

June 17, 2004

**This week's share:**

- Easter Egg Radishes\*
- Redbor Kale or Swiss Chard\*
- Braising Mix\*
- Baby Arugula\*
- Peas: snow peas for PSSB shares, U-pick for farm shares
- Baby salad mix\*
- Cucumbers (snacks at farm)\*
- Herbs: Lemon Medley: Lemon Thyme, Lemon Balm, or Lemon Verbena

\*=items from the hoopouses (i.e. "WOW! That grew in Michigan this early in the spring???" )

**Announcements:**

**1. Volunteers wanted!**

**Four volunteer opportunities:**

1) Next week (July 21-25) will be our big planting rush – the ground is finally dry enough to work up and plant; we've made a good start, but your help is needed! Come out *Monday or Wednesday, between 1:30 and 4:00*. Wear old, grubby clothes, a hat and/or sunglasses, long sleeves and/or sunscreen, and bring a water bottle, rain gear, your favorite gardening gloves,

shovels, or wheelbarrows if you have them (we have some, but more are welcome). Come work for an hour or all afternoon. No need to RSVP; just show up if you can.

2) *The last two Thursdays in July, 7:00-11:00 a.m.*, we need harvesters! Please call, email, or ask in person beforehand, so we know who to expect, and hopefully you can even come harvest at least once before then, to get an idea of what to expect.

3) Weekend watering: thanks to those who have volunteered to water on weekends, and we can still use more help – please call or email to set up a time to learn the ropes – the walk-through takes about half an hour; the actual watering takes close to two hours, early in the morning.

4) Would you like to meet your fellow members and learn how CSA pick-up works? Come volunteer to staff the pick-up table at the farm Thursdays from 3:30- 6:45 (includes set-up and take-down). Call, email, or ask in person if you're available and would like to work one or more Thursdays this summer.

**2.Share Balances Due:**

Unless we've made alternate arrangements, all balances are

due by June 17, 2004 (third Thursday in June). **Make checks out to MSU.** Either hand-deliver to us at pick-up, or mail to me: Michelle Ferrarese, MSU Dept. of Horticulture, A288 Plant and Soil Science Building, East Lansing MI 48824. If you split a share, we request that you make out one check for the total balance – it makes our record-keeping simpler. If your receipt and/or confirmation letter has still not arrived, please email or call me at 355-5191 ext. 342.

**3. Congratulations, Andy and Cassie!!!** Andy Fogiel, our resident compost guru and fertility expert, recently married his sweetheart and partner Cassie Hogan, and several student farmers helped them celebrate last week, dancing all day and all night last Saturday. We appreciate everything you do, Andy, and we wish you two all the best always.

### New veggies?

Braising Mix: Most commonly asked question at CSA pick-up on Thursday: “What’s braising mix?” To recap, according to *Food Lover’s Companion*, “braise: a cooking method by which food (usually meat or vegetables) is first browned in

fat, then cooked, tightly covered, in a small amount of liquid at low heat for a lengthy period of time. The long, slow cooking develops flavor and tenderizes foods by gently breaking down their fibers. Braising can be done on top of the range or in the oven. A tight-fitting lid is very important to prevent the liquid from evaporating.” Braising mixes are becoming popular in produce aisles as well as seed catalogs, and this particular mix was sold pre-mixed from Johnny’s Selected Seeds, where we purchase most of our seeds. I usually stir-fry braising mix, rather than actually braising, but of course you can prepare it however you like. It includes mustards, Asian greens, kale, and edible flowers of the brassica (mustard) family, some of which you may recognize as more mature versions of some of the baby salad mix components (no lettuce here, though).

Arugula: According to *Food Lover’s*: arugula is a “bitterish, aromatic salad green with a peppery mustard flavor. Though it has long been extremely popular with Italians, American palates often find its flavor too assertive. Arugula is very perishable and should be tightly wrapped in a plastic bag and refrigerated for no more than two

days. Arugula makes a lively addition to salads, soups and sautéed vegetable dishes. It is a rich source of iron as well as vitamins A and C.” They also say that it “resembles radish leaves,” and it “holds a tremendous amount of grit and must be thoroughly washed just before using.” It sounds to me like the individual who wrote the definition is not a big arugula fan. In my experience, arugula leaves are delicate, smooth, with no more grit than baby salad mix, and it has a delicious nutty, pungent flavor reminiscent mustard, but so distinctive you’d never mistake it for another mustard green. I am partial to arugula, but I suspect it’s in the “love it or hate it” category of produce, along with cilantro and Brussels sprouts. We often include arugula in our baby salad mix, but I recently heard that some folks have allergic reactions to it, so we offer it separately this week -- you can, of course, add it to your salad mix, braising mix, or enjoy it alone. If anyone does indeed have a reaction to it, let me know, and we’ll continue to keep it separate in the future.

**Herbs:** Lemon thyme, lemon balm, and lemon verbena, combined or separate (maybe not lemon thyme on its own – I’ve

never tried it) make delicious teas, either sun tea or brewed hot or iced tea. Gently crush sprigs (equal amounts of each herb, or different ratios if you know you prefer one over another) to bruise, but not crumble the leaves, place in a glass jar or pitcher with a cover, and let steep in direct sunlight for a few hours, give or take – taste periodically to see if it’s strong enough. Chill and serve with lemon balm or thyme flower ice cubes (see last week’s idea), or drink at outdoor-sun temp. Lemon balm is also delicious on fruit salads, and lemon thyme is great on roasted potatoes or other roasted roots.

### **What’s up at the farm?**

Sog. Sog is up at the farm. You’ve heard it before, and it’s still true. This has been the wettest spring on record, and while the Great Lakes needed it, and the mosquito larvae are loving it, the ground at your farm and much of the surrounding farmland was inundated for weeks. We’re just now able to till and plant most of your summer veggies – potatoes went in late, winter squash and pumpkins made it in, but we planted into the mud, and when it dries, they’d be growing in a clay brick if we didn’t mulch and irrigate

them. We've started putting in tomato transplants, but there are many more to go. Cucumber, zucchini, and melon transplants are still waiting patiently in the greenhouse, growing leggy and thinking about flowering in the meantime. Sweet corn just got planted, so we probably won't have any early sweet corn this season— the earliest may be in August. Green beans – same thing. As you saw if you picked peas on Thursday, some of the pea plants are stunted and yellow, from standing in water so long. Most are recovering, but it's been a slow start.

Thankfully, the onions are doing great; the broccoli and cauliflower in the field are happy, and the little orchard, despite growing in heavy clay soil with plenty of standing water this spring, made it through with only two casualties – two fruit trees succumbed to the sog.

We'll replant as soon as it dries up enough that water doesn't fill the holes as soon as we start digging....

Again, the win-win-win arrangement of CSA has allowed us to breathe a little easier this season than if we were depending on wholesale or farmers' market sales for our income. I hope the connection to the farm and farmers, or whatever reasons drove you to

join our CSA, have made this soggy spring and potentially late summer an educational, enjoyable, and rich experience, despite the late tomatoes! And don't worry, it looks like there will be lots when they do come in. Get your canning jars, dehydrators, and freezer bags ready.....

## GARDEN MEDITATION

*by Rev. Max Coots*

Let us give thanks for a  
bounty of people.

For children who are our  
second planting, and though  
they  
grow like weeds and the wind  
too soon blows them away, may  
they forgive us our  
cultivation and fondly  
remember where  
their roots are.

Let us give thanks;

For generous friends...with  
hearts...and smiles as bright  
as their blossoms;

For feisty friends, as tart  
as apples;

For continuous friends, who,  
like scallions and cucumbers,  
keep reminding us that we've  
had them;

For crotchety friends, sour  
as rhubarb and as  
indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are  
as gorgeous as eggplants and

as elegant as a row of corn,  
and the others, as plain as  
potatoes and so good for you;

For funny friends, who are as  
silly as Brussels sprouts and  
as amusing as Jerusalem  
artichokes;

And serious friends as  
unpretentious as cabbages, as  
subtle  
as summer squash, as  
persistent as parsley, as  
delightful as  
dill, as endless as zucchini  
and who, like parsnips, can  
be  
counted on to see you through  
the winter;

For old friends, nodding like  
sunflowers in the evening-  
time,  
and young friends coming on  
as fast as radishes;

For loving friends, who wind  
around us like tendrils and  
hold  
us, despite our blights,  
wilts and witherings;

And finally, for those  
friends now gone, like  
gardens past  
that have been harvested, but  
who fed us in their times  
that  
we might have life  
thereafter.

For all these we give thanks.

### **Recipes**

If you have favorite springtime  
recipes using farm produce,  
please email (easier than hard  
copies) them to me at  
[ferrares@msu.edu](mailto:ferrares@msu.edu), and I'll  
include them in upcoming  
newsletters. This week you're on

your own. Try doing a google  
search for anything in your share;  
let me know what you find!