

STUDENT ORGANIC FARM CSA NEWSLETTER February 10, 2005

In your share this week:

- Salad: *Ermosa* Butterhead or Red Romaine lettuce*
- Tatsoi OR Komatsuna*
- Onions
- Garlic
- Potatoes: Blue and/or red
- Carrots (NutriRed and/or orange) and/or Parsnips
- Celeriac (Celery root)
- Hot chili peppers (grown last summer and dried)
- Optional extra Radishes

*items with a star were harvested from the hoophouses; the others were in cold storage or from the field (some leeks, root veggies, etc. still under mulch in the fields)

Announcements

1. **VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED:** The last Thursday of February, most of the farm crew will be away at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wisconsin. CSA harvest and distribution still must go on! The farmers who are staying behind to “hold the fort” could use some help harvesting, washing veggies, and setting up for CSA pick-up. Can you volunteer for a few hours? The most important time is from 9a.m.-noon, and again from 2:30-7:00 p.m., but any help during the day will be appreciated. Please call the farm phone (230-7987) if you can commit to help out on **Thursday, Feb. 24.**

ANOTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: During Spring Break, CSA will still go on. As you can imagine, we’ll be down to a bare bones crew that week. If you are available the **second week of March** to pitch in at the farm, particularly on Thursday for harvest and distribution, please call the farm phone. Thanks!

2. CSA Share Balances are due next Thursday, Feb. 17. You should have gotten a reminder in the mail with your balance due, if any. If you need to find out your balance, please email msufarm@msu.edu. If you are all paid up for the current session, you can renew for summer session any time, with either \$350 paid in full, or a deposit of \$175. Thanks to Gena (and our “member agreements”?), more balances seem to be getting paid on time, our books seem a bit more organized and up to date, and it will be easier to hand off some of this bookkeeping (like sending out balance reminders, for example) stuff to our Core Group, if they’re so inclined. Thanks everyone!

Interview of the Week

This is a new section of our CSA newsletter: each week we’ll interview either a student farmer, a CSA member, a farm volunteer, or one of the many MSU staff and faculty who help

keep the farm running. To start us off, Emily Reardon interviewed **Angie Durhman, our January Volunteer of the Month.** (Angie earned the title of Volunteer of the Month by showing up to harvest rutabagas all afternoon on a chilly, foggy winter day, out of the same muddy field your carrots came out of this week)

Hoorah to our **Volunteer Of The Month of January!**

The Student Organic Farm would like to give a shout out to **Angie Duhrman**, volunteer extraordinaire! Angie is originally from a small town in Minnesota. She moved to North Carolina and decided to attend NC State for college. Angie, because of her love for plants, decided on Horticulture. After college our lovely volunteer wondered how she could apply her knowledge of horticulture to environmentally sustainable practices. She did a little work and discovered green roofing! Michigan State seemed the logical choice, what with its reputation as a leader in horticulture, and the opportunity to research green roofs. Angie also missed the Midwest, of course☺. She has just finished her time here at MSU and is taking a breath of fresh air. She'll be spending a while traveling, visiting friends on the east coast, and is planning a trip to Europe. After???? She tells us she'll either end up working for a non-profit environmental agency in New York City, or work as a rep. in the green roof industry.

So how did Angie become such a great volunteer? Angie has been a CSA member since the get-go. She loved it too! Her favorite veggie of all was bok choy! Yup, bok choy. Angie loves to eat it in stir-fry with garlic, sesame seeds, sesame oil and whole wheat noodles...yum! She does have some advice for our new CSA members...stay in for more than one season, there is so much you don't want to miss out!

When she's not volunteering, going to class, or working on green roofs Angie finds time to go camping, loungeing, and a whole lot of other outdoor activities. She recently ran the Chicago 2003 marathon. How was that?!!! Well she says she learned that next time she'll only do half☺ Wow! Angie, you're amazing!

What's up at the farm?

The first SOF CSA Core Group met this past week for the first time. About eight members came together in the basement of Hubbard Hall for a brainstorming and question-and-answer meeting. Together we generated a long list of potential core group responsibilities, discussed how to increase member involvement at the farm, and talked about educational programming on the farm that's in the works for next year and beyond. THANK YOU so much to everyone who attended; we are looking forward to drawing on more of the rich resource base that is you, our members. For those of you who are not joining the Core Group this year, we hope you will get to know one or more of the Core, and use them as your liaison to the farm and farmers—you'll start hearing from them regularly pretty soon. They might be calling you to organize a work day or to be "on deck" in case of emergency, to attend a potluck, to staff the CSA distribution table, or contribute ideas for how to improve the farm and make the CSA better fit your needs. I am so very happy that they will be phasing in, and we'll be able to pick eight more people's brains and talents. I'll rest easier after graduation knowing there are at least sixteen *more* capable hands in which to leave this farm. Muchas gracias.

New or Unusual Vegetables in Your Share this Week

This section *has* to start out with carrots this week, not because they are new or unusual, just because of their unusual circumstance. These carrots' story is one that you'll only get from CSA. Four dedicated volunteers (Lucy, Debbie, Sophie, Isabelle, and Ian) and I spent over two hours digging carrots out of the semi-frozen mud on Monday, determined to get enough for this week's distribution! I'm impressed with the quality these roots have maintained while frozen in the ground for over a month, under a layer of straw mulch, and at times snow. I hope you enjoy them -- there will be plenty more once the ground thaws a little more. We successfully excavated a few NutriRed carrots and a few more orange ones (either Napoli or Sugarsnax; the labels were lost in the mud; I'm not sure which they are, but both of those are sweet favorites). Several of the carrots broke into pieces, as you might imagine, hence the carrot chunks in your shares this week, but some came out whole. Ian Billinge successfully chipped away at a cinder-block-sized chunk of mudcrete to save 5 or 6 of the precious roots, un-broken, as part of his training program for work as a paleontologist and/or archaeologist. Isabelle nearly sacrificed her work boot to the mud-deities that live in the East Field and demand offerings from time to time. And Lucy was undeterred by sucking mud, munching rodents, freezing rain and frozen fingers -- you'll see an interview with Lucy as Volunteer of the Week (or Month, even!) in the next newsletter. In fact, you'll see an interview with the Billinge Family as well, as superstar volunteers *and* core group members. Stay tuned.....

The only item you haven't seen yet this session is **Tatsoi**, an Asian member of the Mustard family. Actually, you have seen it in the baby salad mix, but this week you'll receive a mature rosette of Tatsoi (A rosette is just like it sounds: an arrangement of basal leaves that resemble a rose -- you'll see). Its dark green, round leaves resemble ping-pong paddles, and the stem is crisp, mild, and juicy. Even though you may expect a little bite because of its family affiliation, tatsoi is quite mellow and sweet, though crisp and still flavorful. If you want to cook it, I suggest steaming lightly, then dressing with just a little tamari, soy sauce, lemon juice, or ume plum vinegar. A "miso-tamari-smidge-of-tahini-dash-of-cayenne" dressing is also yummy on tatsoi. You can use tatsoi in just about anything in which you use pac or bok (same thing) choi. In fact, most of the choi/soi group are interchangeable; you'll come to appreciate the subtle differences and develop your own favorites, but if you're ever in need of preparation ideas for one of the Asian greens, a recipe calling for any of them will do fine. I think tatsoi is best enjoyed fresh, as a salad, or just as a snack -- after cleaning the rosette, keep it in the refrigerator, either whole or broken into loose leaves, and snack on it like carrot sticks. Kids seem to like the little round leaves, and so do adults.

And is everyone familiar with **celeriac**? I think you've seen it once before this winter, and it is still celery root, still a wonderfully pungent celery-like vegetable, delicious in soups, stews, roasted veggies, shredded fresh in salads and slaws, or just about anything else you do with celery ("except ants on a log" says Jeremy).

Oh, the **hot peppers** (dried) in your share this week are a special reminder of summer's heat -- they are chiles we grew this past summer and dried for you to enjoy this winter. I think most of them are cayenne peppers; and if you've never used whole cayenne, now's your chance. Yes, they're the same cayenne you buy pulverized in the store, just whole. You can make your own cayenne powder with a mortar and pestle, food processor, or blender-- just be careful to wash it out with soap before using it again, for say, a smoothie.... Whole dried chiles are also a great addition to a pot of beans--while soaking and boiling/simmering dry beans,

throw in a whole chile or two for a warm, spicy broth with your beans. If you're a heat-lover, you can then eat the rehydrated chile, seeds and all. I've found the flesh mellowed out with cooking, but those seeds still retain some heat. Don't limit yourself; try making *mole* – rehydrate the peppers first, then blend with cocoa – you'd better find a recipe for that one; it involves a little more than cocoa and chile, but not too much more.

I hope you're all enjoying both the stored root vegetables and the fresh winter-grown greens.

Old members (from fall session): those member feedback surveys are really on the way soon; try to remember what CSA was like way back in September.... Check your email!

Even without surveys, your feedback is so important and interesting – we're making a seed order this week, so if you have any special crop or variety requests, just let us know, and we'll see what we can do.

Eat well, be well, vaya con dios y diosa tambien, Michelle