



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 23, 2014

We are what we eat....so we better make sure it's good!

by Farmer Richard

There is a lot happening at the farm this time of year. We're running a race against time to harvest as much as we can before winter sets in for good. We're busy planting some of next year's crops already...garlic, sunchokes and horseradish are just a few. In the midst of all the hustle and bustle, we also have to start thinking ahead to the next season as this is a crucial time of the year to lay the foundation for next year's crops. The nutritional well-being of our soils and plants is paramount to the success of our crops, our health and yours! Our philosophy has long been to provide our plants with everything they need for healthy, vigorous growth. Healthy plants are strong & can defend themselves. They can outgrow the weed competition and insects are not attracted to them. They are also more resistant to disease. The result is dependable production, higher yields, and food that tastes really good! While this is a basic concept of good organic farming, it is not easy. However, we can attest to the fact that it actually works!

Just as with human health, a lot has to go into the system for everything to function optimally. Right now we're in the midst of reviewing our annual soil tests. Every fall we take samples from our fields and send them off to a soil lab where they are analyzed for a variety of nutrients and indicators of soil health. One of the important results we always look at on our soil test is the CEC, cation exchange capacity. Simply put, CEC is an indicator of the organic matter in the soil and the soil's ability to hold nutrients. We are blessed with some very rich soil in our valley. In particular, the fields on our home farm are a soil type known as silt loam. These fields have a high CEC, which we can see on our test results, but also in the quality of the crops that grow in these fields. Soils with high CEC are more resilient and have a more stable soil structure. They hold water and nutrients that can support plants during periods of drought, yet at the same time they drain well during times of excess moisture. We strive to increase the CEC and amount of organic matter in all of our fields. But how?

Organic matter is built by adding compost, growing cover crops, and by supporting microbes in the soil that break down crop residue thereby returning it back to the soil. Many of our farm's fields are vibrant colors of green right now, as they were seeded to a cover crop earlier this fall. As soon as we finish harvesting a crop we immediately plant a cover crop. This fall we planted a diverse mix of oats, millet, rye, winter peas, vetch and clovers. The purpose of a cover crop is to keep the soil covered and protected from wind and water erosion that can occur over the winter. They also support soil microbial life, capture and hold available nutrients and produce nutrients by capturing sunshine. We have found that cover crops are one of the most efficient ways to maintain and build soil fertility. After the

crop is planted, there is no further buying, hauling or spreading necessary. Everything happens right in place in the field. The cover crops will go into the soil to be digested by soil organisms (ie tiny microbes to earthworms) and become food for our next vegetable crop.

Cover crops and soil building are still just part of the big nutrition picture. Our fall soil tests also help guide us in making decisions as to what additional minerals we will apply in the fall for each field. Every year we take nutrients out of the soil in the form of vegetables which we send your way. In order for the complex system to work, we have to make sure we replenish them and provide them with a balance of nutrients to draw from for their critical life processes. So we buy and spread mixed mined minerals to replace the ones that left the farm in the form of food for others. Does this really make a difference? We think so! Minerals and trace elements are key components to many plant and soil processes. If they are not present or are not in appropriate balance, systems do not function optimally and

the crop may not have as many nutrients.

While much of our soil building efforts happen in the fall, we also invest in the nutrition of our plants during the growing season by providing them with additional minerals and nutrients at critical stages of their growth. We do this by adding nutrients to irrigation water delivered through drip lines to the roots and also foliar feeding which feeds the plant through the leaves.

Many farmers question whether all this nutritional hoopla is worth the extra effort and expense. As stewards of the land, we feel that it is our responsibility to not just take from it, but to also care for it so it can be productive for many years to come. We also feel that it is our responsibility to grow the highest quality food we can grow. Isn't the whole point of eating to nourish our bodies? So when we're asked if it is worth it to spread minerals and compost, plant cover crops or provide additional nutrients, we find it hard to not answer "YES!" Maybe you can taste those nutrients too?

This Week's Box

ITALIAN GARLIC: It's getting to be that time of year again. While it's hard to imagine foregoing this delicious garlic, if you plant each clove within a week or two of the first hard frost, you'll reap the benefits by next July—and don't forget that you'll get to enjoy garlic scapes too!

CARROTS: Add some tang to your carrots! Slice them into thin 2-inch pieces, toss with olive oil, salt and pepper and 1 Tbsp each of honey and pomegranate molasses. Bake at 425°F for 12-15 minutes, turning occasionally, until just tender.

CAULIFLOWER OR BROCCOLI: Make your roasted broccoli more exciting by tossing it with garlic and lemon juice and zest. You can do the same with cauliflower. Toss first with olive oil, and lightly season with salt and pepper.

PURPLE VIKING POTATOES: These potatoes are so good we recommend just trying them solo if you haven't yet. Baked in the oven, then top with butter and a dash of salt and pepper—you can't go wrong!

SALAD MIX: Toss with a fruity vinaigrette and then top with fresh figs, prosciutto and goat cheese.

SPINACH: I recently used a half-pound of spinach in a batch of risotto...and it was unquestionably worth it! Italian sausage, tomatoes, spinach and Parmesan star in Martha Stewart's Tomato and Sausage Risotto. Find the recipe online at www.marthastewart.com.

RED & YELLOW ONIONS: If you find yourself with a growing number of onions, you can rest assured knowing that these red and yellow onions are storage varieties. If you keep them in a cool, dark place, they'll keep for months!

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: Pepper season is coming quickly to a close, so consider freezing these for later use. Simply slice each pepper, removing the membranes and seeds and store them in a tightly sealed freezer bag. Expel as much air as you can before placing in the freezer.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS: Keep your grill active into the fall months by slicing these peppers open, removing their seeds and membranes, and stuffing them with soft cheese. Roast on the grill, along with any other veggies and/or meat, until slightly charred. Sadly, this will be the last week for these little jewels.

SWEET POTATOES: For these delicious root tubers, why not just oven roast them with some honey and cinnamon? It'll be almost like dessert. Check out last week's newsletter for additional information and recipe ideas.

TAT SOI: With mild, mustardy leaves, tat soi will go well in salad form, sautéed, or even in soup or risotto. It's incredibly versatile, delicious, and nutritious.

RED CURLY KALE: Kale is a lovely addition to broth-based soups, plus it adds a nutritional boost. Consider chopping and tossing your kale into some combination of lentils, potatoes, Italian sausage, tomatoes and veggie broth. Don't forget the garlic and onions!

BUTTERNUT SQUASH OR SPAGHETTI SQUASH: Cooked squash can easily be frozen for later use. Simply cook the squash and scoop the flesh out of the shell. Put the flesh into a plastic bag and freeze.

VEGETABLE FEATURE: TAT SOI

by Andrea Yoder

Tat soi is a unique fall vegetable we look forward to every year, both for its beauty and its flavor. You'll recognize the tat soi in your box this week as the large, flat, flower-like green. Tat soi is related to bok choy and mustard greens. It has dark green, spoon-shaped leaves that grow from a main base on the plant. The leaves are tender and very flavorful with a mild, sweet mustard flavor. The stem of the tat soi is edible as well and you'll find it to be sweet and crispy since this is where the plant stores most of its sugars.

We intentionally plant this green late in the season with the intention to harvest it from the field as late as possible. This year it is a little early, but it should survive into November. As the temperatures start to decrease, the plant lays itself flat to hug the ground for warmth. The result is a very open, flat rosette that is a gorgeous deep, dark green. Tat soi is very resilient to cold temperatures and can recover after being frozen. If you see some leaves on the outside of your tat soi that have a whitish hue to them, this is a little bit of frost damage. If you can be forgiving of a few frosted leaves, I think you'll be very happy with the flavor of this green.

Tat soi can be eaten raw or cooked. As a raw vegetable, tat soi makes a delicious salad. Combined with other veggies such as carrots, beauty heart or daikon radishes, carrots, and cabbage, tat soi only needs a light, simple vinaigrette to enhance its rich flavors. It can also be lightly sautéed, stir-fried or steamed, similar to bok choy. Tat soi pairs well with onions, garlic, mushrooms, winter radishes, carrots, soy sauce, sesame oil, rice, cilantro, toasted almonds and sesame seeds. It adds a wonderful flavor and texture to brothy soups such as hot and sour soup or a basic chicken and rice soup.

To prepare tat soi for use, turn it over with the bottom facing up and carefully trim each stem from the base. Wash the stems and leaves vigorously in a sink of clean, cold water. Remember, tat soi lives very close to the ground so there is often dirt on the stems at the base of the plant. Once the leaves and stems are clean, spin them dry in a salad spinner or loosely wrap them in a large kitchen towel and shake them to remove excess water. If you are cooking the greens, it is a good idea to trim the stems from the leaves and put them in the pan first to give them a 1-2 minute head start before you add the leafy portion. To store your tat soi, place it in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator.



Tat Soi and Garlic

Important Upcoming Delivery Dates

- **Final Summer Fruit Share** delivery on October 23/24/25 (This week)
- **Final Peak Season Vegetable Share** delivery on October 30/31/November 1 (Next Week)
- Weekly and Every other Week vegetable deliveries continue into December.
- Full Fruit deliveries continue into January
- Full **and** Once a Month Cheese **and** Coffee deliveries continue into January
- First **Autumn Vegetable Share** delivery begins November 6 /7/8 (Two Weeks)
- First **Winter Fruit Share** delivery begins on November 6/7/8 (Two Weeks)
- **Extended Season Vegetable** deliveries are a separate purchase delivered January 8/9/10 and January 22/23/24. It's not too late to sign up!

**Please remember that beginning November 6/7/8 all deliveries switch to an every other week schedule!
Refer to your calendars to make sure you pick up on the right day.**

Winter Greens Salad with Carrot-Ginger Dressing

Recipe adapted from one published in the October 2014 *Yoga Journal* magazine.

Serves 4

2 medium carrots, grated (about 1 cup packed)
3 Tbsp sesame oil
½ cup sunflower oil
2 Tbsp peeled ginger, chopped
2 Tbsp rice vinegar or apple-cider vinegar
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1 garlic clove
1 Tbsp soy sauce
2 tsp honey
Salt & Ground black pepper, to taste
6-8 cups Tat soi, cut into bite-sized pieces

Additional salad toppings of your choosing may include: sliced onions, radishes, nuts or seeds and chicken or fish.

In a blender or food processor, process carrots, oils, ginger, vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, soy sauce and honey until smooth. Thin the dressing with ¼ to ½ cup water if desired. Toss the dressing in a bowl with the greens and any other salad toppings and serve immediately. You may also refrigerate dressing in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Produce Plus is a benefit of CSA membership, allowing you to buy some of your favorite items in bulk to put up (can, freeze, preserve) for later use.

Produce Plus Current Offers

Orange Carrots, 10 pounds - \$18

Sweet Potatoes, 15 pounds - \$30

Red Cipollini Onions, 5 pounds - \$23

Shallots, 5 pounds - \$23

Baby Red Beets, 10 pounds - \$25

Twin Cities -order by 5pm on Monday, October 27th for delivery on **October 30th**.

To order, please call 608-483-2143 x2 or email
csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com

Please drop your check in the mail the same day that you place your order.

Please be sure to include your name, telephone number and pick-up location with your order!