



This Week's Word From the Farm

Week of 7/28/08

What's In Your Box ?

- Fingerling Potatoes – Russian Banana
- Red Torpedo Onions
- Garlic
- Eggplant
- Summer Squash
- Chard
- Salad Greens or Head Lettuce
- Basil
- Cucumbers
- Bok Choy or Komatsuna

Dear Friends,

Every year at Riverhill Farm is a little different. We succeed with some individual crop where we failed in another year. We get something planted early where last year it was planted late. We run out of time in the season to get something planted and so we do not grow that crop that year.

This year has been no exception. Spring started off in a most difficult way this year. We had contracted with someone to build a greenhouse in which to grow our transplants. It was supposed to be completed by the end of February. Week after week went by with delays until finally it became apparent that the contractor was not going to build it. I improvised what I could to create a greenhouse-like structure. Once we got our transplants germinated and growing, they began to fail. Nothing we tried seemed to improve their condition. The extremes of the freeze and then the heat wave didn't help. Ultimately, we were able to salvage some flats of transplants, but the majority were lost. Most of our transplants were warm-weather crops, such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. As important as those crops are, we couldn't simply decide not to grow them. So, we bought replacement transplants from a nursery in Santa Cruz that grows certified organic transplants. The effect of all this? We were able to salvage and plant about two hundred of our own tomatoes. They were planted earlier than we usually manage to get our tomatoes in the ground, and you'll be enjoying their fruits soon. The rest will come along late, but in huge quantities.

In most years, our salad mix and lettuce begins to suffer from the heat by early July, and we find it hard to replace as lettuce does not germinate well in hot soil. This year? We've been able to maintain a steady supply of salad mix in quantities of one pound per box per week. This week we'll be cutting salad mix from a late-planted block that has grown well, and we're taking advantage of the cooler temperatures this week to get several more blocks seeded. Last year we enjoyed potatoes in the early and in the late season. This year we've grown enough that you've had them in your boxes each week. In years past we've been overwhelmed by weeds in the overhead irrigated areas. We grow salad mix and greens with sprinklers instead of drip because it helps to keep the plants and the soil cool, improving their taste and appearance

and contributing to their longevity for multiple cuttings. This year, thanks to all the hands we have working here, we've been able to keep the weeds under control.

So it goes with farming. We learn from each year's experience and do our best to respond the next year to the successes and failures of any given season. Each season is different but hopefully, on balance, each season is good.

Next year? Earlier planted tomatoes and peppers, come hell or high water. Lots of melons and watermelons (like last year) for a steady supply through the season, and tons of winter squash for everyone to enjoy during the Fall and Winter. Earlier root crops and a more consistent supply of carrots and beets through the summer months.

Recipe of the Week:

Sichuan Eggplant Braised in Fragrant Sauce*

4 Asian eggplants (about 1 lb)
3 tablespoons oil
6 cloves garlic, minced
6 slices fresh ginger, minced
3 scallions, chopped
1 tablespoon chili paste
¼ cup water

Sauce:
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon rice wine
½ tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon vinegar
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sesame oil

- 1) Halve the eggplants lengthways, then cut each half into 2 inch pieces.
- 2) Combine all the sauce ingredients and set aside.
- 3) Heat the oil in a wok over high heat and when hot, add the eggplant, garlic, and ginger and stir-fry until the eggplant begins to soften, about 4 minutes.
- 4) Add the scallions and chili paste and cook for 2 minutes. Add the sauce and stir to combine all ingredients. Add water and cover. Reduce heat to low and cook for 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish.

Serves 4 as part of an Asian meal.

*From *Healthy Asian Vegetarian Dishes*. Published by Periplus Editions.