

What is this? A frog convention! I exclaimed, as I got out of our minivan and as a multiple of frogs hopped out of the way. "They have been here all summer," Marianne said nonchalantly. I had been sent to Herman and Marianne Hendrickson's by my wife to get a pail of tomatoes for canning and there seemed to be frogs everywhere, "I suppose they are after the grasshoppers and other garden pests". I had gone up to the house to get the pail of tomatoes that Herman and Maryann had gathered for me, when I remembered that my wife had said, "Could you also see if they got anymore hot peppers?" She was making a hot salsa for our eldest son who has developed a taste for a hot salsa that would burn the guts of most people. I had almost forgotten, but Marianne simply said "follow me". She and her son got in a car and took off down the road to one of their gardens. When he dropped her off, Emily (my youngest daughter who came along for the ride) and I picked her up and backtracked to another garden to where the pepper plants were found. As we made our way down the row looking for the long green ones, frogs were hopping everywhere. Quite a difference from my farm where I use chickens to keep the scourge of grasshoppers this hot dry weather had spawned in check. I have found that they make great chicken feed. But here at the Hendrickson's, instead of grasshoppers hopping out of the way, it was frogs. It brought to mind a National Geographic story a few years ago bemoaning the demise of the earth's frog populations. That article had made it sound like frogs would be all but extinct soon if we did not cleanup our act and stop pumping chemicals into the soil. Frogs were in terrible straights I read, they were becoming sterile and of the ones that were born many had weird birth defects like extra legs and such. I wish now I had that issue here in hand to reread. If that article told of the problems that frogs were having, then, here at the Hendrickson's, we have an example of how to make a difference, how to do things right. You, the supporters of the Whole Farm Coop, should give yourself a pat on the back. It is because of your support that Herman and Marianne are able to do what they love to do, and do it well. Congratulations you have proven yourselves worthy fellow caretakers of the earth! We can't all be great gardeners, but by the way we spend our money we can, and do, support those who are.

On our way back to the car I caught sight of a small leopard frog sitting on his fat belly in between a couple of pepper plants so I called Emily over for a look. It was quite the regal looking creature, and as Marianne came up behind us she asked Emily "what should we name it? We give everything a name out here." I volunteered Froggy, after a character in one of the books that has been read to Emily quite frequently, but Marianne piped in and said such a fine looking frog should have a name that would match its royal looking character, how about Ferdinand? Emily and I thought that sounded good so Ferdinand it is. As we stood there looking at Ferdinand I looked about me and was amazed that the Hendrickson's were able to keep a garden here at all, let alone the multiple gardens that they have, each surrounded by brush, trees and tall grass. The brush and trees should by all accounts harbor a multitude of garden robbers from deer to that prince of robbers, the one that is born with a mask in place, the raccoon. The tall natural grass stand should harbor good safe place to raise billions of grasshoppers, and yet they have very little problems with their wildlife neighbors. Maryann said that some bean plants were topped off in the spring but they came back to yield enough for their needs. This all brought back memories I have as a kid learning about St. Francis of Assisi, who called all creatures wild and tame brothers, and was said to have tamed a

wolf that had been terrifying a nearby village just by going up to it and having a nice little chat with it. This gentle man would even stoop down to pick up and toss worms off the road he would be walking on. I can imagine how pleased he would be to be able to walk the Hendrickson's garden, a garden, a way of farming, that takes care of the earth and will hopefully by all their hard work leave opportunities for the future. Farming in nature's image, it is amazing to see, feel and hear. To see a mass of leopard frogs holding a convention and see deer tracks in the soft moist garden soil and no deer damage to speak of, leaves one, well, speechless, which is good, the better able to breath in the goodness of it all.

This is all made possible because of your support, your purchasing and consuming the produce grown by Herman and Maryann. It is because of you that I was able to have what I like to call an incredible moment, an incredible moment in Eden. Thank you...

I hope that any of you reading, this will look up to see what Herman has available and order a bunch of stuff and share with others in the community. I know he had a lot of different melons because he gave us some. I had a melon yesterday that on the outside looked like a regular melon but on the inside it had yellow flesh, instead of the normal red but came with so much flavor, that you could almost hear it. Speaking of hearing, I wonder what Ferdinand and his crooners are planning for this coming spring. I can't help but wonder if they are planning a thank you concert for Herman and Maryann, to thank them for farming in nature's image, for being such great caretakers of the earth. I know on my farm, which also has seen a resurgence of frogs since I started grazing the land rotationally with my dairy cattle, I will be looking for a Freddy and the Frogs concert this spring. We have come a long way in twenty four years when all one heard from the ponds was the croak of toads and lizards, they may be fine for some, but to hear a chorus of frogs surround you with living sound is very breathtaking indeed. It would be nice to share the experience with you, our supporters that make it all happen. We will have to see how things work out.

Be sure to order a bunch of Herman's stuff and spread some real sustainable flavor around your community.

Submitted by:

Marty Primus
Whole Farm Coop Producer and supporter