner

Easy peasey summer salad

Rinse the quinoa under cold, running water until the water runs clear (this will remove any bitterness).

Drain and cook the quinoa in a saucepan of boiling water according to the packet instructions (about 15 minutes), then let it cool.

For the dressing, mix the dressing ingredients in a bowl and whisk together.

Combine the quinoa, edamame, grated carrots, sliced pepper and spinach. Pour over the dressing, add the coriander and mix well.

- adapted from BBC Good Food / Priya Tew

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 200g quinoa
- 500g edamame beans, peas etc
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1 pepper, thinly sliced
- 200g spinach leaves
- fresh chopped coriander
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp sesame seeds
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- ½ lime, juice only



Find out how decisions are made about your farm

The amazing thing about SCA is that we are not just a place to find wonderful, seasonal organic vegetables, grown in an ethical way, we are also a co-operative that belongs to you.

At the AGM you elected the members of the core group, who are also the directors of SCA. We have an in-person meeting every month and you are welcome to join us to see how we make decisions and maybe think about joining us?

We meet at 5.30 every third Thursday of the month so the next core group meetings are:

- Weds 22nd July
- Thurs 20th August
- Thurs 17th September

We'll be meeting at the roundhouse for the summer months. If you'd like to join us it would be helpful for you to let me know in advance:

molly@gaianeconomics.org



Our SCA Principles

1. To farm in a way that enhances biodiversity and reduces our carbon emissions.
2. To develop a sense of community around the production of our food.
3. To ensure our farmers have a decent livelihood and can afford to live in Stroud District.
4. To continue to pioneer a new economic model based on mutual benefit and shared risk.
5. To offer opportunities for learning, therapy and re-connecting with the life of the earth.
6. To practice organic and biodynamic agriculture.
7. To be inclusive in welcoming people from any background or situation, including those with low or no income.
8. To encourage members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for their individual and social activities and celebrations.
9. To be transparent in all our affairs. To make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. To strive towards social justice.
10. To network with others to promote community supported agriculture to other communities and farms and share our learning (both economic and farming).
11. To work co-operatively with other enterprises that share our principles.



**Thank you for being a member of
Stroud Community Agriculture!**

DONATING YOUR SHARE?

If you'd like to donate your share to a volunteer or the food hubs while you're on holiday, please send an email to:

membership@stroudcommunityagriculture.org

Or text **Jamie**: 07758 237078

CONTACT US

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