

# Two Onion Farm

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Week of October 18, 2009

Those of you who receive our weekly forecast emails over the weekend will have read that we were expecting to include Brussels sprouts in your boxes this week. Very sadly we will not include them. In past years we have distributed Brussels sprouts in each of the last three weeks of October. We planned to do that again this year, and we started a large planting in mid June, at the same time as we have started them every year since 2004. This was a trying year for the Brussels sprouts. The plants grew sluggishly during the cool August, and we had a large outbreak of downy mildew, a disease which attacks many vegetables in the cabbage family during damp weather. (Unlike Madison and other areas to the northeast of us, we had a very wet summer.) The Brussels sprouts did grow during the dry, sunny weather of September, and we hoped for a decent harvest. However the advent of cold weather has stopped the sprouts' growth and many have not matured. From watching the patch over the past few weeks, we knew to expect a poor yield, and we decided to try harvesting the entire planting in 1 week, instead of three weeks. However, when we actually started harvesting on Monday we realized that the yield would be vanishingly small. In a good year, a single plant might yield a pound of sprouts, this year most of the plants in our patch had most 1 or 2 harvestable sprouts; many had none. Almost every single sprout was either infested with downy mildew, which turns them black and eventually moldy, or it was immature and hollow, because the sprout had not had time to fill out. Very reluctantly, we decided that we could not include a reasonable portion of sprouts in your boxes and we decided to stop harvesting.

Next year we will experiment with some different varieties and planting dates so that our Brussels sprouts planting will be more secure in future years. If we plant earlier, there is less risk of the sprouts failing to mature before the end of the season. However, there is an opposite risk that the sprouts will mature early and need to be picked in September. Sprouts that are picked early in the fall, before very cold weather sets in, are much less delicious than sprouts picked late in the fall after frost. The ideal timing is to have the sprouts reach full size just as the weather turns very cold; then let the sprouts sit on the plant through some freezing weather which will sweeten them up.

When we plan our plantings we try very hard to ensure that you will receive an abundance of produce in each week's box. We deliberately plant more than we think we need, so that if certain crops yield less than expected we will have enough of other vegetables to include in your boxes. When everything yields well, we are able to sell the surplus to our wholesale accounts. To compensate for the crop failure of the Brussels sprouts, we are including more cabbage, squash, onions, and radishes in your last boxes than we had originally planned.

**Please return your boxes.** We have many fewer boxes than we did a few weeks ago. If you have a stockpile of boxes at home, please return them with your next delivery.

**End of delivery season.** Our delivery season runs through the end of October; our final delivery week is October 25-31st. Some members with biweekly deliveries have their last delivery this week.

**Winter storage vegetables.** If you'd like to continue eating our produce after the regular delivery season ends, you can order extra winter storage vegetables such as onions, winter squash, carrots, cabbage, beets, celeriac, beauty heart radish, and rutabagas. We'll deliver these extra vegetables along with your last regular scheduled delivery of the season. Details including prices and minimum order amounts are available on the member services page of our website at [www.twoonionfarm.com/WinterStorageVegetableOffer.pdf](http://www.twoonionfarm.com/WinterStorageVegetableOffer.pdf).

## In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Cabbage	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	Green or red
Carrot	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Celeriac	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Onion, Yellow or Red	Yes or No	No	2+ wks	Store dry, in or out of fridge
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Potato	No	No	2+ wks	Store in dark.
Squash, Winter	No	No	2+ wks	Buttercup (large dark green squash with grey button on bottom) or butternut (tan, bulge at one end).

**Celeriac (Celery root).** This is the vegetable with a gnarly, swollen root. Celeriac is closely related to celery and has a similar flavor. However, the plant is much better suited to our climate than celery.

You can use celeriac in place of celery in most recipes. Add grated or finely minced raw celeriac to salads, or eat celeriac sticks with dip. In our house we generally eat celeriac cooked, in soups, sauces, stir-fries, or other dishes. It's really very easy to use – the flavor is not overwhelming and blends in easily with many cooked dishes.

You should peel the rough skin off the root before eating it. An easy way to peel celeriac root (and other roundish vegetables) is to trim off the top and bottom ends, slice the celeriac in half horizontally, place each half with the cut end down on a cutting board, and trim off the skin by slicing down with a knife.

**Winter squash.** We are giving out a mix of buttercup and butternut squash this week. Both have dark orange flesh which is excellent in soups and baked dishes.

**Potato.** The potatoes in your box are organic potatoes raised at Vermont Valley Community Farm west of Madison. The folks at Vermont Valley raise several acres of excellent potatoes and they have invested in specialized equipment and facilities for growing, harvesting, and storing potatoes. It does not make financial sense for us to

purchase these items at our scale of production and we have decided to purchase our potatoes instead from another local farm. Potatoes are the only vegetable which we plan to include in your boxes that we do not raise ourselves.

## Celeriac, Carrot, & Beauty Heart Radish Salad

Those of you who have beauty heart radishes left in your fridge from the past several weeks can use them with celeriac in this salad recipe. We are also planning to include radishes again in next week's box.

2 Tblsp walnut oil  
 2 Tblsp lemon juice  
 1 Tblsp honey  
 1/2 tsp salt  
 Black pepper to taste  
 2 cups shredded carrots  
 1 medium beauty heart radish, peeled and shredded  
 1/2 cup peeled and shredded celeriac  
 1/4 cup raisins  
 1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Cook the walnuts over medium heat in a small skillet, stirring constantly, for several minutes, until they darken slightly and become fragrant.

Whisk oil, lemon juice, honey, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add vegetables, raisins, and walnuts. Toss and combine.