



2019 CSA Membership Handbook

Welcome to membership in Leaning Birch Farm! We are excited to have you join us. You are a valuable, integral part of our community. Leaning Birch Farm is built on a foundation of commitment—to the land, to our community, and to each other. That commitment is reflected in everything we do, including our interactions with our members. This agreement represents our commitment to you. We will work hard to bring you the best and most delicious produce possible. We want you and your family to enjoy good eating by having a connection to the source of your food. In return, we need you to commit to us.

Please take a few minutes to carefully read through this agreement as it will help us lay the groundwork for a successful year together. *There are several places in this agreement where your information, selection, or agreement is needed. Those areas are clearly notated with a check box and correspond with an item on the agreement page that will be signed and returned to the farm.*

Price and Share Options

Leaning Birch Farm is a family run farm and is relatively small, compared to some other market gardens. In order to ensure we are able to produce enough volume and variety to meet our CSA members' and off-farm markets' needs, we reserve the right to limit the number of farm shares we sell each year.

The cost of membership in the 2019 CSA is \$435 for new members for 18 weeks of produce. New members can pay their CSA fee on our website by scrolling to "Online CSA Payment" in the drop down menu under the "2019 CSA Information" tab at the top of our home page, then clicking the appropriate link. Our website is guaranteed as secure for accepting online payments.

Members can hold their spot in our CSA by paying a deposit of at least 20%. Subsequent payments of any amount may be made at members' convenience, as long as the **FULL amount is received by May 29, 2019.** While we certainly track all payments as they are made, we do not have the means to send payment reminders. It is our members' responsibility to keep track of how much they have paid and ensure full payment is made by the deadline.

****Checks are always accepted for new or returning members and can be made payable to: Leaning Birch Farm.** Please note on the comment line of your check that your payment is for the 2019 CSA membership fee.

Share Options:

In order to better meet the needs of our members, Leaning Birch Farm offers 3 different formats by which they can support our farm. All formats are offered at the same cost and differ only in the way members receive their share of the farm's bounty.

1) Traditional CSA model

With this model, members stop by each week and pick up a bag that we have pre-filled with a selection of veggies we feel are the best and freshest we have at that time. In exchange for allowing us to make their selections for them, we will offer these members the first of each variety as it becomes available. Traditional CSA members will receive these limited items before anyone else has a chance to buy them. This model works well for members who have a very busy lifestyle, or for those who like to be surprised by what they receive. We've had members claim, "It's like Christmas morning each week!"

2) Free Choice Model

This format provides exactly what the name implies. Each week, CSA members will make personal selections from a wide assortment of items we have available. This ensures everyone the freedom to choose those things that fit with their particular tastes and needs while avoiding those they may not be interested in.

Free Choice Members are expected to select an average of \$30 worth of produce each week based on our retail prices, but will be free to take a bit more or less on any given week depending on their individual needs. We will not be monitoring what you take as we trust that your selections will be in keeping with the community spirit of joining a CSA and not abuse the system.

Participants in this plan may make their weekly pickup at any of the designated locations at their convenience.

Regardless of which of these two models you choose, you can expect to get an average of \$30 worth of produce each week at a built-in discount of 20% off our market stand prices. In addition, all members will be able to purchase any extra items they want at the same 20% discount.

For those who would like to support our farm but don't care to commit to a weekly CSA pickup, we are offering a third option:

3) Pre-paid Debit Card

With this format, members pay a membership fee of \$435, and receive a debit card that is worth \$540 at current retail prices. This is a 20% discount, just like the other models. The debit card can be used during specific hours at our on-site farm stand (hours will be posted on our website and Facebook page when the season opens) or at any time at our off-farm market locations.

This option allows members to get what they want, when they want it. Members can come each week and pick up a week's supply or come more or less frequently, depending on their needs. You will even be able use your debit card to purchase items before and after the CSA season as long as you give us sufficient notice in advance. We grow a lot of stuff early and late in the season – from early spring greens to late storage crops – so this way you can get it all as we have it available.

Please check a box to indicate your Preferred Share Type:

Traditional CSA Free Choice CSA Pre-paid Debit Card Undecided*

*You can make your deposit without deciding on a Share Type, as long as you commit to a type by 5/19.

Risk and Reward

Shared risk and reward are at the heart of the traditional CSA model. By joining our farm, you are becoming a part of our extended farm family. Together, we agree to share in the risk and reward of farming. If the year is especially abundant, you will receive product of exceptional quality and size. If the year is a difficult one with heavy pest, disease, and weather pressures, you may receive less of a particular item or possibly not get a particular item at all. If we experience an extreme natural disaster, such as a flood or tornado, it is possible you may receive no further products at all.

If we were to experience an event that resulted in us being able to provide *less than 50% of the **total** amount of produce we would normally provide*, refunds may be considered and will be discussed with the membership. At the same time, you can share in the abundance of the farm! We consistently hear from members that they don't *want* more produce. Many members can't use any more than we already distribute in each weekly share. At the same time, some members want more items for canning or freezing. For those who do want more, we provide bulk product at discount rates. In times of abundance, we will announce bulk buying opportunities for our members at our wholesale rates.

To build a strong, resilient business that can follow through on its obligations, Leaning Birch Farm also sells at a few off-farm locations. These are posted on our website. If you need more farm goodness, come by one of our stands! Members may always buy items from us at 20% off our retail prices (excluding bulk items, which are already discounted). At the same time, we don't want you to worry about being shortchanged by our markets. You may occasionally see items at one of our stands that aren't available for inclusion in your CSA share. One reason would be if a particular item hasn't provided an abundant enough yield for us to have enough volume for everyone. Another reason for this is because we often use those markets to test new items. We trial new varieties and vegetables in small amounts first, for sale at our stands. If customers like them and we can produce good quality, we will grow the item in the future at scale for all our CSA members. Those markets help us build our skills, so we can confidently commit to getting our CSA members abundant items of the best quality.

I understand Leaning Birch Farm's Risk and Reward Policy above, and I am agreeing to share in the risk and reward of farming, as described.

Refund Policy

If you move out of the area or suffer a hardship that prevents you from utilizing your share, you may be eligible for a prorated refund based on the remainder of the season. Refunds are given at the farm's discretion—please call us to discuss options.

If you decide CSA simply isn't for you, we ask that you look for a replacement member to take over your share. The farm depends on each member's commitment to cover expenses and provide enough food for everyone and as such, "dropping out" is strongly discouraged. Please call us to discuss a refund.

If Leaning Birch Farm cannot fulfill its obligation to deliver quality shares in the quantity estimated to members for reasons other than extraordinary disease, pest, and weather events, all members will receive a prorated refund based on the remainder of the season.

I understand Leaning Birch Farm's Refund Policy above, and I am in agreement, as described.

Receiving Your Share

Community is a really important part of CSA, and going to the pick up site is a chance to meet and get to know your farmers and fellow members. To make sure each of the sites run smoothly, though, we need a few rules.

Since pick up sites may vary from year to year, specific locations, days, and times will be communicated with CSA members separate from this document. When selecting your site, please make sure you can retrieve your share within the pick-up time frames listed.

****Important****

The 2019 CSA season begins on June 1 and runs through October 16, for a total of 20 weeks. YOUR CSA MEMBERSHIP IS FOR 18 WEEKS, meaning there will be two out of the 20 weeks that you will not receive a share. You can decide which weeks you skip at any time. If you are a Traditional CSA member, please give us 24 hours' notice, at minimum, so we do not prepare a bag for you. If members miss a pick up at any time, that missed pick up will count as a skipped week. If you begin your weekly pick ups during the first week and do not miss any weeks, your membership will end at the end of September.

I understand that I must pick up my share within the pick-up time frame that corresponds to the site I select and that if I do not, it may be donated or returned to inventory for sale. I realize that a missed pick up will count as one of my two skipped weeks.

I understand that picking up my share is my responsibility, and that Leaning Birch Farm may not be able to hold my share for a later pick up. I may contact the farm and arrange for someone else to pick up my share if I am not able to do so.

I will look for the pick up site details and rules via email and agree to abide by them.

Farm Visits/On-site CSA Pickup

We love to have our members visit out at the farm! As a farm share member, you become both part of our business as well as our extended farm family. As such, we ask of you the same respect we ask of one another. When visiting the farm, please treat our property as you would your own home, but respect our privacy, as well. Mind your feet and any signage that alerts you to restricted areas. Our baby plants are delicate, and we need to make sure they don't get stomped on accidentally!

Because of the delicate nature of our work and other natural unpredictable risks of farm life, we ask that you please stay by the side of your children as they explore the farm. We do our best to carefully maintain and properly account for any potential hazards, but small children, animals, and nature don't always follow the rules, so we need you to. Along those same lines, we also ask that you refrain from bringing pets onto the property (other than service animals). If for some reason you need to bring your pet with you, we ask that you leave your pet in your vehicle while you are at the farm. In general, we just ask that you are mindful of your actions so that we can continue to open up our farm to you and your family.

Additionally, this is our dog, Tucker's, home and he has free reign of almost the entire property. He is very friendly (sometimes TOO friendly!) but be aware that he does bark when folks arrive at the farm. Please know that he has never harmed anyone or anyone's pets. If you have concerns around dogs, please let us know and we will contain him in the house while you are here. He does like to play and can get a bit "exuberant," so please be aware of that, especially with children. He is an unaltered male, as well, so that's another reason not to bring your pets to our farm.

Farm Mini-events

From time to time we will host small events here on the farm. This may be something as simple as taste testing all the various tomato varieties, trying out recipes using unusual vegetables we grow, meeting baby ducklings or chicks, helping harvest garlic, etc. If you have ideas for any mini-events, please let us know. We want our members to really feel they contribute to the community feel of the farm and welcome their input into ways to make it more interesting for everyone.

Mini-events will be announced in emails to all members and will usually be held during the week in the late afternoon or early evening as we tend to be participating in off-farm markets on the weekends. These events will often occur during the on-site CSA pickups, but are open to ALL CSA members, regardless of which share type or pick up location they've chosen. Additionally, members should feel free to invite one guest or guest family to attend with them; some of our best new members are friends of current CSA members who visited the farm!

I understand the guidelines for visiting Leaning Birch Farm. I agree to follow all posted signs and rules when at the farm, and I understand that all pets must stay at home.

Communication

Like any strong community, we need good communication. Leaning Birch Farm will email you a newsletter every week. This newsletter will contain updates, farm event information, recipes, etc. We don't want you to miss out—please whitelist info@leaningbirchfarm.com and/or check your spam folder if you don't receive our emails.

Essential information about cancellations, delays, or problems will be delivered via email or text, as indicated below.

Reason for Communication	Mode of Communication	Note
Farm experiences a cancellation, delay, or problem with shares	Farm will always send an email and will text, if requested	Please request text messages on your membership agreement form.
Member experiences delay or problem picking up shares	Member will call or text the farm as soon as possible	The farm can be reached at: (518) 466-8245
Member experiences need for a refund or has a billing question	Member will call the farm at (518) 466-8245	If no answer, please leave a message. We do not have good cell service out in the field.
Member has other questions	Member will call or email the Farm at (518) 466-8245 or info@leaningbirchfarm.com	Farm will return the call or email as soon as possible but no later than 5 days.

Congratulations!

You made it through the Member Agreement process! We are so happy you have chosen to join us. We look forward to sharing our farm with you for years to come.

To finalize your membership, please complete the Member Agreement form and return it to the farm. If you submit payment without completing this form, you are indicating you are agreeing to the terms laid out in this Membership Handbook.

Your farmers,
Dan, Rose, and Nic Fera