



WEEKLY NOTE Week of May 16, 2016

Fresh from the Farm!

Welcome to our first week of delivery! This is always a much anticipated event for us as well as for our members.

Saturday, April 9 marked a pulling out of late, wet period and we were primed for potato planting. First we cut up the tubers, then we loaded up the potato planter (you can see the rotating disc, that spaces the tuber planting as we travel down the row, full of potato pieces. I sit facing backwards to monitor the potato flow while Tim keeps us on the straight and narrow. Then 4 weeks later, after a second cultivation, we spied our first sprouts. Our friend, Becky had stopped by with her friend, Eunice, who was keen to check out the tuber up close and personal with her handy binoculars. Since then the potato sprouts have weathered a bit of frost nip. They look rough, but potato plants are tough and they'll come out of it after some nice, warmer weather.



It's been kind of a cool beginning and our field planted crops are developing slowly. But the high tunnel crops, including all of our greens, are in good shape and it's high time to start our weekly journey through the season. Now let's lay some groundwork for how this weekly delivery system works.

COMMUNICATION: From here on out, expect the Weekly Note to be sent out by email by first thing Tuesday morning; the Weekly Note will be posted to our website by mid week as well for easy reference.

IN THE BOX THIS WEEK

Lettuce
Spinach
Mixed greens, including
Arugula, Mizuna, Mustard greens
Kale
Rhubarb

This is our channel for updates and notices to our members. Please be sure to return an email, give us a call, or text us a note with any comments, questions, or concerns. All of our contact is always provided at the end of each notes.

PICK UP LOGISTICS: We've sent out the Delivery Guide (and you can also find it posted on our website homepage) with pick up site times and site host contact. The sites operate as self serve. Boxes will be staged and a clip board should be found on top of or next to the box with the week's member check off list. Be sure to check your name off the list when you pick up your share(s). Prompt pick up is best for your vegetables. Should your schedule go haywire, please contact your site host. They are more than willing to help, but can't without good communication.

VEGETABLE HANDLING: We rinse and drain or spin dry your vegetables after harvest and keep them cool to minimize nutrient loss. You may want to rinse the product one more time. As for temperature, we keep these early season crops at 32° F in our cooler. The vegetables are boxed up and covered with an insulating blanket on their way to your delivery site. The next step is on your side of the equation. After picking up your delivery, it's back to the cooler. You may want to check your refrigerator's setting with a thermometer. If it's higher than 32-34° F, you may want to adjust the setting to bring the temperature down to the target level.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW BEST TO USE THESE VEGETABLES - Eat them up , of course! Every week or every other week, you'll be receiving a box of vegetables. Now is the challenge to make the most of increasing your vegetable consumption. Some members find this a delightful challenge. Some find it a tad intimidating. We want you to have a delicious and successful experience as a member of One Step at a Time Gardens. I'll try to share as much insight about using these veggies as I can. Please send along your comments as well. I'm thrilled to get news from our members and always appreciate contributions to our Weekly Note. I provide a featured recipe suggestion each week.

Green Vegetable in the Spotlight

I love April and the emergence of bright green as our landscape transforms from winter. The first farm fresh vegetables give me the same thrill after a winter of preserved and storage crops. And so, we are suddenly thrust into the season of greens. It's time to identify them and provide some first step tips for making good use of them. We plant for weekly supplies of lettuce, spinach. In addition, we plan for four deliveries of kale, and two each of mixed greens (arugula, mizuna, and mustard greens), and chard during this Spring Share. That's a lot of greens! I've gotten on a kick to try a number of salad dressing recipes that are featured in this and next week's "Cooking Out of the Box" column.

We have one planting of **lettuce** for each week of delivery. This week we feature an heirloom lettuce called Black Seeded Simpson, dating back to 1850's. This popular garden lettuce is one of the quickest to mature (planted on April 4, just 42 days ago), but also one of the quickest to bolt (go to seed). This cool spring has encouraged robust growth and some heads were so big (topping 1.5 lb.) that we split them up a bit with some bags receiving a stack of individual leaves rather than a complete head. This is a very tender, bright green lettuce, crisp and perfect for salads and sandwiches. Next week our supply is Red Sails.

We raise four varieties of **kale** - Siberian (wavy with a little curl), Lacinato (very dark green with the leaf fitting all the way down along the leaf stem), Red Russian (deeply lobed leaf with purplish stem), and White Russian (just like Red Russian save a pale stem). While this week's leaves are pretty good sized, the greens are pretty tender. I tear them up into salads, shred and cook with eggs, toss into soups or stews. They are also enjoyed cooked with garlic in a quick sauté, to melting tenderness.



Our **mixed greens** include arugula (lobed leaves), mizuna (serrated leaves), and mixed greens (light & dark green and purples - serrated and frilly) - are like greens in their teens - some baby qualities, while beginning to take on the form of a mature leaf.

The mixed greens are bagged together and total about 1/3 lb. In a salad, atop taco pizza, or in a burrito, these add interesting flavor and texture.

Arugula is a bit peppery. Mizuna has a little bitter flavor, and the mixed greens are... great mixed together, providing some nutty, bity flavors to jazz up your taste buds.

Cooking...Out of the Box

This week it's all about dressings.

Thanks to our summer interns who taught us about simple, homemade, inexpensive dressings, it's been years since we purchased a store bought dressing. Here are some suggestions from several sources:

Tim is our house salad dressing master, and he offers this formula: *equal parts olive oil and vinegar (balsamic and/or red wine), generous dollop of a mustard, aronia berry concentrate (from our neighbor, Larry Turner, in Belmond), sweeten with honey to your desired taste, dash salt, black pepper. adjust all components to taste. Shake and use.*

Raejean Chapman, Clarion member reports - My favorite dressing recipe is simple, fast and so easy. Plus it doesn't obscure the flavors of the lettuce or other salad goodies.

One lime, quartered, Fresh cracked black pepper, Squeeze juice from a lime quarter over top of your greens, top with fresh cracked pepper. Eat and enjoy a delicious and tangy fresh salad.

I tried this **Homemade Ranch recipe**

1 C. mayonnaise
1/2 C. sour cream - I used plain yogurt
1/2 t. chives
1/2 t. dried parsley
1/2 t. dill weed
1/4 t. garlic powder - I used one clove, minced
.

1/4 t. onion powder - I used two thin slices, minced
1/8 t. salt
1/8 t. pepper
whip thoroughly. Store in refrigerator for 7-10 days

Soil & Soul- Iowa Agriculture & Economic Development

Twenty three years ago, as I pushed a little girl with golden curls in our front yard tree swing - our neighbor's field appearing and disappearing over her shoulder with each pass of the swing - I was just beginning to awaken to the political aspects of Iowa agriculture, economic development, and the environmental issues we cared about so deeply.

It was 1993, and Iowa's hog debate was moving into high gear. The land that rose and fell over our daughter Jess's shoulder, has been the site of many a manure application since that time, including this spring. The



neighbor who farms that land decided to expand his hog operation in 1993 and embroiled our neighborhood in the center of Iowa's hog debate. In this debate, I recall clearly a confrontational conversation I had with someone who asked me what alternative I had to offer as I was so opposed to expanded hog operations.

After several years organizing against this model of economic development, we felt we had to organize "for" something - a different vision. We mark 2016 as our 21st season offering Community Supported Agriculture Shares. Our farm is a direct response to that situation so many years ago.

The recent Prestage conflict in Mason City brings up some powerful memories. It's been like replay of 20 years ago. I hear that old question resonating - what alternatives can we present for a model of economic development model that 1) is rooted in a common vision for community health and well being and 2) is not so exploitive of natural and human resources?

Your choice to join our farm member program is a testament to your conviction to invest in a different system. As our farm name suggestions, this could well be one step in a long journey you take toward this vision. What else can you do? Take a look at all your other purchases. We offer chicken, but what about other sources of meat, eggs, dairy, small grain, soaps and lotions? Farmers markets are opening all over North Iowa and are home to lots of creative entrepreneurs. Your dollars invested in the local food and product economy provides a proactive response to building a sustainable future for Iowa agriculture, economic development, and our environment. Healthy Harvest of North Iowa's website (www.northiowafood.org) hosts a searchable database of local producers, local food businesses that buy local, and a full schedule of farmers markets.

Just last Thursday, the North Iowa Local Food Coalition, a group I help to facilitate, met to identify four priority projects to help spur further development for North Iowa's local food system. Nearly 40 people from all over North Iowa attended. The top projects include farmers market support, more awareness of local food resources and activities, support for growing new growers, and the most complex project -continued development of an aggregation, distribution, and possibly processing project that opens up more opportunity for both producer and consumer. For this last initiative, there are already some beginnings in a new partnership between North Iowa Fresh (a business of independent, local producers wholesaling their products to North Iowa grocers and restaurants) and Opportunity Village, of Clear Lake. Opportunity Village will serve as the aggregation site this season - eight producers dropping their products off and staff and clients at Opportunity Village helping to prepare the products for delivery. Tomorrow, in fact, I will make my first drop off at Opportunity Village - as some of our kale will be prepared for delivery to Be Wellness in Clear Lake. These four projects will be the focus of working teams of the Coalition over the next 1-3+ years.

When the community pulls together toward a common vision, rooted in a deep commitment to what we can accomplish with local resources such as land and ingenuity, there's a palpable energy . We do have options and we all can play a part in creating our future together.

Weekly deliveries Mid May to early July and August to September

Tuesdays – Garner, Clear Lake, and Mason City,

Wednesday - Belmond, Clarion, and the Farm

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