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Cycle Farm CSA Newsletter

Week 3- July 5, 2012

This week's share

- 1/4 lb snap peas (Cascadia)
- 6 heads Romaine (Devils Tongue, Plato II, Brown Goldring, Crispmint)
- 4 heads of garlic (Korean Purple, fresh/uncured)
- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 bunch baby beets (Chiogga, Golden, and Early Wonder Tall Top)
- 1 bunch beet greens
- 1 bunch kale (White Russian and Rainbow dino)

We're setting in on a right proper routine these days. Weeding, transplanting, more weeding, more transplanting. We got another tray of baby bok choy and a succession of lettuce planted. Weeding is a steady, rolling constant that is broken every once and again by a hiccup of an exciting discovery. Some of the excitements this week include the bright red blooms on the Scarlett Runner Beans, raspberries, the fruits setting on the tomato plants, the very first squash blossoms, rabbits in the field, hop vines at 13', cantaloupe flowers, and the honey bees bearding. We've also got a roll on the greenhouse.

A bit about our greenhouse...

The first major part of the greenhouse set up went in this week. Jeremy's brother Marcus has been out nearly everyday for the past few weeks helping dig out post holes for fencing and the greenhouse. And finally, this Tuesday, we poured the concrete for the pilings.

We are very excited about our greenhouse design. We are building a pole barn, but instead of tin on the outside, like most standard farm/ranch outbuildings, we'll be wrapping ours in strawbale and cob. This will provide both insulation as well as thermal mass in the winter to help keep the space warm. The design is passive solar; intended to minimize heat build-up in the summer and concentrate it during the winter. We intend to use the greenhouse for both planting in the ground as well as a space to start transplants in the spring. In addition to being a greenhouse, the building will also house our chicken coop.

Once the pole barn frame is up, we'll be looking for help stomping cob. The more the merrier - we'll need lots of dancing feet to mix the mud, sand and straw for building. It should be lots of fun and likely very messy, not to be missed! We will keep you posted as this date approaches.



Garlic harvest



First tomato fruit



Greenhouse pilings

We thinned the beets and are especially happy to be able to include in this week's share a bunch of baby beet greens. If you haven't had beet greens before, think of them like kale, chard or spinach. We like to saute beet greens lightly with olive oil and salt and pepper, simple and delicious. Try them steamed or stirfried, with goat cheese, garlic, lemon juice or vinegar - you can even have them as chips (think kale chips).

Beet greens, sauteed with garlic

2-3 Tbs olive oil
 1-2 garlic cloves, minced
 a bunch of whole beet greens
 salt and pepper, to taste

Heat olive oil in a skillet, low-med heat, add minced garlic. When garlic starts smelling amazing, add beet greens. Heat greens until they are tender. Season with salt and pepper. Enjoy with eggs, on a sandwich, or by themselves. So good!



This week's share includes these four varieties of Romaine lettuce; (1) Crispmint, (2) Brown Goldring, (1) Devil's Tongue, and (2) Plato II. Crispmint and Plato II look similar. Crispmint grows more upright, its leaves' edges are more ruffled than Plato II and the taste is sweeter and juicier.

You'll notice that this week's kale is laced with tiny holes. These are caused by flea beetles. So far this year, flea beetles have been our biggest pest. They are a tiny, black beetle that hops like a flea when approached. They can kill seedlings and their holes in mature leaves make produce less appealing at market. The leaves are still perfectly fine to eat. We are experimenting with a few different types of organic flea beetle control. Including trap cropping, where we've planted a crop the flea beetles prefer with hopes the beetles will eat more of the trap crop than *our* crop. The spicier the greens are, the more flea beetles enjoy them, therefore our mustards are serving as trap crops protecting our kale, broccoli, and other brassicas. We are also hoping to use diatomaceous earth to help disrupt the life cycle of the beetles. Because the diatomaceous earth is washed away after rain or sprinkle irrigating, this will surely work better once the new drip irrigation system is set up.



Flea beetles



Mustard trap crop

Big thank yous to our thoughtful and generous CSA members who've contributed rubber bands! And we're having another Weeding Party next weekend, Saturday July 14th. 9AM-noon with a pot luck to follow. Hope you can make it!

Happy happy July,
 Trish and Jeremy