



2011 Season

Week fifteen

September 4, 2011

Zilke Vegetable Farm CSA

Soil Fertility

Growing healthy foods requires healthy soils.

Maintaining healthy soil is as much a part of agriculture as harvesting all the lovely beans and tomatoes. We give back to the soil (to "mother earth") more than we take.

Some plants use up many more soil nutrients than others—corn, tomatoes, and potatoes are all "heavy feeders." To accommodate this, we use a number of soil enriching techniques. Crop rotation is one way to reduce the drain on the soil fertility—we grow different vegetables at each site every year. Another method is to use cover crops. Planted just after a vegetable crop is harvested, cover

crops such as buckwheat, sorghum, annual ryegrass, and mustard improve soil structure and add natural nutrients. Some have the added benefit of natural insecticidal action, such as mustard grass.

Soil fertility can also be improved by the addition of fertilizers. Manure is the classic method of soil fertilization; compost is its newer cousin. Synthetic fertilizers such as Miracle Gro or Weed-n-Feed are under scrutiny due to safety or health concerns. We do not use any synthetic fertilizers on our farms.

We are partnering with MSU to discover even better ways to improve our precious resource: soil.

What's inside your box this week:

TOMATOES, TOMATOES, TOMATOES—this week, many Mountain Spring and one "ugly heirloom" Old German

Potatoes—2 quarts of Yukon Gold

Again, a good assortment of peppers

Turnips—1 quart of Purple Top beauties

Yellow onions

The next of the fall squash varieties—this week: acorn

More fresh greens again! Look for a small bag of arugula, a larger one of black seeded simpson, AND a small bag of mustard greens

Eggplant

Depending on picking—even more!

Farm Updates

We received a lovely half inch of rain from the powerful storms of Saturday, which helped the late plantings of lettuce, spinach, and other fall crops. Luckily we did not get the high winds or hail that neighboring areas did—whew!

Weather looks favorable for the next several weeks, despite the chilly start to the school year. We are hopeful that the first frost is still many weeks off.

We seeded additional items this week: radishes, more lettuce, more spinach, and swiss chard. The crops seeded 3 weeks ago are growing beautifully, and are already in your shares!

Fall items are coming on well. We dug additional potatoes, which are in your boxes this week. We

dug a few sweet potatoes to check their progress, and other than a few insect marks, they are growing along well. We expect to harvest them in the next couple of weeks.

Tom is indispensable on the farm. He repaired the muffler and cleared the sediment bowl on the tractor this week—the kind of tasks that are "everyday" jobs that he learned growing up on the farm. Mechanic, marketer, agronomist, boss, social worker, friend, botanist, dog trainer; you name it, he can do it!

Vicki's sister Terrie is back for another week-long visit, happy to be helping out with harvesting and CSA boxes. We also plan to get tomatoes canned for winter meals, and to eat well while she is here!

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Buckwheat cover crop



We have peppers!!

Gypsy and Green Bell peppers, Cherry Bombs,
Hungarian Hot peppers, and Cayennes

Turnip Potato Soup

- 3 Tbsp butter
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 quart turnips, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3-4 potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 Cups of chicken stock
- Nutmeg and/or parsley for garnish

Cook onions in butter until translucent; add the sliced turnips and potatoes. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 20 minutes.

Add the chicken stock and cook until the turnips and potatoes are very tender, about 10 minutes.

Working in batches, purée the soup in a blender until completely smooth. Return the soup to the pot and season with salt and freshly grated nutmeg. Garnish with the parsley before serving.

Serves 3-4

Ratatouille

Adjust this recipe to include vegetables you have on hand. Chop and add vegetables to pan as you go!

- Chop and sauté in olive oil until tender:
 - Onions
 - Peppers
 - Garlic, thinly sliced
 - Eggplant, peeled and diced
 - Zucchini, sliced
- Add chopped tomatoes, and cook for 10-15 minutes
- Then add:
 - Chopped parsley
 - basil leaves
 - 1/4 c red wine
- Season with salt and pepper

Serve hot or cold

Serve as is, over rice, or stirred into pasta

Arugula?

Try this instead of basil for pesto

Use as a pizza topping, added at last 5 minutes of baking

Stir into pasta dishes just before serving

Swap out with spinach in any recipe, for a little more "bite"

Perfect in a salad!

Mustard greens?

Sauté briefly with onions and garlic, add pepper flakes and/or cumin for extra kick

Steam and dip in soy sauce

Steam and serve with splash of balsamic vinegar

Use as a spicy spring roll wrapper

Add to scrambled eggs

Add to green leafy salads