Around the farm

By John Mitchell

Last week, preparations for the end of the season around Waltham Fields began in earnest. We received 3 tractor-trailer loads of all-natural, finished compost (around 69 tons of material) and spread it on select fields around the farm. That may sound like a lot of compost, but you need to consider that vegetable farmers often spread between 70 and 90 tons per acre of manure when they can get access to it.

About an acre of the farm has already been seeded to cover crop—Sudan grass at the back of the middle field, and cowpeas and ryegrass in portions of the large east field. The Sudan grass is already more than a foot tall, and by the time you read this, the other cover crop seed should be germinating and out of the ground.

New distribution shelter complete! Thank you volunteers!

As I write this on Wednesday, September 17, volunteers who have taken the afternoon off from work, are on vacation, and/or their friends who are in town on vacation and have been recruited for the effort—are finishing the roof on the new distribution shelter. Without knowing at this time how intense the effects of Hurricane Isabel will be in New England, the volunteers decided that they couldn’t wait until this weekend to finish the roof. If left unfinished, the new roof and the structure itself could be damaged by wind and moisture.

On behalf of the entire community that supports this farm, I want to thank these CSA-member volunteers for all they have given and for taking the time out of their lives and jobs to see this project through to completion. They are Jared Shaw, Burke Minsley, Caron Minsley, Chrissie Foot, Dave Engler, and Annaliese Franz.

What were those watermelons?

The watermelon season has gone by, and many people are continuing to ask me what were the varieties of the different colored melons that I grew this year. I experimented with many varieties that were new to me this season—fortunately, most were rare or heirloom varieties that have been bred to produce a crop in colder Northern latitudes. This summer has been an especially wet, sunless one, with many overcast days.

The round white watermelons were called Cream of Saskatchewan, the round red ones were called Blacktail Mountain, the dark green ones with peach flesh were called Curtis Showell White Flesh, we had the very popular yellow variety from Johnny’s, there was a modern red melon also from Johnny’s, and there was variety called Sorbet Swirl in which the flesh was sort of peachy orange with streaks of yellow and pink. This variety is also available from Johnny’s.

Many remarked about how the melons had seeds. It is becoming increasingly rare to find melons in the grocery stores that have seeds, as the agricultural industry is now standardizing on seedless watermelons.

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**RICOTTA LASAGNA SWIRLS**
This is based on a recipe by the same name from Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet*. New York [Ballantine Books, 1971]. I've been making it since 1971 – it was great in college, it was great with young children, it's still great for teenagers and young adults, and it looks about right for retirement! Average serving has 14 grams of usable protein.

8 cooked lasagna noodles

**Filling**
2 pounds fresh spinach, chopped
2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 cup ricotta cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Wash 2 pounds (less will work) fresh spinach; place washed spinach in saucepan and steam for about 7 minutes, until it is limp but not mushy. Mix spinach cheeses, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Coat each noodle with 2 to 3 tablespoons of mixture along the entire length of the noodle.

Roll up, turning on end so that you see the spiral. Stand on end in a baking dish.

**Sauce**
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 cups tomato sauce
1/2 teaspoon basil
1/2 teaspoon oregano

Sauté garlic and onion. Add tomato sauce, basil and oregano. Pour sauce over noodles and bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes.

**Gleaning crops for the CSA**

A note from John Mitchell, Farm Manager

At this time of year, certain crops that have diminished in productivity to the point where we can no longer harvest for the entire CSA are opened for gleaning to CSA members. These items are usually specialty crops in which our charity clients often have little or no interest. They are also labor-intensive to pick, and the availability of labor around the farm is greatly diminished at this time of year as the students have all gone back to school, so we have to triage what we harvest with the labor that is available.

The crops for gleaning are:
- Basil
- Cilantro
- French Beans
- Hot Peppers
- Parsley
- Specialty Basil
- Tomatillos

**OUR FARM: COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE**

From the editor’s inbox, a note from my husband, Leo Keightley

**Subject**: Weeds and bees

Hi Martha,
Something I noticed in my tomato marathon this week: When I take a bite of farm tomato, I can taste and smell the fragrance of the farm fields. I had noticed it before, but having spent more time visiting the farm this year, I recognized the smell of the herbs, flowers, and weeds. I just noticed the same types of flavors are in the [fruit share] peach I brought to work.

Love, Leo

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**Calendar of Events**

**Oct. 19**, Sunday, 3rd Sunday Gathering at the farm, byo picnic and beverage, 12:30-1:30.

**Oct. 20**, Monday, 8pm Board Meeting

**Nov. 1-5**, 7th Annual Community Food Security Conference - in Boston this year! This year’s CFSC conference is an excellent opportunity to connect with food activists and analysts to share experiences and learn from each other about building food systems that work for our communities.

See [http://www.foodsecurity.org/events.html](http://www.foodsecurity.org/events.html)

**Nov. 16**, Sunday, CFO Annual Meeting, election of 2004 Board of Directors, and dinner.