

Two Onion Farm

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Week of August 26th, 2007

The weather was excellent over the past weekend, but as I'm writing this on Monday morning I am checking the radar and watching another thunderstorm being driven towards us. Fortunately our farm is on high ground and we have not experienced any flooding in recent weeks. However, our soils have been constantly wet, and we have suffered some troubles:

- (1) Rainy humid weather encourages many plant diseases. Our tomatoes are almost completely devastated by blight (and consequently this is the last week of tomato harvesting). Our fall pea planting was almost completely lost as the young plants rotted off in the past few weeks. Many of our fall beets also rotted in the wet soil and our yield of beets will be lower. We've had a lot of mold on our onions and garlic as they have dried because the air in our drying shed has been so humid.
- (2) We've been unable to plant our fall spinach because the soil has not dried out enough to allow us to plant, and if we don't plant it this week we may miss our opportunity to plant it and have it mature before winter.
- (3) Wet soil has prevented us from cultivating or hoeing to kill weeds for over three weeks now. We've had to hand weed many of our fall plantings, which is very slow, and we can't get to all of our plantings on time. Consequently we have weeds growing large in some places and reducing vegetable yields.

On the positive side, our first carrot planting is yielding very well (you're receiving some of it in your box this week). We have a lot of lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, fennel, leeks, carrots, radishes, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, rutabaga and other crops which still look good. These should mature later in the fall and we are hopeful that with decent weather they will do well.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Summercrisp, Oakleaf, or Romaine
Acorn Squash	No	No	2-3 wks	
Tomatoes	No	No	<1 wk	
Collard Greens	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Carrots	Yes	Yes	2-4 wks	
Pepper	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Onions	Yes or No	No	1-2 wks	
Cucumber	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes

Acorn Squash. This is a nice early Acorn squash variety with nutty flesh. The squash is not very sweet, so it may benefit from a little added sweetener if you're so inclined. We

enjoy it roasted and served with butter and maple syrup.

To roast a squash, cut it in half from top to bottom and use a spoon to scoop out the seeds

and stringy pulp from the center. Place the two half face down on a dish and cook in a 350 degree oven or microwave until the flesh is very tender.

Acorn squash is also ideal for stuffing. The Sept 19, 2005 newsletter on our website has a recipe for Acorn squash stuffed with bread crumb stuffing.

Tomatoes. This is probably our last week of tomatoes. As we said above, our tomatoes have been devastated by early blight disease, which defoliates the plants. This will likely be our last week of harvesting tomatoes. The flavor of the tomatoes is also declining, since as the plants lose leaves they cannot put as much sugar into the ripening fruits. We will harvest cherry tomatoes this week as well as Garden Peach (small or medium sized whitish yellow tomato with very mild flavor), pink and red slicing tomatoes, and paste tomatoes (light red color, oblong, almost cylindrical shape). The paste tomatoes are meaty and not very juicy. They are well suited for cooking, in sauces, sautés, etc. Any of the tomatoes can be used in the Tomato Tart recipe in this newsletter.

Lettuce. Our lettuce has taken a beating in the recent rainy weather. Hard rains tore up many of the lettuce leaves, and the lettuce's growth was stunted by the waterlogged soil of the past few weeks.

Peppers. This week we will harvest red and yellow bell peppers, an Italian frying type pepper (red, 5-6 inches long, tapering triangular shape, with thin walls), and a roasting pepper (red, usually 3-4 inches long, triangular shape, thick flesh). All of the peppers are fairly interchangeable for eating fresh and cooking. All of our peppers are sweet, not hot.

Onion. This week's onion is the Ailsa Craig onion, good for eating raw or light cooking. This is not a long storing variety.

Tomato Tart

One of our members sent us this excellent tomato recipe. It's a bit late to give it out, since our tomato season is about to end, but you may be able to use it this week.

7 sheets filo dough, thawed
5 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
7 tbsp grated parmesan cheese, divided
1 cup very thinly sliced onion
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
6-8 tomatoes, cut into 1/8 inch thick (or thinner) slices. You can use any slicing or paste tomato.
1 tsp thyme leaves
1 tsp basil leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375. Line a large cookie sheet with parchment paper and oil it lightly with vegetable oil. Lay 1 sheet filo on paper and brush lightly with a little melted butter. Sprinkle all over with 1 tbsp parmesan. Repeat layering 5 more times (with filo, butter, and parmesan), pressing each sheet firmly so it sticks to sheet below. Lay the last filo sheet on top, brush with remaining melted butter, and sprinkle on remaining 1 tbsp parmesan.

Scatter onion across filo, top with mozzarella, and arrange tomato slices in a single layer. Sprinkle with thyme, basil, salt, and pepper.

Bake until filo is golden brown, 30-35 minutes. Cool for a few minutes and serve.

Labor Day Deliveries: Madison area members, note that we will deliver vegetables as usual on Labor Day, Monday September 3rd. If you won't be in town, please make arrangements for a friend to pick up your box or contact us to reschedule your delivery. Note that all cancellations and reschedules must be made at least 3 days in advance.