

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

Hello everyone! We hope that everyone is getting into the swing of things, and making the transition from summer to fall easily!

Farm Update

This last week we received our framing for the two new coldframes we'll be putting up, and we started preparing the ground where we will build the structures. We also started harvesting the sweet potatoes. There were about 270 pounds of potatoes in the first 130 feet, and we have about 1900 more feet to go, so we will have a lot of sweet potatoes! We noticed some insect issues starting on the kale plants, so we stripped the old leaves off the plants and gave them to the animals. We also tried a new organic spray that contains a bacteria that, while harmless to humans, infects many insects and is typically used in organic greenhouse operations. We're curious to see how it goes. This week we also topped the Brussels sprouts, which encourages all the sprouts to enlarge faster and more evenly. I tasted a few of them and they are getting very close to being ready. The beets and carrots are really starting to look nice as the weather and day length are back to the conditions under which these vegetables thrive. The watermelons are close to being finished as the cool weather accelerates their decline. The cherry tomato vines are huge and starting to put a lot of weight on the trellis system. Hopefully

it will continue to hold! This week we are again offering tomatoes for canning at \$12 per half bushel, basil at \$10 per pound, and green beans at \$20 a half bushel. We will also be offering some extra pints of cherry tomatoes for \$3.00 if anyone wants to buy extra, since we have so many. The green beans might not be available until the later part of the week for canning, but if you are interested in ordering some, let us know and we'll figure out when we can get them to you.



The tomato plants are becoming very tall and heavy, but they keep right on growing!

Have questions or comments? Email us at mfororganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at

517-896-6884.

Vegetable Spotlight: Tomatoes

The tomato is a huge part of the American diet and is eaten routinely all over the world. Although we usually think of tomatoes as red fruit, the first cultivated tomatoes are actually thought to have been very similar to a yellow cherry tomato. This first cultivated tomato was grown by the Aztecs around 500 BC. Centuries after its first cultivation, the Spanish acquired seed from their conquests against the Aztecs. From there it was spread throughout Spanish colonies from the Americas, Asia, and eventually to Europe. Its spread was rapid, and many variations were bred out until the red tomato became most common, mostly for its eye-catching color. Now China grows by far the most tomatoes in the world followed by the US, India, Turkey, and Egypt. Here in Michigan, it is a summertime treat since the usual season is the end of July through mid-September. However, in the last decade there has been a trend toward indoor production in greenhouses and unheated tunnels. This stems from market demand to have tomatoes earlier, often allowing the grower to lock in buyers for the whole season if he is the first to have tomatoes. Coldframe production also decreases the difficulty of growing the tropical tomato plant in Michigan, where often cool wet conditions can cause early or late blight. Growing in greenhouses prevents temperatures from being too low and keeps tomato foliage dry to prevent disease from spreading. We now have a tomato season in Michigan that is more from early July to late October.

For human nutrition the tomato contains a lot of Lycopene and usually high amounts of Vitamin A. However, because of the broad diversity of colors, sizes, water content, and sugar content found in



Although most tomatoes are now red, the first cultivated tomatoes probably looked like yellow cherry tomatoes.



Growing tomatoes in coldframes allows a farmer to begin the tomato season earlier and end it later.



Tomatoes ripen at different rates, so it is not uncommon to see perfectly ripe tomatoes next to ones that still need some time on the vine.

different tomato varieties, they vary widely in the level of nutrients they supply to our bodies. One thing that tomatoes have been found to do is help the body is in the repairing of our skin from UV damage from the sun. However, there are a host of other health benefits both for cooked and raw tomatoes. There are no GMO varieties of tomatoes currently on the market; even though there have been some tested in previous years, they have gotten very little acceptance from growers or consumers.

This year we grew 11 different varieties of tomatoes and in this week's share we will be able to offer some of every variety. Some of the tomatoes we grew in the coldframes and some were grown outside. All the cherry tomatoes and specialty varieties were grown inside to minimize cracking, as wet soil can completely ruin the cherry tomatoes outside. Outside we grew our determinate varieties of red romas and large slicing tomatoes. "Determinate" means that the

vines die in the late season and have a concentrated set of fruit. These plants usually only grow to about 3-4 feet. Our cherry tomatoes are indeterminate varieties, which continue growing until something kills them. They get as big as they are allowed to grow, which is usually about 12-15 feet long in our coldframes. These cherry tomatoes are trellised so that the vines are not lying on the ground, making it much easier to harvest and yielding fruit that is not dirty. This year we did have some late blight on our outside tomatoes, but our inside tomatoes are still mostly disease-free and yielding ridiculously large amounts of fruit!

What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Watermelon, broccoli, or tomatoes
- ❖ Beans or bok choy
- ❖ Kale, Swiss chard, or beets
- ❖ Green pepper, onion, or eggplant
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes
- ❖ Salad mix or potatoes
- ❖ Dill, basil, garlic, or hot peppers

Recipe: Tomato and Mozzarella Bites

Ingredients:

20 grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
20 fresh basil leaves
20 small balls fresh mozzarella cheese
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
20 toothpicks

Directions:

Using a toothpick, spear a half of a tomato, a piece of basil, a mozzarella ball, and another half of a tomato. Repeat with remaining ingredients. Place on a serving dish and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Mix the vinegar and oil together in a small bowl to serve as a dipping sauce.

If you have ideas for an article, or you would like to contribute a recipe to a future newsletter, please email mforganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at 517-896-6884.