

# Monroe Family Organics

## CSA Newsletter

OCTOBER 13, 2013

### Farm Update

Hello everyone! Again we have great weather and the crops look as nice as ever! The tomatoes are still doing well and the flavor still seems to be good, as it still gets into the 80s in the tomato coldframes during the day. Our aphid population went down quite a bit after the rain, although this weekend they started coming back a little more. Fred laid some of our low tunnels over some late season spinach, radishes, and lettuce. The pigs have been enjoying the good weather and have been eating a lot of leftovers and culls, mostly of tomatoes and different root vegetables. Tomatoes are their favorite.

We will be selling our pork again this year! The pigs will be \$6.50 per pound fully processed, and half or whole pigs are available. Each pig is a different size but we expect the range to be between 90 and 160 total pounds of meat, and you can request a large or a small pig so you can have kind of an idea of how much meat to expect. They will be available for pick up the week after Thanksgiving at the farm in Alma. We only have 6 pigs available so we expect them to go quickly. They are first come first serve, so if you are interested, you'll want to let me know soon!

This year, like the two previous years, we will be offering a discount for early CSA sign up for the 2014 season. The early pricing is \$285 for a half share for Midland and Mt.



*The pigs keep getting bigger and stronger, and in a few weeks, there will be no keeping them in!*

Pleasant and \$515 for a full. Alma is \$265 for a half and \$505 for a full share. If you sign up and put down a down payment before December 15<sup>th</sup> these will be the prices your prices; after this date the pricing will go up by \$5 per half share and \$10 per full share. Signing up early yields you a little bit of savings and assures you have your spot for next season. It also helps us out, as some of the major expenses for the next season are actually incurred in January, which is when we buy seed and repair equipment. If you have any questions or want to sign up for next year, feel free to email me or give me a call at 517-896-6884!

*Have questions or comments? Email us at [mforganics@yahoo.com](mailto:mforganics@yahoo.com) or call Michele at*

*517-896-6884.*



## Vegetable Spotlight: Beets and Swiss Chard

The humble beet has a very long history; it has been cultivated to provide food for people groups along the Mediterranean coastline for several thousand years. Its history of being eaten by humans goes back to a couple thousand years BC, but consuming it for the rounded root portion is more recent. Until the time of the Romans, beets were primarily consumed as a leafy vegetable with an almost inedible thin taproot. However, it is thought that the Romans may have been the first people to eat the root portion, and by medieval times in Europe the root was being eaten more regularly than the greens. Then in the days of Napoleon when the British halted trading sugar with France, Napoleon started rapidly developing the beet for sugar, and now we have sweeter varieties of table beets as well. One interesting fact in all this is that the beet was eaten as a leafy vegetable for a very long time, and the most modern domesticated form of this is the Swiss chard we enjoy today. The red beet and Swiss chard we have today exhibit the best of both traits that humans have selected over time.

The beet has often been used in traditional medicine; the Romans are known to have used it as a laxative and to help heal wounds. Today we know them as an anti-inflammatory, and they have unique antioxidant compounds rarely found in other foods. Initial lab tests show beets to fight tumor growth, and they are likely to help to some degree against cancer, but this has not yet been well studied.

Beets and beet leaves come in many different colors. This year, we are growing candy beets, as well as red and gold beets.

## What to Expect in Your Share this Week:

- ❖ Tomatoes or cherry tomatoes
- ❖ Sweet potatoes or Brussels sprouts
- ❖ Spinach, squash, or carrots
- ❖ Beets or lettuce
- ❖ Broccoli, cabbage, or cooking greens
- ❖ Kohlrabi, radishes, or cilantro
- ❖ Onion or arugula



*Although the beet root is the part that is usually eaten, the greens are delicious as well. We put them in the cooking greens mix that is available in the shares.*





As for Swiss chard, we grow a rainbow chard mix, which has brilliant stems of many colors. Every now and then we see some of these Swiss chard types grow an enlarged root that is mostly tough and brownish in color, which shows similarities to a beet. In the spring we grow our beets from transplants. This allows us to have beets available earlier in the season, because we don't have to wait for a raw seed to germinate in the cold soil. Later in the season we seed the beets directly into the soil with our largest plantings for the fall time. In the fall these beets start taking on more sugars, and the plant puts less development into the leafy portion of the plant as it prepares to overwinter. This is why fall beets are usually at their best, and are the sweetest of any time during the year. Our Swiss chard we transplant in April into black plastic beds. These beds produce nice Swiss chard leaves throughout the entire growing season, and often have to be cut back to rejuvenate leafy growth at some time during the summer. The harvest on these hardworking chard plants goes from the first week of June until sometimes December!

At our house we almost always eat beets fried in olive oil as a breakfast side. However, we have also made a beet arugula salad with feta. We have also boiled beets then chilled them and used slices for an hors d'oeuvre. Hopefully, this leaves you a little more knowledgeable about the humble beet and how we raise it here on the farm.

## Recipe: Cold Russian Borscht

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 medium beets
- 4 cups beef broth
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 cucumber - peeled, seeded, and diced
- 1/2 cup sour cream

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Remove stems and leaves from beets, but leave on skins. In a deep pot, cover beets with cold water and bring to a boil. Boil until fork tender, about 40 minutes.
2. Drain beets, but reserve two cups of the liquid. Strain the liquid and add to a large saucepan. Remove skin from beets. Grate beets through coarsest blade of grater. Add to beet liquid. Add beef broth, onion, salt, pepper and vinegar. Bring to a boil, and then cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 20 minutes, then remove from the heat.
3. Chill in refrigerator for one hour, or until cold before serving. Ladle into bowls and top each serving with cucumber and a big spoonful of sour cream.