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The Sprout

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Newsletter for Community Supported Agriculture
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Dear CSA members and friends of the farm,

Today marks the first day of fall according to the calendar but signs of fall have been around us for the last two weeks.

Fall brings the farm work into another phase of the seasons that we experience in Northwest Ohio. It is time to finish the harvest and prepare the soil for a winter's rest. Plants depend on beneficial soil organisms to help them obtain nutrients and water from the soil. A single teaspoon of soil contains millions of beneficial microscopic organisms that keep plants healthy if soil conditions are managed in ways that allow the microbes to work and live.

A serious flaw in modern industrial agriculture was to allow science to take apart the components of a plant to determine "its needs." Today chemical fertilizers are used as well as herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides to assist farmers in making the farming enterprise easier. While this has resulted in a real "food revolution" and the claim to be able to raise more and more produce on an acre of land, devastating results occur. These fertilizers and chemicals do nothing for the health of the soil. In fact many of the herbicides and pesticides kill the beneficial microbes and bacteria in the soil. The chemical fertilizers only feed the plant and do nothing to feed the soil. The end result after years of adding these chemicals is the killing of the soil organisms which results in a lifeless soil. Few nutrients in the soil mean few nutrients going to the plant and into the roots, leaves or fruit of the plant. As a result the food that we eat has few nutrients in it.

At Seeds of Hope Farm our soil management practice is one that keeps feeding the tiny organisms in the soil. In the fall of the year we spread compost made from horse manure, leaves, and wood chips that we have been preparing and turning since spring. After spreading and tilling the compost into the soil we sow a cover crop of rye. Rye is a cereal grain that is used by many organic farmers to protect the topsoil in winter. A cover crop's roots help hold the soil in place during the long winter. In spring the rye is tilled into the soil to provide nutrients to the tiny organisms in the soil.

Healthy soil is the key to any farm's goal that wants to provide nutritious products to its customers. A healthy soil provides the plants with the opportunity to take up important nutrients that in return go into the roots, leaves, or fruit of the plant. They cycle continues as we consume those roots, leaves or fruits. "We are what we eat" is just not a silly slogan. It all starts with making the soil healthy. In the cycle of life you will be nurtured by that healthy soil. Remember if we treat soil like dirt that is what we will consume. However if we treat soil like a living organism that we are dependent upon for our health and well being then we will be the better for it.

Sr. Rita

Final Pick Up Days

Wednesday October 7 and Thursday October 8 will be our last CSA pick up days for the season. Thank you for your continued support throughout the year.

CSA Family Day

Mark your calendar and plan to attend our fall CSA family day on Sunday October 18 from 2 – 5 p.m. We will begin with a potluck meal – so please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. The farm will provide several hearty soups.

This family day will also offer hayrides around the farm and our St. Francis campus as well as an opportunity to talk with the farmers about the season and to offer suggestions for 2010.

2010 CSA Shares

We are offering 2009 CSA shareholders and any other friends or family members who want to become shareholders in 2010 to make an initial down payment to reserve your CSA share for 2010. A \$50 deposit will hold your share for 2010 and go toward your overall cost.

You should also be aware that we are going to need to increase our CSA shareholder cost by 10% in 2010. We have not increased our prices since we started the program in 2005. It is always difficult to make decisions like this and we do not do this lightly. Our farm expenses keep increasing each year.

To help assist any CSA members in 2010 we will offer an opportunity to do three payments if this will ease your burden. While a majority of our expenses on the farm happen between January – April we are aware of the economic situation and want each of you to know we value your participation and willingness to take the risk of this adventure with us. More will follow on our CSA's for 2010. Please feel free to contact Sr. Rita if you have questions.

Sweet Carrot Raita (Chopped Carrot Salad)

Combine 2 c. finely chopped or grated carrots, 2 T. lime juice, 1 T. honey, and a pinch of cayenne, mixing well and pressing lightly to make juicy. Adjust seasoning so raita is mildly sweet and mildly hot.

Serve at room temperature. If made in advance and chilled, remove from refrigerator at beginning of meal preparation so salad is not too cold. Serves 6.

From *Whole Foods Cuisine*

Watermelon Pickles

Pickled watermelon rinds are sweet and crunchy. They are a special treat at Thanksgiving dinner in my family.

To prepare the rinds, remove any green or pink portions and cut into 1-inch pieces. For 1 quart of cubed rinds, dissolve 1/4 c. canning salt in 1 quart cold water; add rind and let stand 6 hours or overnight. Drain; rinse and cover with cold water in a large sauce pan. Cook until tender, about 20 min.; drain and set aside.

Combine 1/2 c. vinegar, 1 3/4 c. sugar, and 1/8 c. thin slices fresh lemon. Tie together in a cheesecloth bag 1 t. whole cloves, 1 t. whole allspice, pinch mustard seed, and 1 stick cinnamon and add to the liquid in a large sauce pan. Bring to a boil and cook 10 min. Add the rind and simmer until transparent. Remove the spice bag. Store in the refrigerator if you are not going to can the pickles.

To can, pack the rind into hot jars. Pour hot liquid over the rind, leaving 1/4" head space. Remove air bubbles; adjust caps. Process pints 10 min. in a boiling water bath.

For 4 quarts rind, use 1 c. salt, 1 gal. water, 2 c. vinegar, 7 c. sugar, 1 T. cloves, 1 T. allspice, 1/4 t. mustard seed, 3 sticks cinnamon, and 1/2 cup lemon slices.

Note: canning salt can be found in the grocery store next to other canning supplies.

Summer Squash Pickles

These are crunchy and delicious and a great way to use large amounts of yellow squash or zucchini. Cut 2 lbs. summer squash and 1/2 lb. onions into thin slices. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup salt and cover with water. Let stand 2 hours, then drain well.

In a large pot, combine and bring to a boil 1 c. sugar, 2 c. vinegar, 2 t. mustard seed, 2 t. prepared mustard (plain yellow mustard), 1 t. celery seed, 1 t. ground turmeric, 1/4 t. ground ginger and 1/4 t. cayenne pepper. When it is boiling, add the squash and onions, bring back to a boil, and simmer 5 minutes.

To can, pack immediately into hot sterile jars, seal, and process 5 min. Makes 2 pints.

Bright red pimento peppers may be added for color and a different flavor.

Broccoli with Cream Cheese Sauce

Steam or simmer 1 lb. broccoli florets in water until crisp-tender (5-8 minutes). Drain (if simmered). In a small saucepan, melt 2 T. butter. Add and whisk in 4 oz. cubed cream cheese until warm. Pour over the broccoli and toss to coat. Also good with cauliflower.