

Newsletter August 7th 2011

Hello from the wild and wet hill top of Watershed Farm,

This week we have learned to be careful of what we wish for....finally the rain has come and along with it the weeds, the slugs, the flea beetles, the creepy crawlies of every description and even a few that have yet to be described. But many of our vegetables are also thriving with this moisture which means that this is a bountiful week of offerings.

Thanks to all who showed up last Saturday to help pull some garlic and enjoy a meal with us. We are still hanging the garlic in the barn and praying that despite the humidity, we can manage to dry the garlic over the next few weeks and avoid any of the mold problems that can set in if the garlic is not cured properly. We certainly have some of the finest garlic grown here in years and we know that the hard work of preparing the beds in the fall with compost, seaweed and wood ash and then mulching with straw helped the crop....as did the sun and rain and stars and everything else out there that influences the growth of this remarkable crop. I am hoping that many of you will choose to join us this year as we celebrate the Third Annual Stinking Rose Garlic Festival on Saturday, October 29th. It is a full and fun day that brings people together from across the Maritimes to learn about planting garlic, share their garlic recipes and growing tips, get their hands dirty planting, eat a fine feast of garlic-laced food, listen to great live music and go home with a treat bag of different varieties of garlic to plant or eat. More on that event as we get closer. And while we are at it, we might as well get you to pencil this date on your calendar: Sunday, September 18th is Open Farm Day. This great initiative brings thousands of people from across Nova Scotia out to visit the dozens of participating farms spread across the province. Last year was our first year hosting and we must have shown at least 70 people of all ages around the farm over the course of the day.

We were grateful this last week to have the help of Kim's friend, Ally who was a cheerful and tireless worker and lent a capable hand with everything from mulching potatoes and tending the animals to pulling garlic, harvesting greens and washing up the production area (including the multitude of ice cream buckets that we use in the harvest). Ally is heading back to Toronto with a much greater sense of what it takes to grow food and we hope she finds her way back here at some point in the future, maybe even before she gets too ensconced in her Masters program (hey, Ally, what about that garlic fest?). Next week we look forward to welcoming either one or two young people from Katimavik who will be spending about nine days with us helping with the various jobs that it takes to keep this place buzzing. And once again, if any of you are looking for an excuse to skip your pilates sessions and join us for some wholesome agri-fitness, even if you just have a couple of hours and you want to watch the cedar waxwings and goldfinch flit about while you pick blueberries, just drop in or give us a call and we can always find something that suits your needs or desires and ours as well.

In your bag this week you will find:

NO SALAD MIX!!!! We decided to give you and us a break this week....and we're glad that we did as today's torrential rain would have made harvesting this very labour intensive item a horrible job at best. Many of the tender greens need a bit of a break as the recent heat and unbelievable number of earwigs and slugs are wreaking havoc in the beds that hold the various greens that make up your salad mix. We should be back into production before long but this respite is good for us and hopefully for you too.

Lettuce: Once again this is a mixture of what we have out in the field. Some of the names of the varieties are: Lovelock, Green Towers, Black Seeded Simpson, Jericho, Red Oak Leaf... when I led the Roots and Shoots class with the grades 5-6 at the Waldorf School this last year, we looked through the seed catalogues that I order from and counted 42 different types of lettuce and then talked about why they can only name and identify two kinds... romaine and iceberg. Diversity is a wonderful thing and we should be very grateful to all of the farmers and backyard gardeners around the world who are helping maintain that diversity even in the face of the onslaught of the Monsantos of the world and the tyranny of the economics of scale.

Herbs: Summer Savoury is beautiful right now, full of those aromatic essential oils and flavours. Again, this dries very easily and maintains its flavour but I recommend that you use it right away and chop it finely and add it onto your roasted beets and turnips...more about that later. Most of you will find both Lemon Balm and Mint in your bags and they can be used fresh as teas or chopped into green salads or tabouli or dried for later use as relaxing and refreshing teas.

Beets: The beets go on and on... You won't find any of those bulls-eye Chioggia this week but lots of Detroit Red and Red Ace and Cylindra and the beautiful and über-sweet Touchstone Gold and for some of you, the deep red of Bulls Blood with their magenta leaves. The greens should not end up in your compost.... they are so delicious lightly steamed or added into a soup or stew or stir fry. As for my latest favourite recipe, I just finished a great and easy lunch of roasted beets and turnips (see below) with a side dish of lightly steamed greens. Yummy and so easy. Turn your oven over to 400 F and wash the beets (and turnips if you have them) and trim off the greens and tips and cut in half or quarters. Toss them in olive oil and summer savoury and a sprinkle of herb salt and spread on a cookie tray with parchment paper or tin foil. They will take about 30 minutes in the oven and will delight you as they turn into the tastiest morsels, tender inside and slightly crunchy on the outside. The beets become sweeter, if that's even possible, and the turnips somehow get milder and more earthy at the same time and they all go together really well. While waiting for the roasted vegetables I heated some olive oil in a frying pan, added some chopped up garlic and let the house fill with that delicious smell (hey, I hope you all removed the garlic that we put in your onion bag last week and have either used it all by now or hung it up in a dry well ventilated spot so it can cure over the next week or two), then I added the turnip green stems and beet green stems and let them saute for a few minutes before adding the chopped up leaves... the few lacy holes in the leaves hardly matter once this is steamed. I covered the pan with a lid and let the greens do their thing for a few minutes then added a squeeze of lemon juice (sorry, not local) and some herbed salt and what a feast.

Turnips: These summer turnips, in the large size bags only, are colourful and delicious and as I have recently learned, one of the healthiest foods around. Apparently they are higher in Vitamin C than just about any other vegetable out there and then there's a host of other remarkable traits...who knew? Read all about it by following this link:

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=144>

We have three types for you this week...Hakurei which are the white ones and are commonly used in Japanese cuisine...these ones are quite mild and lovely even raw shaved into thin slices as a crudite or roasted as above in the beets section. The Red Meat ones are a bit ugly on the outside with a creamy somewhat blemished skin but the inside is a lovely watermelon pink and they cook up very nicely. The stunning pink of the Scarlet Queen revealed itself when I washed the soil off and they gleamed with a jewel-like shine, of course the rain helped everything look a bit gleamy and shiny this morning!

Cucumbers: I shouldn't probably commit this to writing, never mind say it out loud for fear of proving myself wrong, but it seems we now have the cucumber beetle under control...so you will find a mixture of small and sweet Persian cukes, Lemon cucumbers, Boothby Blonds, Suyo Long and a few other varieties thrown in for good measure. The Persians are very tender with small seeds and look like miniature English Cucumbers,, the Boothbys look like blonde pickling cukes and are very lovely, the Lemon cukes look like their namesake but taste like a fine mild cucumber and their seeds are even a bit sweet and the Suyo Long looks a bit like a dinosaurs, long curling and prickly but very tender and delicious.

Summer Squash: What a harvest of strange and wonderful shapes and colours. You will find your classic green zucchini, the striped Italian version called Portofino, The Israeli oblong pale green version called Sagev, the round and lovely patterned French version known as Ronde De Nice, the yellow scalloped Patty pans, the strange flying saucers of yellow and green that look like star fish, the ghostly pale green scalloped saucers of Bennings Green Tint , the yellow crooknecks dipped in green at the blossom end called Zephyr, and a few others whose names escape me. Again, what a wonderful world of diversity we can celebrate in the squash world. We enjoyed these on the BBQ at our garlic pulling party day. But there are a million ways to use these beauties...after you admire them on your dining room table for a day or two... Large size share folks will get a slightly larger selection but all of you should be able to revel in the odd and wonderful shapes that we will continue to harvest over the next number of weeks.

Bunching Onions: The bunching onions, were lovingly washed and cleaned by Claire this morning who wondered why she was feeling so emotional and prone to tears. They are tender and delicious raw in salads or lightly cooked in any of your recipes...such as the steamed greens dish described above.

Swiss Chard: These rainbow stemmed greens are a miracle of cheerful colours and apparently a ton of phytonutrients...which is to say that your grandmother was right when she told you to eat your vegetables. High in calcium, vitamin C, K and iron, chard is a powerhouse of nutrients but are best cooked to avoid the natural oxalic acid that they share with spinach and others of the chenopod family. They do reduce quite a bit when steamed or cooked, much like spinach but the stems retain much of their great colour and their nutritive value.

Cabbage: Speaking of nutrition and colour, yesterday I was busy munching away on the purple and green cabbage, stripping off the buggy outer leaves and admiring the silvery blush on the red cabbage that eventually peels back to reveal the deep purple hues, all of which are supposed to relate to the anti-inflammatory properties of this vegetable. Some of you will have green cabbage this week and some will have the red and some of you will have a handful of teeny tiny heads...just as delicious and very cute.

Flowers: Kim has been busy making gorgeous bouquets for the large size members. What a rainbow of colours. The Bells of Ireland are the gorgeous chartreuse stalks that have that almost citrusy smell (beware the spikes that sit at the bottom of each bell), and the Love Lies Bleeding in green are very dramatic and always remind me, for no good reason, of Carson McCullers, maybe something about the gothic south and the heavy hearted gesture of weeping willows and of course, their name.

A couple of quick notes...for those who thought the mushrooms were an inadvertent experiment that just happened to be growing in my basement because it was moldy or something, please rest

assured. These are mushrooms that come from a pesticide-free mushroom operation in the valley. They are grown in substrate made up of wheat straw and manure and the bags come inoculated with crimini, portobello and white button spores. The problem that I am now confronting is that I imported not only these wonderful bags but also the tiny fly that feeds on these things (they did warn me). So no mushrooms till I figure out how to rid the root cellar of these little beasts that bore through the stems and riddle the mushroom caps with holes.

Also, anyone interested in herbed salt, just let me know and we will include a jar in your bag for next week. The cost is \$5.00.

Eggs...ah yes, broody hen times two, Susie Broody and her sister Floozy Broody! I will have to reduce the eggs we can make available as there are now two hens committed to reproducing at all cost and others who have simply stopped laying. It seems that the copies of *The Second Sex* and *Feminine Mystique* that I left for them to read in the henhouse are going unread, or at least unappreciated as they remain committed to their biological imperative. I worry that Susie Broody has been rolling some of the eggs out from under her and we may have lost track of what was fresh and what had been sat on till she grew tired of it...so please let us know if you get any funky eggs. Hopefully there won't be any surprises there and going forward we are marking the ones she is sitting on with a big black X to avoid confusion, at least our confusion...her confusion is not so easily cured.

Happy eating all,

Camelia and the Watershed Gang.

PS We are all happy to see smiling Joe back from his adventures with grizzlies and gold claims in the north....welcome back Harmonica Joe you were well missed.