

# STUDENT ORGANIC FARM CSA NEWSLETTER

December 9, 2004

## In your share this week:

- Lettuce: green Butterhead and/or small red leaf heads
- *Napoli* orange **carrots**
- Loose leaf spinach
- Collard greens
- Leeks
- *Red Dale* potatoes
- Storage yellow or *Redwing* red **onions**
- Optional extra red radishes (a little funny-looking but tasty!)
- **Note on optional extras:** Until further notice, there is *always* extra rutabagas, turnips, kale, Brussels sprouts and Brussels greens. Just ask a student farmer at CSA pick-up. There may occasionally be extras of other crops, but staple crops like carrots and potatoes we have to ration to be sure there is plenty for all 50 shares all winter.

## Announcements

1. This is the second-to-last week of Fall CSA! Last week was the deadline to renew your membership with a guaranteed spot for spring(winter). If you intended to renew and forgot, please email [msufarm@msu.edu](mailto:msufarm@msu.edu) as soon as possible, to see if any shares are still available. Gena, our undergraduate secretary, is handling all renewals and membership questions.
2. **WINTER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:** CSA will take a break, and student farmers will be away, from mid-December to mid-January, while MSU takes its winter break. We need volunteers to open and close up hoopouses on sunny days, water if necessary, and keep an eye on things while we're gone. Can you sign up for one or more days? You may not even need to come in – if it's cold and cloudy, we leave the hoopouses closed all day, and we don't water. But just in case we get sunny days, we need folks available to ventilate and water, so please sign up to be "on call," depending on the weather, for one or two (or more) days this winter. We will

show you what to do – it's not too hard. Please check your calendar, and call the farm phone (517-230-7987) and/or sign up at CSA pick-up today.

### **What's up at the farm?**

In case you haven't heard, next week is the last week of fall CSA. We will resume share distribution in the middle of January (Jan. 13? whatever Thursday is during the first week of MSU classes, anyway). If you are renewing membership for "spring" (it's really winter, of course, but MSU calls that semester "spring semester," so it's the "spring" CSA session), you will get a receipt of payment along with a membership agreement – a new thing we're trying out, kind of like a contract, so the farm and the members are clear in our intentions toward each other, so no one slips through the cracks by accident – you'll see; it's the same thing we always talk about in New Member Orientation. You'll also get a letter confirming membership, and an invitation to new member orientation, along with all relevant dates. Check your real mail box between now and mid-January.

Loose leaf Spinach: It's time for winter spinach once again. Those of you who were members last winter probably remember all the spinach – we'll try to go a little easier on you this year; though we had only positive feedback, it seemed like an inordinate amount of spinach. The spinach is one of a few specially designated experimental crops – we've planted it out in all the hoopouses, at two different planting dates, to compare effects of both planting dates and hoopouse design (there are three different hoopouse models at the farm, with different inside temperature extremes as a result) on winter spinach growth and yield. So even though it takes us longer to harvest and record all that data every Thursday, it means you'll get spinach all winter. The frequency will depend on the weather, of course – the more sunny days we get in the winter, and the milder the temperatures, the faster the plants will regrow, and the more often you'll get spinach in your shares. This is the same case, of course, for Swiss chard, baby salad mix, parsley, and any other leafy green veggie that we harvest multiple times ("cut and come again" crops, just like flowers). We're going to try harvesting some of the Asian greens, like Komatsuna, as bunches (harvesting individual leaves, as with kale) rather than as heads, to see if those crops can handle the multiple harvest regime – I suspect there are lots of tricks to make winter farming work, and we're just starting to learn them.

A special note on spinach, baby salad mix, and anything else we distribute in plastic bags (rather than bunched or loose): We generally do NOT wash baby salad mix or spinach before we give it to you. We do this because dry leaves, if properly sealed in an airtight container (i.e. closed plastic bag), store longer in your

refrigerator than wet leaves – with delicate leaves like salad mix, especially, wet leaves tend to stick together, get matted and compacted, and encourage rot. Dry leaves may be perked up by soaking in cold water for a few minutes before serving (make sure to rinse them well to get the dirt off, too). Let us know what you think – would you rather have pre-washed salad and spinach that doesn't keep as well, or unwashed stuff that keeps longer?

### **New Veggies and Recipes**

I hope everyone is familiar enough by now with all the crops in your share to know what to do with them – spinach is the only new one this week, and for goodness sake make a salad if you can't figure out anything else to do with the spinach. 😊 As always, if you have a favorite recipe or way to prepare any items in your share, please email them to me, and I'll include them in future newsletters.

Get ready for next week, when you'll get a bonus share of lots of good storage items to tide you over for the month between CSA sessions!