

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

OCTOBER 7, 2012

Hello Everyone!

Farm Update

The weather this week has been nice until this weekend, when the cold morning temperatures have caused some very cold hands while we've been harvesting. We have put the main hoops up on the new greenhouses and we are getting our compost for them in on Monday. Now we have also started to cover younger plantings with low tunnels for later fall/winter harvests. This extra layer of plastic helps to insulate the plants as the temperatures get lower and lower. This Monday morning will probably have a harder frost than we have had before, so we will be covering a few things and letting the few warm weather plants that are left die out for the season. It has been a good season and we are nearing the end of the 2012 CSA year. The last week of drop-offs will be the 15th-21st of this month. We will be sending out a survey next week that we hope you will take a few minutes to fill out, since we use the information we learn to make changes to the farm to better serve your needs. Last year's survey we saw a lot of people wanting fruit, eggs, and more broccoli included into the program somehow. So we made adjustments this season based on that feedback. We aren't able to incorporate every piece of advice, but do try to adjust if we see major trends in the feedback. With the amount of interest that has been growing in our farm,



The construction on the new coldframe is under way!

we anticipate a much larger 2013 membership and hope you folks will be with us next year as well. We have appreciated your support of the farm in both your family's food dollars and your encouraging words at the drop-offs. Also this year we have seen our wholesale markets grow much more than anticipated, but we would like to make our CSA membership a larger proportion of the farm because you our CSA members provide us with a much less variable income. If you are looking for some extra veggies for preserving, this week we have beets for \$18 per half bushel, sweet potatoes for \$1.35 per pound, and roma tomatoes (frost willing) for \$12 per half bushel.

What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Sweet potatoes
- ❖ Carrots or potatoes
- ❖ Brussels sprouts or winter squash
- ❖ Green onions, arugula, or radishes
- ❖ Beets or tomatoes
- ❖ Salad mix, spinach, or a random vegetable
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes or chard

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

517-896-6884.

Vegetable Spotlight: Sweet Potatoes

You had to know that with a 4500-pound harvest of sweet potatoes this year, they would be in your shares in a major way! This year was a terrific year for sweet potatoes as the plants had a lot of time to put on growth early in the season. They love warm weather and can be a somewhat variable crop here in Michigan, but obviously the intense heat of summer we had starting in June really pushed them to their full potential. Many of you may have not seen a sweet potato plant before, but these long vines creep out fast, eventually becoming a dense carpet of vines and triangular leaves across the raised beds in which we plant them. On these raised beds, we have black plastic which absorbs sun and creates more heat around the vicinity of the plant. Ironically, they like more infertile sandy soil, so we actually had trouble with them on the rows that were planted on our richest black soil, but they thrived in the really light soil in the southwest corner of our farm. Our sweet potato plants actually arrive at our farm as stems with maybe a few roots, and these stems (commonly called slips) are pushed into the soil and watered by our drip tape irrigation so that new rootlets form on the stem below the ground.

The plant seems to have originated somewhere in Central America. It was found to be in Polynesia around 1000AD, meaning that there were probably some travels between natives of Polynesia and South America that spread the sweet potato cuttings from the Americas into Polynesia, where it also thrives. It is now found in many warm weather parts of the world, and makes up a major part of the diet in many cultures. Total yields in these hot weather climates are much greater than here in Michigan. Many of these tropical places can grow the same vine out for many years just taking newly formed tubers as needed. (Continued on next page.)



Above: The variety of sweet potatoes we grow is called Beauregard, which has a reddish brown skin and is orange on the inside.

Below: The sweet potato vines stretch out all over their area of the field.





This sweet potato pie is a perfect dessert for chilly fall evenings!

There are actually many different colors of sweet potatoes grown in the world, but the orange flesh type that we grow is known to be the most nutritious because of the large amount of beta carotene. Sweet potatoes are probably the best food you can eat to get the valuable beta carotene, and interestingly the full amount of beta carotene is best absorbed into our body with fat intake of some kind (such as olive oil, butter, and other animal fats). Also, like regular potatoes, organic sweet potatoes are better because they do not have a chemical sprout inhibitor applied to them. If you see conventional potatoes or sweet potatoes in the grocery store, almost all of them have the active chemical on or in them to decrease the chance they would start sprouting in the store. For storing our sweet potatoes it is better to have them wrapped in newspaper in a dark place with higher humidity. The best place to

store them is where the temperature is below room temperature but above 50F. Most basements or closets furthest away from the thermostat would be good. Remember it is a tropical root and (like basil) will not do well for very long if put in the refrigerator. Hopefully, this leaves you a little more knowledgeable about sweet potatoes and how we grow them. Enjoy!

Recipe: Sweet Potato Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 (1 pound) sweet potato
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 (9 inch) unbaked pie crust

Directions:

1. Boil sweet potato whole in skin for 40 to 50 minutes, or until done. Run cold water over the sweet potato, and remove the skin.
2. Break apart sweet potato in a bowl. Add butter, and mix well with mixer. Stir in sugar, milk, eggs, nutmeg, cinnamon and vanilla. Beat on medium speed until mixture is smooth. Pour filling into an unbaked pie crust.
3. Bake at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 55 to 60 minutes, or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Pie will puff up like a soufflé, and then will sink down as it cools.

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.