



News
from

Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

Harmony Valley Farm, S. 3442 Wire Hollow Rd., Viroqua, WI 54665
608-483-2143 harmony@mwt.net www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Membership is Partnership

Unlike membership in a health club, or membership in a professional group, CSA membership comes with some responsibility and risk. For example, if the asparagus freezes tonight you are at risk. The CSA boxes we pack on Friday will contain less asparagus. We won't go out and buy another farmer's crop to fill in a shortage. But, on the other hand. The generous amount in last week's box was the result of beautiful temperatures and plenty of moisture, your benefit. I know this is all repetition of a concept you are aware of, for the most part. But, it is important to put it out there every now and then so this relationship between you-- the membership-- and us -- the farmers-- retains its true character, rather than being mistaken for the relationship between shopper and grocer. It is really more like a partnership.

Besides risk there is responsibility. We have responsibility to you to do our very best at farming. A relevant example, we will try to send out a crew to pick the asparagus just before the end of the day. We will salvage what is out there before the frost hits, even though it wouldn't normally be picked until the following morning. It is a small, but potentially important change in plans to make this week's box the best it can be.

Small, but important, are how I'd describe your responsibilities to us, as well. If everyone does the few things outlined in the CSA calendar and in previous letters the system works smoothly and is the best it can be. Here are your 5 responsibilities:

Sign up and pay on time.

Pick up your box or make arrangements for it. Arrangements could include calling your coordinator before the end of the pick up day to hold your box, or finding someone to pick up your box for you.

Return your carefully unfolded box to the pick up sites regularly -- weekly or every other week. (Carefully means *without ripping*. Diagrams are in the calendar.)

Stay informed by reading the calendar, especially the informational section at the beginning, all notices at the pick up sites, and the weekly newsletter.

Follow "pick up site etiquette" -- leave it neat, check off your name, take only what you have paid for, come during pick up hours.

So, at the risk of lecturing, I ask that if you have not read your CSA calendar and hung it up so it can be referred to, do so this weekend. Everything I just mentioned is in the calendar. If you do not have one, please let someone know so we can get a copy to you.

We are about to embark on a new adventure in our CSA -- the FruitShare. For the FruitShare to work everyone has to do their part -- inform your coordinators if you can not get your box or make arrangements for its timely pick up. Can you imagine a coordinators quandry when not only vegetables, but fruit boxes are left behind? They hate to see perfectly good produce go to waste as it languishes in a garage, yet don't like to disappoint members either. Equally important, take fruit and salad only if you paid for them. No excuses for not knowing if you should take these extra items. Lists of names indicating to whom the fruit and salad are delivered are always there. Columns indicating salad and fruit shares will appear on the check off lists when those items are delivered.

We sincerely thank you for being our farming partners and want your experience to be phenomenal. With everyone's help, we are sure it will be. ---Linda

This Week's Box

Ramps -- season's last
Rhubarb -- had enough for a while, freeze it!
Winter Onions - as they mature, they may be best for light cooking rather than eaten raw.
Last of the Winter Spinach or first of the Saute Mix Salad Mix - first of the season and quite spicy due to a healthy dose of Wrinkled Crinkled Cress. Looks like parsley but bites like water-cress.
Asparagus -- as I write this we are headed into a frosty night -- that could reduce the amount in your box.



Rhubarb flower bud

Your Farm

What with a fairly crazy spring, we thought you'd be wondering about your crops. Most recently we had frost, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Here in the valley frosts are spotty. Gratefully, we don't grow crops behind our house. If it freezes, it seems it always strikes very hard just outside our kitchen window. When we wake on a cold morning, the coating of white in the back yard can cause quite a panic. However, crops

Recipes by Lee

Hooray, the salad mix is here.

The good thing about salad mix is that with all its variety of flavors and textures, it makes a pretty great salad without very many add-ins. Without some good dressings though, you may get bored by the end of the season. Here's one that was popular with the crew this week. As a bonus, try it on asparagus.

HONEY POPPY SEED DRESSING

1/4 c. honey
3 Tbsp. cider vinegar
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 ramp bulb or two winter onions (white part only), minced
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 tsp. poppy seeds
salt and pepper to taste

Shake together in a small jar.

Let the greens begin! This week some of you are receiving the last of the winter spinach and some the first of the sauté mix. These two are really interchangeable in recipes but I think you'll find that sauté mix doesn't cook down quite as much as spinach and it has a little bit more of a kick. Here's a quick, tasty recipe for Friday nights when you still have unfinished bags of greens in the fridge and you know there are more on the way. Quantities are necessarily vague because I don't know how many greens you have left in your fridge!

SPICY WILTED GREENS

Canola oil
Spinach or sauté mix
Ramps or winter onions, (or whatever allium is in season at the time) sliced
Hot pepper flakes
Soy sauce
Toasted sesame oil
Toasted sesame seeds (optional)

Heat canola oil in a pan. Add ramps or winter onions and sauté until just beginning to soften, 3-5 minutes. Add the hot pepper flakes and soy sauce and stir over high heat until soy sauce cooks down a little. Add the greens and turn down the heat. If you have a lot of greens, add a Tbsp. or so of water to help them steam and wilt. Stir until all the greens are evenly wilted. Add a few drops of sesame oil and a sprinkle of seeds. Serve immediately.

Okay, so I have to tell you that I found a much better Pickled Ramp recipe than the one in the last newsletter. It is so good it's worth buying extra ramps in order to make them.

Also, a friend pointed out that I didn't really talk about how to process (can) the pickles. I will try to give basic directions in the canning recipes but if you are unfamiliar with the process, additional resources should be consulted. For more information on canning, I recommend the Ball Blue Book Guide to preserving. This inexpensive book is the preserving bible.

IMPROVED PICKLED RAMPS

1 c. white wine vinegar
1 c. sugar
1 tsp. mustard seed
1 tsp. coriander
1 tsp. fennel
1 tsp. pink peppercorns
1 bay leaf
2 lbs. ramps, cut so only 1/4 inch of green remains (reserve greens for another use)
kosher salt

Follow the instruction for the pickles in last week's letter.

You can also make them as refrigerator pickles. Put the cooked ramps into the vinegar solution and store in frig for a month or so.

From Front

along the river and creek can be protected by fog; crops that are not mulched with either straw or plastic retain the warmth of black soil around them; and crops on a slight slope can benefit from cold air sinking away to lower areas. Tuesday evening's frost seemed to hit especially hard in the strawberry patch! Mulched with straw, which doesn't absorb heat like black dirt, they are at risk. We covered the half of the bed that is flowering with row cover fabric. The next morning, however, we lifted the frosted cover to find the freeze had, indeed, penetrated beneath, as well. Not all the blossoms have opened, and generally only the fully open ones are effected. It will take another peek under the cover to see if Tuesday's perfect berry field now sports "black eyes," (black centered blossoms damaged from the cold, which won't produce berries.) We suspect that even if some

blossoms were lost, the field looks so healthy and clean that we'll still have quite a bountiful crop.

We had also set out the basil transplants early in the week and rushed to cover them before dipping temperatures. Basil, which is very tender, suffering damage even at 34 degrees, looked beautiful under its little blanket of row cover yesterday. Just the effect of the warm, bare soil could have made all the difference between the basil and the berries.

Other crops not really effected by the frost are looking quite good. The asparagus fields, much too large to cover with anything, did get a touch of frost, but not enough to cause damage. Good stands of peas, carrots, parsnips, beets, salad mix, spinach, potatoes, radishes, sunchokes, horseradish -- the list goes on.

Generous moisture helped those crops that we managed to get into the ground. However, there were many days when the ground was just too wet to be planted. We got behind in our planting schedule. We are in fairly good shape now, having had several days of favorable conditions. To catch up we decided to plant the early and late crops of fennel and lettuce on the same day. The early crop was a bit over grown, having had to wait patiently in the greenhouse several extra weeks. It will mean that when we have head lettuce and fennel, we'll have LOTS of head lettuce and fennel, and then it will be over quickly.

In summary, it has been a cold, wet, late spring, but most crops look good and the frost hasn't done too much damage. We are very ready for some warmer, drier days. ---Linda and Richard

Freezing Rhubarb is so easy it is almost silly to write the instructions. Just rinse clean, chop off the remnant green leaf and discard, then chop into uniform pieces (1" is good). Spread on a cookie sheet. Put in the freezer. When frozen completely, transfer to a ziplock bag or freezer container of your choice. Using this cookie sheet method allows you to use whatever amount you need, since all the pieces are individual, not stuck into a big blob.