

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 11, 2011



Green beans, red top beets, and red mustard blooms grow side by side.



The cilantro is definitely liking the cooler weather.

I hope you all had a good weekend and were able to enjoy the nice weather. Since this is the time of year when the first frost comes many of you have been asking the date of the last CSA pickup of the season. For Alma it is October 17th, Mt. Pleasant October 18th, and Midland October 26th since we started in Midland a week later.

Farm Update

This week at the farm we harvested all of our winter squash which will be getting worked into the shares gradually over the next few weeks. We are also continuing to seed short season cool weather crops like salad mix and spinach. It has actually been very dry so we have still had to water our seedings and a few of our fall crops that we are trying to hurry along their maturity. One thing I thought I should mention is that often on root crops like turnips or beets we leave the tops on in a bunch in case you want to eat the tops. However, if you do not intend to use the root portion very soon then taking the tops off is better to help the root crops last longer. Something like beets may start to get a little spongy after 10 days with tops left on but can actually last at least 3 weeks in prime condition without the tops attached.

This week we have beets (\$10 per half bushel), green beans (\$14 per half bushel), and tomatoes (\$12 per half bushel) for freezing and canning.

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

517-896-6884.

○ Extending the Harvest Season ○

For many (if not most) people here in mid-Michigan, the season mostly ends when the frost comes. Most of you who have gardens come to the end of your season after the first couple of frosts. That is why people are often surprised that we carry the CSA through late October. However, in northern Ohio where I grew cool season crops we did not end harvesting until late November. We probably will end harvest (outside of the cold frames) a couple weeks sooner here in mid-Michigan. How is this possible? What most people do not realize is that each crop has different cold hardiness and that most of the damage on cool season crops does not come from just freezing. While it is true that freezing will destroy tomatoes and other warm season crops, for spinach, lettuce, and green onions among others it is actually the loss of water from a frozen leaf. That is why when these cool season crops are protected in a cold frame from wind, they can withstand subzero temperatures. It is only when the plant tissues are frozen and then jostled or exposed to rapidly moving air that they begin to die off. So for the first couple of frosts, when the air has to be still in order for there to be frost, there is no problem just being out in the field. As the frosts lay on the plants for longer portions of the day when the wind picks up, then these exposed plants begin to show damage and eventually die off. To keep plants outside looking nice for longer into the season we put row cover (poly spun fabric) supported by wire hoops over the crop. We also use a perforated clear plastic with wire hoops as well. These maintain a higher temperature around the plant, but more importantly they protect it from being exposed to the wind while the crop is still frozen.



Now that the extreme heat of the summer is over, the spinach is growing again in the field.



Head lettuce is back!



Photo: Fred pulls some weeds in a bed of green beans.



What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Potatoes, sweet corn, watermelon, or edible pod peas
- ❖ Green pepper, onions, or hot peppers
- ❖ Tomatoes or acorn squash
- ❖ Salad Mix or head lettuce
- ❖ Green beans
- ❖ Carrots or cherry tomatoes
- ❖ Beets or red cabbage
- ❖ Kale, chard, basil, cilantro, dill, or parsley

Recipes

Hearty Cabbage Soup- This recipe was submitted by one of our CSA members. Thanks Diane!

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ❖ 1 cup thinly sliced onions
- ❖ 2 apples - peeled, cored and finely diced
- ❖ 3 cups shredded cabbage
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ❖ 1 large potato, shredded
- ❖ 1 1/2 cups vegetable broth
- ❖ 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- ❖ 1 teaspoon white sugar
- ❖ 1/2 cup half-and-half cream
- ❖ salt and pepper to taste

Directions

In a large heavy pot, cook onion and apple in oil over medium-high heat until lightly browned. Stir in cabbage and garlic, then reduce heat. Stir in potato, broth, Italian seasoning and sugar; cover and simmer 30 minutes. Stir in cream, salt and pepper. Heat through and serve.

There are other tricks to extending the harvest. For instance, it usually takes temperatures as low as 26 to 28 degrees to damage the dense root portion of turnips and beets, but when we bury the exposed portion of the root with soil, the air temperatures can get colder without being able to penetrate the buried root. The great thing about carrots is that they can withstand extremely low temperatures while buried in the soil, and by placing row cover or straw over them can be harvested throughout the winter in most cases. Keeping plants going late into the fall takes experience and knowledge of what each crop can withstand. Fortunately I learned a lot from my former job in Ohio about how to do this and what makes sense economically.



Extending the season this long is a very foreign idea to many, so if any of you have greater interest in these kinds of season extension techniques, contact us and we can show you around the farm as we get into October and November.

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.