

Two Onion Farm

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Week of October 25, 2009

This is the final week of deliveries, ending a wet and beautiful growing season which began when we started our first onion seedlings on March 13. The rows of vegetables we planted this year totaled over 14 miles in length; we transplanted about 50,000 vegetable seedlings, and sowed many more seeds directly into our field. The weather was challenging, but not catastrophic. Most of the year was unseasonably cool, which delayed the maturity of many of our crops, and we also had a severe killing frost on October 10-11, several weeks earlier than in most years. Frequent rains for most of the season made it difficult for us to till and plant on schedule; regular successive plantings on schedule are essential for us to maintain a steady supply of vegetables in your boxes. The wet August weather also introduced a lot of disease into our fall plantings of brassica family vegetables (Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, and their relatives). Fortunately, we had beautiful warm dry weather in September, which allowed our peppers and winter squash to ripen before they were killed by frost. And thankfully the summer hail that blasted many farms in the surrounding counties missed us.

We were very pleased with the contents of our boxes this year. Winter and summer squash, lettuce, onions, cucumbers, beans, and garlic yielded particularly well. We were pleased to include lettuce in every box we packed this year. Members have consistently asked for more bean, cucumbers, and summer squash, and we were able to distribute more of these vegetables than we have in past years. Peppers and tomatoes were very late to mature, but the eventual final yield was only moderately less than normal. Our biggest disappointments were in the late autumn – a complete crop failure of Brussels sprouts and very poor yields of fall spinach and rutabagas.

We perform a great deal of hand labor on our farm, especially in harvesting and washing produce, which are the most time-consuming steps in raising vegetables. It's essential for us to have reliable and conscientious workers. This season we were helped by an enthusiastic crew of employees who worked about 3500 hours between March and October, many of them in cool, rainy weather. Farm members who participated in our member worker program worked an additional 500 hours on the farm this summer. We have always been very impressed with how enthusiastic and conscientious member workers are. We appreciate their help and enjoy the opportunity to meet them. It's very rewarding for us to have a personal connection with the people who eat from our farm.

We will soon be inviting all of you to respond to a brief internet survey. (Members without email will receive a paper survey). We take the survey results very seriously. Past survey responses have lead us to modify the quantity and selection of vegetables we give out, our pickup locations, and the contents of our newsletters. Please tell us what you think.

Most of our muddy field now waits for winter under a blue-green cover of winter rye. The garlic which we planted last week sprouts its slow roots and begins a long, patient growth towards next summer's harvest. Over the winter we will spend our time maintaining and improving buildings and equipment, planning for 2010, purchasing supplies and new equipment, hiring employees for next season, and recruiting farm members. We plan to begin accepting members for next season in early December. This is earlier than in past years – in the past few winters we have received many inquiries from perspective members in December and we decided it's better to enroll these members rather than deferring their requests until January or February. We will notify all of you when we begin accepting members, and we hope you will join us next year. It has been a pleasure and privilege to raise produce for you. Thank you being a farm member in 2009.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Beet	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Broccoli	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes
Cabbage	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	Not in all boxes
Carrot	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Onion, Yellow	Yes or No	No	2+ wks	Store dry, in or out of fridge
Leek	Yes	Yes	2 wks	
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Radish, Beauty Heart	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Rutabaga	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Spinach	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes
Squash, Winter	No	No	2+ wks	Buttercup (large dark green squash with grey button on bottom) or butternut (tan, bulge at one end).

Rutabaga. These turnip relatives reach their peak sweetness and taste in the cool weather of late fall. Their flavor is assertive, but rutabagas can be excellent when prepared well:

- Rutabagas are excellent in stews and soups – the rutabaga should be added early in the cooking, so that it has time to completely soften, and almost dissolve. It contributes a wonderful silky texture.
- Grated rutabaga can be cooked with onions in butter – see the recipe in our [11/12/2006](#) newsletter.
- Roasted rutabaga: peel and slice the 'bagas thinly. Spread the slices in a single layer on large baking sheets, each oiled with about 2 Tbsp olive oil. As you lay the slices on the sheet, first lay one side on the sheet and then turn the slice over – this ensures that both sides are oiled. Roast in a hot, 400-450 degree oven. We use the highest and lowest shelves in our oven, where the temperatures are hottest. Roast until the bottoms of the slices begin to brown, about 10-20 minutes. Turn each slice with tongs, and continue roasting until the bottoms begin to brown. Collect the slices in a bowl and toss them with salt and

balsamic vinegar. This is somewhat time-consuming to cook, but excellent to eat.

Carrot Beet Soup

- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup onion, sliced
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 - 1/2 lb carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1/2 lb beets, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- 2 tsp salt
- Black pepper to taste
- 4 cups water
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar (optional)

Heat the ground coriander in a small dry skillet, stirring constantly, until fragrant; set aside. In a soup pot, sauté onions, thyme, and bay leaf in olive oil until onions are tender. Add carrots, beets, coriander, salt, pepper, and water. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, until vegetables are very tender. Stir in optional vinegar. Discard bay leaves and puree soup in batches until smooth.