

November is here

The farm was very busy this past Saturday. We planted garlic in the East Field, which was a joy. It was a beautiful day and the work was smooth. Planting garlic is not only the last major farm project of the growing season besides clean-up; it's also the first planting of the 2008 season! That's right... we've already kicked off next year.

Garlic hangs out all winter, growing roots safe beneath a layer of straw mulch, until the soil slowly warms up in late winter. Tiny green shoots will poke through as early as mid-winter, or by late winter at the latest. By the time we're into the spring planting season, garlic will have a four-month head start.

That's not all that happened Saturday. Another group with a big tractor made huge strides in getting in our new irrigation system. This group included Mike Reese, Tony Norman, Tom Bechtold, Alan Davenport, Cliff Ohlson and Floyd Warren, which represents more talent, experience, know-how, you-name-it, than this farm has seen in the fields in years, and is easily the most involved project at the farm since the fences were constructed.

A new irrigation system is a HUGE improvement for the farm. More than anything, if this new system works as planned, we'll have full water pressure at four points in each field. This gives us major insurance against heat and drought.

For those of you who may be unaware, to date our irrigation "system" has consisted of two water hoses running several hundred feet to each field. We have been irrigating 4 ¼ acres with two garden hoses! This system has been better than nothing in taking the edges off dry spells, but it has been inefficient, cumbersome, and ineffective against the worst of the drought and heat we've seen in recent years.

Water is integral to good growing. Vegetables consist of up to 90% water, and, like us, need moisture for every life process. Our soil holds onto lots of water, but it gets so hot and dry that they stop growing at times. Crops are especially vulnerable when they've just been sown or transplanted. During the heavy heat and drought of this past August I had to delay sowings and plantings because I could not enough water to any plant.

This new irrigation system will make organic vegetable farming viable here for many, many years. It will make the work much more efficient and sane. We'll get water to plants when and where they need it. I'll save a ton of time in not having to haul garden hose everywhere.

Or... it may rain... there's always rain... remember rain? Regardless, the new system is HUGE! Many thanks to the irrigation crew!

What's in Your Share

Rutabaga, Bok Choy, Carrots, Sweet Potatoes, Spinach, Scallions, Swiss Chard, Salad Mix, Turnips, Lettuce, Kale, Cilantro or Dill, Radishes, shallots, and green peppers and tomatoes

What's For Dinner:

Buttered Turnips and Rutabagas with Mixed Herbs

1 ½ pounds turnips and/or rutabagas, peeled
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 Tbsp butter or sunflower oil
1 Tbsp chopped parsley
2 tsp chopped tarragon or thyme
2 Tbsp snipped chives
1 garlic clove
½ cup fresh bread crumbs browned in 1 Tbsp butter or oil

Dice the turnips and rutabagas into ½-inch cubes. Boil them separately until they're tender-firm, about 12-20 minutes. Drain. Melt the butter in a wide skillet. When foamy, add the vegetables and sauté over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until golden. Toss with the herbs and garlic, taste for salt, and season with pepper. Remove to a serving dish and scatter the crisped bread crumbs on top.

Upcoming Events

Harvest Party: This Sunday, November 11, 4-6... Come have a great time with fellow members. Bring a potluck dish, enjoy the 2007 slide show, and the farm debut of the new La Vista documentary... Fun for all!

Looking Ahead

One more week after this week!

At this point, with four more share days, I divide the remaining crops by four and start cutting and picking away. Frost has finally killed off the stellar tomato family crops, but we have lots of roots and greens.