



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Local & Madison Edition - Brown Week Delivery

May 15-16, 2009

Spring Planting Report by Richard de Wilde

The swallows are back, having returned to the barn a few days late. The bluebirds are nesting, the tree swallows are in their nest boxes, eagles are busy feeding their young (we have two nests in the valley), the hummingbirds are back – it must be spring! I've found about three pounds of morels so far and lots of deer ticks. The nettles are healthy and ramps are at their peak!

Just so you don't think all we do is enjoy the beauty of spring, here is a spring planting report. It has been a cool, almost cold spring. The trees are still not fully leafed out! We planted our first salad greens, radishes, cilantro, and spinach on April 10, a good early start, but unusually dry. Only half of them came up so we set up irrigation, got a small rain, and the rest came up. Two crops in one, a nightmare to cut! We got three more plantings in and covered, and cultivated the first plantings. Celeriac has been transplanted, also celery. I think celery is inferior to celeriac root and a nightmare to grow, but it may be available before the celeriac is ready.

All of the early transplants are out in the fields: Bok choy, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuces, fennel and kohlrabi. They've been covered and fenced to keep the deer out. The deer population is high and hungry. We welcome hunters to fill our agriculture tags. They rarely kill a deer, but the presence of hunters is a great deterrent and lets the local deer population know that our fields are not safe places to find food. Electric fences are a definite deterrent as well, but not a guarantee.

The poly covers we use for early crops (\$12,000 worth) are returning huge benefits in this cold spring by trapping the sun's heat and holding it in on cold nights, on average 4-6 degrees warmer day & night, and protects the plants from wind and insects. They also exclude the early flea beetles that eat holes in the delicate arugula, but they don't stop deer! The deer destroy the covers to get at a



Storage: Everything in the fridge.

Use first: Ramps, sorrel, chives, arugula, salad mix, spinach, asparagus. The other items store very well in the crisper drawer, but use within a week or two for best taste.

THIS WEEK'S BOX

ASPARAGUS- Steam until very tender and add to a frittata or omelette.

CHIVES- Make your own sandwich spread by mixing cream cheese, chopped chives, dried dill, and a tablespoon of lemon juice.

RAMPS- Replace the onion in any soup recipe with fresh ramps, adding the greens just before service.

PARSNIP- Use in place of carrot in your usual dishes.

SUNCHOKES- Try them raw, cut into chunks with veggie dip.

ARUGULA- Small, peppery flavored leaves that are often included in salad mixes. Arugula is sturdy enough that it also works well as a cooking green, sautéed very lightly.

SPINACH- Add to pizza as a topping, or mixed into the sauce.

BLACK RADISH- Try using it as you would horseradish, grated and served with meats.

SALAD MIX- The first of the year! Celebrate with your favorite vinaigrette, or try the recipe for turkey sorrel salad on the back and throw in some salad mix. This salad is unique for the year in that it is only greens, no lettuce. Lettuce is slower growing and will be ready next week.

SORREL- See veggie feature on back

FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISH - Slice & put on a sandwich.

WILLOW OR DOGWOOD - For Every other Week "brown" week members only. One bunch per share rather than per household.

favorite crop or just demolish them by walking & running over them to get to the other side - every day, twice a day. They decimated a huge crop of overwintered spinach and left us with just enough for two CSA boxes and market, none for our wholesale markets.

Did I say it was dry? Actually, a record drought for March and April, but that changed with the 3.25 inches of rain on April 18-19 and two more inches since then. But thankfully no flooding! Between rains, we have managed to cultivate our early crops. That means remove covers, cultivate with a tractor and rolling

basket cultivator with small tunnel shields, and then put the cover back on.

We have two crops of peas looking good, baby white turnips, baby bok choy, chard, three colors of beets, and carrots up and growing. Eight acres of parsnip and parsley root, planted and flame weeded by Darin on a weekend before it rained. José cultivated on Monday, keeping his eagle eye on the just emerging seedlings.

All the alliums, onions & shallots are planted on reflective mulch to keep the thrips away, the fall planted garlic looks terrific and the strawberries look good,

with blossoms on the early variety! We transplanted our first summer squash and cucumber plants on Monday and covered them on Tuesday. The basil is out, under hoops & a double cover. We could still see several nights of frost yet, which would destroy hot loving crops.

We are on schedule! Every year is a new challenge. We have a wonderful crew with experience, a willingness to work late, on weekends or whenever needed and it makes all the difference in the world. We are off to a good start for the season and we'll keep you updated as it progresses.

Sorrel Pesto

Great as an interesting pasta coating or a thick sauce for fish.

2 cups coarsely chopped fresh sorrel, ribs removed
1/3 cup packed fresh parsley leaves
2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
1/3 cup freshly grated parmesan
1/4 cup pine nuts
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup olive oil

To use the pesto: For every pound of dried pasta cooking in a kettle of boiling water, stir together in a heated serving bowl 3/4 cup of the pesto and 2/3 cup of the hot cooking water. When the pasta is al dente, drain it in a colander, add it to the pesto mixture, and toss the mixture until the pasta is coated well. Vermicelli works very well with this recipe.

In a food processor or blender puree the sorrel, the parsley, the garlic, the parmesan, the pine nuts and the oil, transfer the pesto to a jar with a tight fitting lid and chill it, covered. The pesto keeps, covered and chilled, for 2 weeks. Makes about 1 cup.

From Two Small Farms Blog

Sorrel, the delicate, spade-shaped leaves that appear bunched in your box, have a body and texture similar to spinach, but a tart flavor that reminds many people of the taste of lemon.

There are several kinds of wild and cultivated sorrel eaten throughout the world, and it is often used as an herb for the flavor it adds to dishes.

Sorrel can be eaten either raw or cooked. Eaten raw, it makes a great addition to a salad. You may mix your own blend with the greens in your box this week, although I think sorrel works especially well with spinach.

Cooking sorrel sometimes poses a problem. In her book *Vegetable Love*, Barbara Kafka repeatedly warns that sorrel must only be cooked in a non-reactive pan. i.e., not aluminum. Aluminum, she warns ominously, will not only turn the sorrel acrid, but also a "revolting color." Although she never specified what this revolting color might be, I think I may have discovered the color while sautéing fresh sorrel in a cast iron pan last week, and the color was a dingy brownish gray.

Sorrel's texture, too, changes with cooking, and not in the familiar ways of some of our sturdier cooking greens. When heated alone in a pan, sorrel's texture quickly becomes what some people call "mushy," and others affectionately call "silky". It lends itself well to soups and sauces; the French are especially fond of wilting and making a puree to spoon over egg, fish, and meat dishes.

For such a thin leaf, cooking time is almost instantaneous. When sautéing or steaming, you should continually be turning over the leaves in your pan with a pair of tongs, and remove from heat as soon as all of the leaves have begun to soften. If the softer texture of cooked sorrel is a problem for you, try sautéing it mixed with other greens, such as spinach or arugula.

Store in a slightly moist paper towel in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer. Use first, within a few days.

Spinach Sorrel Salad with Turkey

4 servings

Salad:

1 8 oz. bag Spinach
1 bunch sorrel
1 sunchoke, shredded
¼ cup toasted pecans
¼ cup dried cranberries
8 oz. cooked turkey

For Dressing:

½ cup mayonnaise
Zest and juice of two blood oranges
¼ cup maple syrup
¼ tsp white pepper

1. Whisk together dressing ingredients until smooth. Season to taste.
2. Roughly chop spinach and sorrel to small bite-sized pieces.
3. Toss spinach, sorrel, sunchoke, and dressing in a large mixing bowl with dressing until well coated. (The shredded sunchoke is to add crunch. If you prefer, substitute chopped cabbage or grated carrot.)
4. Divide equally onto four plates. Sprinkle with toasted pecans, dried cranberries, and top with chopped turkey meat.