



2011 Season

Week eighteen

September 25, 2011

Zilke Vegetable Farm CSA

It's officially fall!

Both the calendar and the weather agree that the autumn equinox has arrived. The fields, once lush and green, are now browning as corn and soybeans ripen and dry. The sun sets much earlier in the evening, trees have autumn colors, and we've had our first cider and donuts from our local orchard.

Our CSA season typically runs 20 weeks, and this year is a typical one in that regard. (It certainly hasn't been typical in most other measures!) We have harvested nearly every one of

the crops, and have the sweet potatoes and squash in storage bins awaiting packing in boxes this week and next. The greens continue to thrive in the fields, as they tolerate the cooler and shorter days of fall. We are still hopeful that the radishes and swiss chard mature sufficiently in time for the final week.

Our final share box of the season will be seasonal items—pumpkins, indian corn, sunflowers, popcorn, and gourds—along with whatever edible items are still available.

Please plan to visit the farm stand on Sunday, October 9, for your share and some pumpkins, too!

What's inside your box this week:

Sweet potatoes

Butternut squash

Spaghetti squash

Watermelon—by request
See article on page two

Lettuce, arugula, and/or bok choy



Farm Updates

Tom had a very busy week last week! Vicki was away doing some consulting most of the week, leaving Tom to double up on all the week's chores. We had some help from our trusty farmhand and musician Mike who made time for us between his shows, hired our niece Kirsti to help at the farmstand, and kept the high school kids busy after school hours!

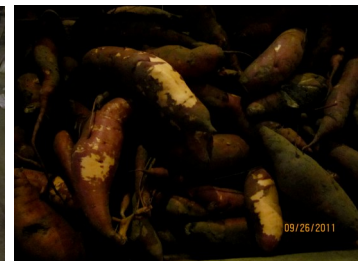
The sweet potatoes are being dug by hand, since we've lost the digger until it's fixed. We've taken them to the car wash for rinsing off. They sure are delicious!

The large hoophouse got prepped and seeded with swiss chard, spinach, lettuce, radishes, and carrots. On sunny 60 degree days, it warms up into the 80's to help germinate the seeds. Our goal is to establish these plants now, overwinter them, and harvest them once day lengths return to 10-hour days in March. Add twice-daily watering to the list of jobs everyday . . .

Late blight has affected nearly all the tomatoes, so finding an unblemished one is a rare find. The few that we bring in spoil quickly. Sad.

Cover crops at the Day Road farm look fabulous. Weather permitting, we hope to get the rest of the just-harvested fields seeded this week and next.

We are hosting a classroom field trip from our local elementary school this week. They'll learn about parts of plants, cover crops, and marketing foods locally. We skyped with the classroom to prepare them for the visit!



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From last week: Our crop of watermelon, planted late, also has lost vigor. We have picked them and will store them a week or so to see if they will ripen enough for boxes. We sampled one and while tasty, it was not as sweet as we would like. Vicki thinks watermelon flavoring for jams or summer rum drinks might still be an option if fresh eating is not, so don't despair.



Nope, they didn't sweeten much with storage, so we have 100 watermelons available, should you want one this week. They sure LOOK nice. Fresh eating is not an option, but if you google "unripe watermelon recipes" you'll find a good assortment of options for using this almost-a-treat. Most recommend a simple syrup for making watermelon juices or pickling the rind. I found this interesting tidbit when researching: In some African countries, unripe watermelons are prepared like marrows as a vegetable dish, or the rind is pickled or candied. In North America, pickled watermelon peel has long been a favorite relish. A recipe was included in an 1796 book called "American Cookbook" by Amelia Simmons. Some in the southern states, liked to fry cubes of the peel cut from under the skin. In some European countries, the peel is candied. The seeds can be toasted and eaten, but discard the outer shell as you would with pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds.

Unripe Watermelon ideas:

Soak cubed watermelon in tequila, some lime juice, some simple syrup, freeze, then blend for watermelon margaritas

Muddle mint, add diced watermelon, and create a mojito with rum, club soda, and lime

Blend with some nectar or juice to give texture to a smoothie

Use it as a substitute for mango in a salsa recipe

Throw it into a blender with ice cubes, lemon juice and simple syrup for a drink.

Freeze mashed watermelon in sugar in ice cube trays or molds for winter flavor in punch bowls or beverages

Need some ideas for squash? Try:

<http://www.squashrecipes.us/>

