

# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Customers ~ Since 1993  
Twin Cities Edition ~ Green Week Delivery



## Are You Recovered from the Flood? by Richard de Wilde

We get this question repeatedly from CSA members and market customers, and the answer is not a simple yes or no. Yes, the weather has been on the dry side for many weeks now and we have been able to work most of our fields and get them ready for fall crops, barely and just in time. We are pumping a little irrigation water to get fall lettuce, fennel, radish, turnip, beets and carrots up and growing and they look beautiful! Two acres of purple, yellow and orange carrots, many beets, turnips, radishes and the salad mix, arugula and greens plantings are starting to stack up nicely for fall. We even have a 1000-foot bed of spinach up and we'll still be planting weekly until mid-September. There is nothing like a clean salad mix and a beautiful crop of carrots to make this farmer smile. Especially when the water table is still so high that we get stuck cultivating them and the weed pressure has been horrendous!

We farm land that has been kept mostly free of weeds going to seed for many years, making each season easier and easier to raise a weed free crop. Then the flood of August 2007 came and washed in new weeds we didn't have before. It was too wet to get in the fields and cultivate to keep them from going to seed following both floods of 2007 and June 2008. Water loving plants like nutsedge and smart weed may have been laying there dormant waiting for this super saturated soil that they thrive in and soon enough, you have a gigantic challenge to get a clean crop of carrots up and running – but we did it! So yes, we are making slow and steady progress toward getting fields back into production, but the weeds will continue to be a problem for some time.

I've spent hours and hours on our leased bulldozer fixing stream banks so we can put fences back in place and cross the creek where we need to, removing



Beautiful, weed free Romanesco field

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** Garlic Mayonnaise is a great spread for sandwiches or as the base for a salad dressing

**YELLOW ONIONS:** Store them in a cool, dry place in your kitchen.

**ZUCCHINI OR SUMMER SQUASH:** 'Tis the season for summer squash...and grilling! Grilled zucchini is a simple and delicious accompaniment for summer cookouts.

**CUCUMBER:** Cucumbers and dill combine well to create refreshing dishes

**DILL:** Pairs well with cucumbers, potatoes, and grilled fish

**AMARANTH GREENS:** Try the recipe on back for a tasty way to use this beautiful cooking green

**CARROTS:** Other than beets, carrots have more natural sugar than any other vegetable. Their sweetness is good with many flavors, especially rich, warm spices like ginger, curry, and nutmeg.

**MELON OR RASPBERRIES:** There are several different melons you could receive today. The ones that look like watermelons...well, those are watermelons, either red or yellow. The small tan melons are "Sarah's Choice"—a cantaloupe variety. The small white or yellow melons are "Mini-Musketeers."

**SAUTÉ MIX OR ARUGULA:** Why not try something a little different with your sauté mix. How about stuffing cabbage leaves with sauté mix and cooked rice, some sautéed onions and garlic. Grease a baking dish and place the filled leaves tightly against each other. Add a cup of vegetable stock, a pinch of salt, cover and bake at 350 degrees for about 20 to 25 minutes. Since arugula is so delicate, instead of trying to cook it sprinkle some chopped arugula over a cheese pizza as soon as it comes out of the oven. Or, stir some chopped arugula into soup just before serving.

**EGGPLANT:** Trim the green caps from the eggplant and then either slice it lengthwise into long strips or crosswise into rounds. You don't really need to peel eggplant unless you are going to puree a roasted eggplant.

**ITALIA PEPPER:** The stem and seeds should be removed from the pepper before cooking. Use a paring knife to cut around the stem and then grab hold of the stem and pull out the core. Cut the pepper in half through the core end and scrape out any remaining seeds. Use a paring knife to remove any pithy white membranes on the inside of the pepper and then slice or chop as needed. This pepper is excellent for quick sautés or stir-fries.

**POTATOES:** Buttery golden potatoes, this variety is best roasted, boiled, or fried.

**CHOICE: FENNEL**

huge trees that would dam the creek in the next big rain. Progress is evident, but there are many more weeks of bulldozing to fix everything. Oftentimes, I can't be on the bulldozer, as there are more immediate needs to plant, cultivate, weed, harvest and pack boxes for the present week.

We have beautiful second plantings of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, melons, and carrots, but they are all coming in late. The difference between this upcoming second crop and those we are harvesting now is like night and day. The broccoli and cauliflower that sat in saturated soil only produced tiny stunted heads. The melons had scraggly vines and poor production. The later plantings, in non-compacted soil, have beautiful vines, blossoms and fruit, about three times the size of the first plantings!

The beans we couldn't plant in June due to poor soil conditions are the ones we need now, the flooded sweet corn field would have been ready last week. The early melon crop survived being flooded, but is only producing 30% of a normal crop, same for peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, fennel, carrots, zucchini, and cucumbers.

We plan for abundance. We plant twice as much as we think we will need in order to buffer our customers from crop losses. When all goes well we have plenty to fill CSA boxes plus extra to sell. When several crops are gone or produce only 30% of a crop, each of our markets will notice the loss. In all honesty, we are still struggling weekly to pack a nice CSA box and still have something to take to market. We have very little to sell wholesale; sales are down 62% from last year.

We received a complaint about beans and cucumber, "Why do we get only one cucumber in our box?" We had a huge one acre planting of early summer squash and cucumber, planted, covered, and thriving when the June 8 flood waters washed over it, leaving a mess of row covers, silt, displaced irrigation hoses and oversaturated, compacted soil. We cleaned it up as best we could right away, but only 20% of the plants survived. Weeds filled in the gaps and we could not cultivate because there is still row cover buried in silt, now with weeds growing into the whole mess. We could have destroyed the field and replanted it a month ago, but we held out hope that it would produce something. From that

### Stuffed Mushrooms with Ricotta, Amaranth Greens & Dill

1 bunch Amaranth greens	1 tsp Dill, finely chopped
½ cup chopped onion	1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp olive oil	Fresh ground pepper to taste
1 pound extra large mushrooms (portabella or large shitake)	2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
1 cup ricotta cheese	

Steam Amaranth over low heat in just the water that clings to the leaves after washing, about 5 minutes, or just until tender. Drain and chop finely. Sauté onions in oil slowly until soft. Carefully remove mushroom stems from the caps and reserve. Then place caps in an oiled baking dish. Preheat oven to 400°. Finely chop reserved stems and add to sautéed onions. Sauté another three minutes and remove from heat. Stir in Amaranth, ricotta, dill, soy sauce, and pepper. Spoon mixture into mushroom caps, piling high. Sprinkle each one with a little grated parmesan and bake for 20 minutes, or until mushrooms release their juices and tops are lightly browned.

### Cucumber Salad with Yogurt and Dill

2 medium cucumbers peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded and cut ¼ inch thick	1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt	1 medium garlic clove, minced
¾ cup plain yogurt	1 tbsp minced fresh dill
	Freshly ground black pepper

Toss the cucumbers and salt in a large strainer or colander set over a bowl. Fill a gallon size zipper-lock bag with ice water and set the bag on top of the cucumber slices. Drain for 1 hour. Thoroughly rinse the cucumber slices under cold, running water and pat dry with paper towels. Toss the cucumbers with the yogurt, oil, garlic, dill and pepper to taste. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to several hours.

## Produce Plus

Available for delivery next week:

**3# Italian Basil: \$24**

**3# Italian Garlic: \$20**

**10# Petite Green Beans: \$25**

Place your order via phone (608/483-2143x2) or email (csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com) by Monday, August 18.

Please send a check for payment directly to the farm the day you place your order. Your produce will be delivered to your site on August 21, in a box with your name on it.

devastated field, last week we were able to pick about 1,100 cucumbers to bridge the gap until the second planting produces. That is one cucumber for each CSA box, with the other 100 going to market.

We were thankful to have those 1,100 cucumbers. It wasn't much, but we hope you were as delighted as we were in the fruit of our plans and labor (from nursery to greenhouse to field to box), despite the poor growing conditions and distress of seeing the destruction of so many crops, again. Now we have a beautiful later planting of squash and cucumbers and are looking ahead to the upcoming weeks when we will have more than enough of a crop for every box. Until then, we thank you for your patience with the "either/or" situations and hope you enjoy your boxes.

The old cucumber field's plants are chopped and we now have several days of difficult, grimy work to extract the remaining row covers from silt and weed roots. Angel and Nestor will have it cleaned up by the end of the week and will never complain about the hot, dirty, and dusty mess. Unfortunately, they, and other crew members, have already invested many hours cleaning up other fields that otherwise would have been a total loss with *no* harvest. The crew has never complained about any of the backbreaking work at the farm because they know that without even a meager crop, you won't have vegetables for dinner and they won't have a job. All that work for "only one" cucumber per box.