



News from the Farm



Volume 3, Issue 15
September 28, 2011

© 2011 Grassroots Farm, LLC, all rights reserved
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.

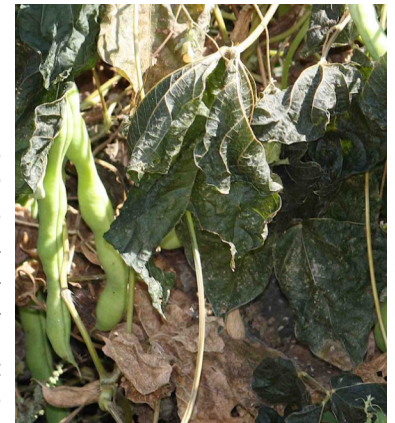
Certain crop residues can harbor plant diseases. Those are either sheet composted in place with additional materials added to heat up the soil and kill disease or removed to the hot compost piles away from the market garden.

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?

Red Mustard

Yellow Storage Onions

Garlic

Yellow Potatoes

Salad Mix

Thyme Sprig

Greenhouse Tomato

Kohlrabi

Spinach

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

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 harvest 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— Yellow Potatoes

Incredibly, there are 5,000 different types of potatoes grown world-wide. This tuber appears in virtually every corner of the plant, in many climates and wears many culinary hats.

As popular as they are, potatoes generally are not the powerhouse of nutrition found in other vegetables. Notably, one of the potatoes primary values is as a natural source of those hard to get in any other form trace minerals that are

still necessary for optimum health, such as thiamin, riboflavin, folate, niacin, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, and zinc. These trace elements are in and just under the skin, so do not peel, but scrub carefully when preparing your recipe.

However you choose to prepare them, boiled, mashed, fried, baked, or in soups and stews, potatoes are delicious. Try them in an entirely new recipe this week!



Crushed Baked Potatoes

This recipe is mostly “method” and you’ll enjoy the blank slate the finished potato offers for making it a tasty side dish or main meal.

BRING a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add in as many potatoes you wish to make and cook until they are fork tender.

On a sheet pan, generously drizzle olive oil. Place tender

cooked potatoes on the cookie sheet leaving plenty of room between each potato.

Using a potato masher, gently press down on each potato until it slightly mashes, rotate the masher 90° and mash again. Brush the tops of each crushed potato with more oil.

Sprinkle the potatoes with kosher salt, fresh ground pepper

and fresh chopped rosemary. (or chives, thyme or whatever you like)

Bake in a 450 degree oven for 20 to 25 minutes until golden.

Topping suggestions:

Simple Potato Soup

This is an original recipe that I have honed over the course of many years. The taste is highly dependant on the quality of the potatoes.

- ¼ c. white onion, chopped
- 1 lb. yellow potatoes
- ½ c. all-purpose flour
- 4 c. 2% milk
- 2 T. butter
- 3 T. salt
- Any extra spices or small ingredients of your liking: bacon bits, parsley, paprika, rosemary, etc.

In a 3 qt. saucepan, bring 2 ½ qts. of water to a boil. While water is com-

ing up to temperature, scrub potatoes, but leave on the peel. Cut potatoes in 1" cubes and place in the water. Boil until tender, about 10-12 minutes depending on the type of potato. When potatoes are tender, drain, reserving the cooking water for another use (bread, vegetable soup).

While potatoes are cooking, in a soup pot, melt the butter and add the chopped onion. Sauté until the onion is lightly caramelize and brown.

Serves 4.

Add drained potatoes and flour to the soup pot with the onion and stir until potatoes are coated with flour, add the milk and continue to stir, but do not boil. When milk/ onion/butter flour base has thickened slightly, add garnishments.

