

CSA Newsletter

WALTHAM FIELDS COMMUNITY FARM

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE 1995–2005

A project of Community Farms Outreach

240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 • 781-899-2403 • www.communityfarms.org



Notes from the Field

It's a funny thing, frost. It can creep up on you. Sometimes you know it's coming—the weather radio and website forecast it and the clear skies and falling temperatures confirm it—and you prepare for it by getting all the vulnerable crops out of the field. This makes for a busy day followed by a chilly, starry night that confirms your suspicions and a crystalline, frost-spangled morning when the whole farm staff goes out to breakfast. But sometimes, as it happened last Sunday morning, you arrive at the farm chilly but totally unaware—and find patches and pockets of crisp frost in all the low spots in the fields.

I had a mentor once who said, somewhat perversely, that his favorite day of the farming season was that morning when he woke up and everything was blackened by the first frost. Although some of the shareholders and volunteers on the farm took offense at the implication, I understood what he meant. There is something inexorable and beautiful about an ending that is not within your control, that comes overnight and leaves a few moments of sparkling beauty followed by what farmers can only experience as deep, honest rest.

The frost that we had last Saturday night was not that kind of frost. It barely touched the tops of the basil plants and skimmed over the tender galinsoga, leaving everything more or less intact. Of course, even the first killing frost, when it comes sometime this month, will not be the end of the farming season. Many of the crops that we've been eating this month just get better with frost, and there will still be plenty to harvest and cover crop, weed and mulch and clean up for next year. And then, the symbolic final act of the farming year, there's the garlic to plant.

Still, that light frost in the hollows and shadows of our fields is the harbinger of seasonal rest for the fields and the farmers that is welcomed and celebrated by nearly all of us, even those who are sorry to see the season pass. It is a moment of stillness that reminds us that nature will stop us even if we refuse to stop ourselves, that hints at mortality and renewal and the blessings of rest for the weary.

Amanda, for the crew

October 2–6, 2005 (Distribution #17)



A Guide to the Winter Squash

Adapted from the Fedco Seed Catalog

Sweet Dumpling

Stunning 1–1 1/2 lb. ivory-colored green-striped fruits shaped like miniature pumpkins. *New York Times* food writer Regina Schrambling raves that “a roasted Sweet Dumpling squash is one of the most amazing things ever to emerge naked from an oven.” But make sure your Dumpling is ripe before you stick it in. Under-ripe Dumpling fruits taste starchy and insipid, nothing like the sweet dry and memorably rich deep orange flesh of the mature ones. Introduced by Sakata Seed Corp. of Yokohama, Japan, in 1976 and marketed as Vegetable Gourd. Did not sell well until they changed its name to the more appealing Sweet Dumpling.

Delicata

The lovely ivory-colored 1 lb. fruits with dark green stripes are oblong and not stubby and have the unsurpassed sweetness that makes Delicata the best of all the pepos. In storage the green stripes turn a delicate orange and the cream background sometimes yellows. Not a good keeper, but when it's this good, who's gonna wait to eat it?

Sunshine

Bright orange flesh is dry yet tender, meaty yet sweet, with real substance. It can be steamed, baked or used for pies and the color stays bright in the cooking.

Continued

Squash Guide, continued

Buttercup

New England's favorite winter squash, enjoyed for its sweet deep-orange flesh. Alan Kapuler has said, "If you pick only one squash to grow this is it." Fruits have acorn-shaped button on the blossom end and flattened shoulders.

Butternut

Waltham Butternut—large butternuts, excellent keepers. Bred by the Massachusetts Agricultural Extension Service by crossing New Hampshire Butternut (a 1956 Yeager/Meader development) with a neckless *moschata* from Turkey, and introduced by Bob Young of Waltham, MA.

Burpee's Butterbush—smaller butternuts. Keep well; some funny shapes. Of the nine different butternut squashes tried by Mark Fulford over the years, this one is "hands down the best." Fruits average no more than 1-1/2 lb, each a perfect one-person serving chock full of deep, reddish-orange flesh "as sweet as the best sweet potatoes." Seed cavities are small. Fulford describes the flavor as nutty, and the texture moist but never watery, not as moist as the large butternuts.

Carnival

This squash will give your senses a thrilling ride. First it will treat your eyes to a kaleidoscope of colors, each fruit flecked with shades of green, gold and yellow, no two exactly alike. As it bakes you will enjoy the nutty squash aroma. Finally it will thrill your taste buds with its full-bodied sweetness.

Green Hokkaido

Slate-green fruits with thick yellow flesh preferred by those who like their squash very dry but not particularly sweet. Like other Kabocha-type squashes, gains sweetness and improves in flavor during storage.

Winter Luxury Pie Pumpkin

"My favorite orange pumpkin...so beautiful...that it breaks my heart to cut one open," exults Amy Goldman, in *The Compleat Squash*, #9657. The beauty comes from the uniquely russeted finely-netted golden orange skin but is far more than skin deep, with Goldman claiming this heirloom pumpkin has "flavor as fabulous as her appearance". Goldman advises baking the pumpkin whole, pierced with a few tiny vent holes, until it slumps after about an hour at 350°, scooping the pumpkin flesh out like ice cream and then putting it in the blender to make "the smoothest and most velvety pumpkin pie."

New England Pie Pumpkin

Also known as Small Sugar pumpkin—pumpkin pie standard for New England growers.

Rouge vif d'Etampes (Cinderella pumpkin)

This spectacular French heirloom turns the pumpkin patch into a glowing blaze with its deeply ridged burnt-orange to red fruits. The coarse fibrous deep yellow flesh is not as flavorful as that of the smaller pie pumpkins. Amy Goldman asserts in *The Compleat Squash*, "This one coasts on its looks alone," but Deborah Madison makes a wonderful soup in the pumpkin in her book *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*.

Jarrahdale

Heavily ribbed blue-green-gray smooth fruits flattened on top like pumpkins, but much sweeter. Thick stringless yellow-orange flesh takes on a complex rich flavor which is superb for baking and pies. Excellent keeper.

Come to the **3rd Sunday Gathering** at 4:00 p.m. on October 16th to join in a discussion about the farm season. Give the farmers your feedback, get your questions answered, and get to know your fellow shareholders. Refreshments provided.

To reach us:

Amanda Cather: farmmanager@communityfarms.org
Ellen, Matt, or Trina: asstgrowers@communityfarms.org
Marla Rhodes: developmentmanager@communityfarms.org
Volunteer Coordinators: volunteer@communityfarms.org
Newsletter Submissions: newsletter@communityfarms.org
CFO Board of Directors: board@communityfarms.org

**In October,
distributions will end
at 6:30 P.M.
because of darkness.**

Community Farms Outreach is a nonprofit organization dedicated to farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education.