

Two Onion Farm

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Life of the Packing Shed

Our 12 acre farm was for many years part of a large crop and livestock farm. When we purchased the property in 2003, it contained ten old barns and sheds. Some of the buildings we use, the more dilapidated we've torn down, and some we're still not sure what to do with. The building most integral to our vegetable production is the packing shed, where we wash, clean, store and pack all the produce which you receive.

The shed was built in the nineteen-seventies as a hog finishing barn (where hogs are fed and raised from weaning until slaughter). A friend and neighbor of ours lead the crew of carpenters who built the barn, and he has shared with us the hair-raising story of how he almost cut his foot off while trimming the end of a too-long roof truss with a chain saw. Our first glimpse of the barn was in July 2003 when we visited the farm as perspective buyers. It was a very hot day, and we peeked inside the barn to see four hundred very hot and crowded pigs squealing plaintively. The livestock were trucked away before we moved onto the farm, and we selected the hog shed to become our packing shed because it was one of our largest barns (about 60'x80'), it had ample electrical service (useful to us for running coolers), and because the floor was entirely concrete. We disassembled the walls and gates which had formerly divided the building into pens, and on the long chilly days of April 30 and May 1, 2005, we pressure washed and scraped down the floor and remaining walls. In my memory this task made me exceedingly cold and wet.

Since then we've gradually remodeled and repaired the building: we installed three walk-in coolers, lights and plumbing; repaired and covered holes in the walls and roof; and enclosed the east wall which was formerly open. It's now the vital hub of the farm during harvest and packing season. At one time we also used this packing shed in the spring for mixing potting soil, planting trays of seeds, and potting on. We've since moved all of the planting and potting into another building and devoted the packing shed solely to produce washing and handling. As we harvest, we haul all of our produce into the shed. Inside, we dunk most of our vegetables into tubs of cold water to remove field heat: prompt chilling is essential to preserve the longevity of fresh produce. We wash the dirty items, and then store produce between harvest and delivery in our walk-in coolers. Multiple coolers allow us to hold different vegetables at their own optimal temperatures. Perishable items, such as broccoli, lettuce, or spinach, we harvest on the day before delivery and hold overnight. Long-storing items such as carrots and winter squash are harvested whenever they're ripe and mature and held in the shed until delivery. On the morning of the delivery day we move aside the tubs, tables, and hoses used for washing and instead prepare a large open area for box packing. We arrange the produce to be packed on a long line of tables: first the squash, then the onions, then the garlic, etc. Our packing crew then fills your boxes two at a time: we place two empty boxes on a cart and wheel the cart along the line of produce, placing in each box one squash, one onion, one garlic, and so on. Then we reposition the hoses and tubs and launch back into another two or three days of harvesting and washing!

Organic produce in this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Broccoli	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Cauliflower	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes
Carrot	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Garlic	No	No	2 wks	
Kale	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Dark blue-green leaves
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Oakleaf
Onion	No	No	2+ wks	
Spinach	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Squash, Winter	No	No	2 wks	Buttercup

Onion. As we've mentioned before in [previous newsletters](#), we suffered a nearly complete loss of our onion crop this spring due to a seed corn maggot infestation. At the time it was too late to replant bulb onions and so instead we planted many successive plantings of green onion which we have included in your boxes over the past fifteen weeks. A few bulb onions, however, did survive the maggots and we're including some in this week's boxes.

Lettuce. Your lettuce may deserve an extra careful washing this week: there are lots of aphids (small plump green insects) on the leaves. Aphids are generalists which feed on lots of different plants. They prefer green, actively growing plant tissue. As autumn descends, our lettuce patch is an island of tender green in a sea of dry brown cropfields and every year it attracts a horde of hungry aphids.

Recipes from our website:

- [9/5/2005](#) Gingery Kale and Soy Sauce
- [9/18/2011](#) Kale with Apples & Mustard
- [10/24/2005](#) Winter Squash with Sage and Onion
- [11/12/2006](#) Orange Spiced Squash
- [10/11/2009](#) Indian Squash Pea Soup
- [9/30/2007](#) Baked Cauliflower and Macaroni

Kale with Lemon & Garlic

- 1 large bunch kale
- Juice of 4 small or 3 large lemons, or 3-4 oz of lemon juice
- 1/2 cup of olive oil
- 3-4 garlic cloves, cut into chunks.
- 1 tsp salt
- Optional: toasted walnuts or pecans, raisins, blue cheese or feta cheese

Wash and dry kale, destem, and cut into fine strips. Place in bowl. Combine the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic and salt into blender, and blend until frothy. Pour 1/2 of liquid over the kale and toss. Then pour the remaining part over the kale. Add optional nuts, raisins, and/or cheese. Let sit for 2 hours to "cure" the kale before serving (although you can eat it right away).

Winter Storage Vegetables: We expect to have a surplus of carrots, winter squash, and several other winter storage vegetables at the end of the season. We are offering these vegetables to our members to purchase and receive with the last delivery of the season. Read www.twoonionfarm.com/WinterVegetables.pdf for prices and information on how to order.