

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

Hello everyone! I hope you all enjoyed your squash. I loved our squash so much I ate one and a half the other day for dinner. We also have started eating some Brussels sprouts last week, and those will be coming soon.

Farm Update

This last week we have started to see our warm weather crops start to wind down as the weather is staying cooler. We are now on the last planting of green beans, and harvesting tomatoes is a lot harder than it has been in the last few weeks. Now the cool season crops like Brussels sprouts, spinach, carrots, and green onions are really looking nice. We started seeding the coldframes for our late fall harvests, and also seeded some larger areas of our field with a cover crop of rye grass. In other news on the farm, our dog Rachel went to doggy jail this last week when she decided to explore the neighborhood instead of staying on the farm. We broke her out of jail and she is now back to eating old sweet corn and pestering the pigs. Our winter squash has been awesome and we have baked about 9 of them so far. We did notice that one had a rotten spot on the inside. Hopefully this was an isolated fluke but if you have one like this then let us know so we can give you another in its place. If you were gone last week make sure and get your squash this week. Also, in a few of the weeks to come (not this week yet) we will be offering the Brussels sprouts.



Brussels sprouts grow around a long stalk, just like this.

Some people like them and some don't. (In our house I like them but Michele does not). We kind of want to get a feel for how many people don't want them so we can plan how many of them to bring for the next week. Obviously we want our members to get their fair share of Brussels sprouts, but we don't want to give them to people who don't want them especially because they have been very popular with our wholesale accounts. So if you think about it, let us know at the drop-off.

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

517-896-6884.

Using Cover Crops

This last week we seeded a cover crop of rye grass, which is probably the most popular type of cover crop to plant in northern areas. Many of you may not know what cover crops are used for. Cover crops are something that is planted for the purpose of improving the soil. It is not a crop that is harvested but instead is usually turned back into the soil. Cover crops improve the soil in several ways, including erosion control, improved soil fertility, improved soil structure, and weed suppression. There are many different choices of cover crops that can be seeded but I will use our rye cover crop as an example. We seeded it after our sweet corn and squash were done in the field. This rye seed will grow up and take nutrients out of the soil, many of which would have been leached away over the winter if the soil were left unplanted. After the rye grass is turned in to the soil, these nutrients will be saved and released for use by the next crops. Also, during the early spring and winter there is more rain and snow melt, which can erode the soil into the creek. However, with the roots of the rye grass to hold the soil in place, very little will blow away or run into the creek under snow melt. Over time the organic matter in the soil starts to diminish, especially when the soil is open because it is so light that is readily blown away in the wind. Microbial life also breaks down nutrients over time, which is a good thing as long as there is a new source to replace them. As the grass grows up, it is turned back under to replenish the organic matter content in the soil. *(Continued on next page.)*



When there is frost, it is important to cover the crops. This protects them from the wind.



These green onions will be in the share this week.



Photo: Rows of beets grow up in the field.



What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Tomatoes or other bagged options. The other options will be things that we have just a few of, and might include peas, mixed tomatoes, etc.
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes or carrots
- ❖ Beets or cabbage
- ❖ Green beans
- ❖ Green onions
- ❖ Large gold beets, candy beets, hot peppers, or bell peppers
- ❖ Head lettuce, spinach, or salad mix
- ❖ Dill, cilantro, basil, parsley, or chard

Recipe- Sautéed Beets

- 1 bunch beets
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1-2 teaspoons dried rosemary

We have had this a lot over the last few weeks, mostly as a breakfast side. Take the bunch of beets and cut the tops completely off. You can cut the skins off, or do what I do and just cut the skin off around the top where it is a little tougher. Then cut into ¼ inch strips. Put in a medium size pan at medium heat with the olive oil and cover. Stir the beets every minute to two minutes so they don't scorch. Then when the beets are cooked through, take the cover off and add the rosemary and the salt and stir. Let this sit for another minute on the stove and then serve. This would normally feed 3 to 4 people as a side dish.

This organic matter is very important to the health of the plants because it acts like a sponge in the soil. This "sponge" binds nutrients and water and releases them slowly to the growing plants. One of the main reasons we have been successful this year is because our soil has a very high percentage (8%) of organic matter relative to most other soils. Planting a cover crop helps maintain that high level. The final reason for planting our cover crop is that if the soil is open, weeds will start to grow as the soil looks for a way to cover itself. When rye grass is seeded it smothers out other weeds and actually suppresses germination of weeds by a chemical it emits out of its roots. There are a lot of benefits to cover cropping and there is a lot to know. There are many books that are just about cover cropping. If you have any questions about how it works, feel free to ask us at the drop-off.

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.