



News from the Farm



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Monroe, Wisconsin

Winding Down for the Season...

WEATHERWISE, 2011 has been an agricultural challenge, to say the least. A late, cold, wet spring caused the growth of even the cool weather greens to grind to a halt. The young plants stood well in the field, but were smaller than normal until late June when we roared into summertime temperatures.

Both salad and cooking greens hit with sudden hot temperatures immediately bolted and made seed, which ends the harvest for those crops.

Our mid-summer weather in south central Wisconsin produced a bumper crop of tomatoes and peppers, only to play that cruel trick on September 14... hard frost. Established summer crops were OK under row cover, but many, like the pole and bush beans, could not be covered because of their sprawling nature. Fresh leafy herbs and sweet pota-

toes were nipped, too.

And going into the final weeks of the season, after this week of chilly temperatures, Indian Summer will return and finish off the garden.

As crops are depleted, either from weather or by end of harvestable produce, they are returned to the soil where they grew. Depending on the nature of the crop, some are tilled under quickly by the small rototiller. Others are left to "collapse" in the field until they can be tilled under by the tractor-driven tiller.

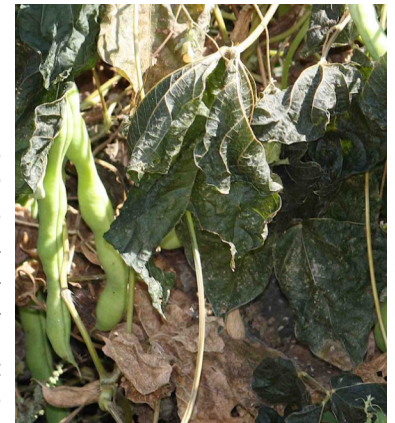
Certain crop residues can harbor plant diseases. Those are either sheet composted in place with additional materials added to heat up the soil and kill disease or removed to the hot compost piles away from the market garden.

As the nights get cooler, seedlings in the

green house are brought into the high tunnel to provide late season greens for the fall CSA share and beyond. Once the daily high temperature is lower than mid-50's, greens again suspend their growth. We try to give them a quick start before the temperature prevents them from sizing up.

Aside from the work in the field, there are many farm chores to do before the winter snows set in. We have fencing projects to complete and some gates to install or repair.

Also, now is the time to do maintenance tasks and general repairs to small engine equipment; sharpen, oil, and clean tools; organize and inventory consumables (like boxes, bags, cartons, markers, and labels), and a myriad of other tasks so we can make plans for the 2012 season.



Hit by the frost!

Special points of interest:

- Winding Down for the Season...
- ...And Already Getting Ready for Next Season—Garlic
- Herding Chickens
- Recipes using this week's produce
- Questions and Answers

What is in your share box this week?

Kale*

Yellow Storage Onions

Garlic

Potatoes

Salad Mix or Lettuce head

Thyme Sprig

Arugula

Spinach

Notes: In general seasonal fall produce keeps better than spring and summer produce. Root vegetables and winter squash can be

stored as long as 2 months under ideal conditions.

* Featured Produce this week



...Getting Ready for Next Season—Garlic

ONE of our crops that gets planted this fall is garlic. Our wonderful hard-neck garlic is placed, like any spring flowering bulb, in the ground in the fall.

This replanting process is part of why our garlic is so good. We have not purchased garlic since our initial purchase of garlic in 2008.

Each year, when the season's bulbs have dried, but before we select our market garlic, we set aside about 200 bulbs for the next season.

Criteria for the bulbs selected for next year's crop are:

- No sign of any disease
- Full, plump bulb with fully

formed cloves

Good, white or white streaked with purple color

Pleasant, assertive, but not overly strong garlic aroma

Then, with those "prime" bulbs reserved, the balance of the crop is cleaned and sold.

In the next two weeks, all 200 bulbs will be "cracked" to separate them into individual cloves. The new garlic field for next year's crop will be prepared and furrows made. Then we will drop and cover all 2,000+ cloves. And wait.

Herding Chickens

Never heard of a herding dog for chickens, have you? Definitely sheep and cattle respond to herding by dogs. I know Chev would chase chickens, given the opportunity, but herding would be out of the question.

However, I learned a new skill over the weekend, when I had spent close to half an hour trying to

get our recalcitrant flock of 24 chickens into the coop before a sudden threatening thunderstorm hit. After 30 minutes, the score was Chickens 21, Farmer 3. I called Lindsey for help and she suggested I "herd" them into the coop with a broom. Ya. Right. Beautiful day, sunshine blue skies and a broom is going to convince the ladies they



need to get into the coop for their own safety? (They don't call them bird-brains for nothing.)

However, I quickly located the broom and gently swept the birds, a couple at a time, into the double doors of the coop. Doors closed and latched. Task was completed a matter of minutes before the first on-

Questions and Answers

Q. There has been a big scare about *listeria* and cantaloupes lately. What is the outcome of the investigation on that?

A. We've been following this story for several weeks and the results of the FDA investigation has lead to a contamination of the machines that are used to harvest these melons. There has been no suggestion as to how the machinery was initially contaminated, as *listeria* is generally carried and spread by cattle. However, as the season for harvesting cantaloupe moved from south to north this year, the specialized har-

vest equipment was transported to the next crop-harvest center north, thus, spreading the contamination into those areas.

Although we haven't had a firm analysis of why, if handled properly and thoroughly washed before slicing open, all cantaloupe from these locations were not safe IF WASHED BEFORE EATING, we think it has to do with the possibility of any bacteria not washed from the surface of the melon, being transported to the flesh inside by the slicing of a knife.

A Word About Composting

We hear a lot about composting our vegetable and fruit scraps. There are even attractive little bins that can reside on the counter to collect them. If you are inclined to try this, please remember that any animal product that hits the compost pile will entirely change the nature of the composting process. Even small bits of butter, eggs, or animal fats measurably slow down the breakdown of the materials in the bin. When you empty the bin, be sure to let the pile weather for an entire season before using any soil for vegetable production.

Featured Produce— Kale

FALL Kale turns sweeter in cool weather, but is the same nutritionally as spring Kale. And each variety of Kale that we grow is essentially the same as the other for the purposes of healthful benefits, too.

Having provided the run down on history and nutrition in a past newsletter, here are a few words about how each of the three varieties of Kale that we are growing

this year differ in terms of suitability for recipes.

Lacinato Kale is our favorite for all purpose Kale. It steams, sautés, and macerates equally well. We shred it for soups and add it to various stir-fry dishes for flavor and added nutritional values.

Green Curly Kale (Winterboor) is great for Kale Chips and for longer, slower cooking methods. Macerating this variety does not

result in as tender a finished dish, but the salad will keep well under refrigeration.

Red Russian Winterboor is suitable for macerated preparations and light steaming and sauté. The leaves of this variety have a fuzzy surface and are not recommended for shredding into raw salads. Too much heat will destroy the leaf structure and the leaf “melts” into the preparation.

Sautéed Kale

From the University of Illinois Extension Website

1 pound kale, tough stems and center ribs discarded and leaves cut into 1-inch-wide strips (8 cups)
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 small red onion, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise
 1 garlic clove, minced
 Pinch of dried hot red pepper flakes

1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar, or to taste
 1/4 teaspoon salt

Cook kale in a 6-quart pot of boiling salted water, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 10 minutes, then drain in a colander.

Heat oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet

over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté onion, stirring occasionally, until softened, 6 to 8 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté, stirring, until garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to moderate, then add kale and cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through. Remove from heat and stir in vinegar and salt.

Lentil Soup with Sausage and Kale

Lots of ingredients... lots of flavor.

½ lb. sweet Italian sausage
 1 large onion, chopped
 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
 1 T. chopped garlic
 1 lb. dry lentils, rinsed
 1 c. shredded carrot
 8 c. water
 2 (14.5 ounce) cans chicken broth
 1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes or 3 c. fresh chopped
 1 T. Finely minced garlic
 1 T. chopped fresh parsley
 2 bay leaves
 ½ t. dried oregano
 1/4 t. dried thyme or 1 thyme sprig
 1/4 t. dried basil

1 T. salt, or to taste
 ½ t. black pepper
 ½ lb. ditalini pasta (optional)

Place sausage in a large pot. Cook over medium high heat until evenly brown. Add onion, celery and chopped garlic, and saute until tender and translucent. Stir in lentils, carrot, water, chicken broth, and tomatoes. Season with garlic powder, parsley, bay leaves, oregano, thyme, basil, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Cover, and simmer for 2 ½ to 3 hours, or until lentils are tender. Stir in pasta, and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until pasta is tender.



Beautiful fall Lacinato Kale.