

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

It may seem a little odd, but we are starting to hope for frost... Our first heavy frosts cause a decisive change in the fields. Heat loving plants like peppers, tomatoes and beans die off completely. Cold tolerant crops like most root vegetables, as well as greens like spinach, kale and chard, become sweet and rich, as some of their starches turn to sugars, in part a defense against freezing. This sweetness is what makes us wish the most for frost, however, we also look forward to the end of weeding, trellising, pruning and harvesting. There is a release that happens with the end of a growing season that I imagine is similar to finishing a large contract or retiring.

We are planting our garlic for 2018 this week. Garlic can be planted early in the spring, but is best planted the fall before. This allows the garlic to establish its root system and growing

tip, so it can get a head start on the following season. To plant garlic we first 'pop' it, which involves dividing the bulb into individual cloves. These cloves will grow into bulbs the following season. Next we prepare the land, rototilling the area to be planted so the cloves can be easily pushed into the soil. After this we have simply to spread straw mulch.

We are mulching some, but not all of our garlic this year. Mulch helps hold in soil moisture, adds to organic matter and is generally good for soil life. In dry years this is great, as we don't have to worry about irrigating as much and the plants are healthy and happy. In wet years it can hold too much moisture, increasing disease pressure. The wet season we just had and the crop failure it caused for some fellow farmers makes us hesitant to mulch the whole crop, so we are hedging our bets and only doing some of it. Keeping our fingers crossed!

The raspberries are slowing down and the disease pressure in the patch is increasing. During the third week of September we had two days of rain followed by a week of temperatures in the high 20's to low 30's, which together brought on some serious disease pressure. This pattern is usually more of a concern with raspberries in July, as temperatures and moisture levels can both be high during that month. Generally temperatures have cooled by September and there is less moisture. This is one of the reasons we grow fall (everbearing) raspberries instead of July ones...

This is our last newsletter as we have but two weeks of the CSA left. Our last pickups are the week of October 10-14. It has been a pleasure growing vegetables for all of you this season. Thanks for your support!

Radicchio

We grow two types of radicchio, the standard round type, and a taller variety called Treviso that resembles a wide red romaine heart. Our radicchio has more green than the classic red radicchio you find in stores. This is because most radicchio is blanched by leaving it in water in the dark so it loses its chlorophyll.

Radicchio originates in Italy, where it is common in cooking. It is a bitter vegetable and so is often mixed with other ingredients like apples, pears, nuts, arugula, kale or other brassica greens, sweet onion, fennel, sharp or aged cheese and cured meats.

The bitterness of radicchio can also be reduced or

balanced by roasting or grilling. Both of these cooking methods help bring out its sweetness by caramelizing the natural starches and sugars. We like to cut it into quarters or sixths, tossing with oil, salt and pepper and then slow grilling or roasting with other vegetables or alone.

Harvesting

- Cabbage
- Chard
- Daikon Radish
- Garlic
- Kale
- Kohlrabi
- Lettuce
- Onions
- Parsnips
- Potatoes
- Pumpkin
- Radicchio
- Spinach
- Squash



Radicchio is great in pizza, pasta, salad, frittata, grilled sandwiches or any number of things

We hope you find sweetness in this bitter vegetable by trying something new!

Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving is one of the few holidays we get excited about on the farm, as it is a celebration of the year's harvest. Many nations have a history of harvest celebrations, which makes sense given the central role of agriculture and food production in most settled societies. Canada's Thanksgiving tradition started to come about when French settlers celebrated their early successful harvests. Many contemporary aspects of the tradition that are also part of American Thanksgiving (like turkey), were brought up from the states by loyalists fleeing during and after the American revolution (Wikipedia).

In Canada and many other countries, Thanksgiving used to have more explicit religious connection, with the celebration being about blessing the harvest, the preceding year and giving

thanks to God. While it is now a secular holiday, we feel that there is something naturally spiritual about growing food and joining with friends and family to give thanks for it.

In the spirit of feasting and plenty, we have tried to provide a generous quantity and variety of items this week. We hope some of it makes its way into your Thanksgiving celebrations this weekend.

In keeping with the celebration we would also like to give thanks. First we thank the land our farm is on, traditional land of the Three Fire Confederacy of the Ojibway, Potawatomi and Odawa people. Many people, including indigenous people, struggle to access land to be able to grow food for themselves and others and we feel lucky to have so much of it.

We are reminded of past generations of farmers and thankful for the work they put into the land. We see this when working out in the fertile fields with fences lined with rock and when walking through our wood lot, seeing old rock mounds, made by past generations trying to farm the more marginal soils of this property.

We give thanks for farming in a largely peaceful land, which allows us to be safe, to have the stability to invest in our operation and build a business and a life here in West Grey.

We also give thanks to all of you for being members, friends and allies in what we hope is a more sustainable, healthy and tangible way to grow, sell and eat food. Your support makes this CSA possible.

Bulk Garlic

In the past, many members have expressed an interest in buying garlic for keeping, as they tire of the cheap tasteless garlic from China available all winter long at most grocery stores. We overplanted our garlic for this year and so have a lot extra. So, we will be selling bulk garlic at the last pickup.

Under proper storage conditions, gar-

lic will keep till late winter or early spring before some of it starts to go off. Garlic likes to be stored the same way as onions, in the dark, close to but above 0° C and with low humidity. This is different from most root vegetables, which tend to like high humidity. In warm or moist conditions it will not keep anywhere near as long, but

will likely still last for a month or so.

Garlic will be sold by the pound for \$10/pound. There are about 6-10 bulbs of garlic per pound, depending on the size. We will bring a lot of garlic, so no need to order ahead, unless you think you will want a lot!

Next Year?

We will be expanding our membership again next year. This year we reached around 70 members, close to our goal of 75. Next year we hope to reach 90 to 100 members, at which point we think the operation will be financially viable. This will allow us to pay ourselves and our employees properly and give us some money to reinvest in the business.

Word of mouth marketing between members and their friends, family and co-workers is our best form of marketing and is a big part of how we have grown our membership in past years. We encourage all of you to continue passing along our information. Last

year we made a new logo, business cards, postcards and posters. If you are willing to put any of these up or give them out, please let us know and we will get some to you. The best time to do this is before and after Christmas, when people start to think about the coming season.

In the past we have given talks and been featured in local newspapers and other publications. We would be happy to come by your workplace, kid's school or community gathering, to share our experiences with organic market gardening and CSA operations. These could also focus on topics such as local food production and food se-

curity, sustainable agriculture, agriculture and climate change, etc.

We have not figured out our prices for next year, however, we will be raising them to keep pace with inflation and to continue to work towards making a viable living. As an incentive to sign up early, for those who register and pay before Christmas we will offer you this year's price. We will offer the same incentive to anyone who refers someone to us who becomes a new member.

Thanks again for your continued support!