



# Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter Oct. 25-26, 2016

[www.sognvalleyfarm.com](http://www.sognvalleyfarm.com)

Greetings,

We have lucked out with some mild late-October weather. I've been surprised by how many crops are still growing out in the field. Yes, the warm-season crops like beans and peppers are now done for the season, but we still have broccoli, spinach, herbs, and a variety of root crops actively growing out there. As a result, we're spending more time harvesting for CSA and farmers' markets and less time doing what I planned to be doing this time of year: mass harvesting root crops (carrots, beets, turnips, radishes) for storage, dismantling the irrigation system, removing trellis stakes and plastic mulch, and seeding cover crops to protect the soil during the winter and spring. This is good, though—it means we're getting more mileage out of our plantings than I intended. But it also means that when the spigot of nice weather is finally turned off, we'll still have a backlog of field cleanup to do.

Did someone mention cover crops? Oh right, I did. Well, I guess I'll take my own lead and write a little about cover crops for those who don't know what they are or why we plant them. A cover crop is a non-cash crop (meaning we don't harvest any portion of it for sale) grown mainly to maintain or improve soil health. Cover crops commonly used on vegetable farms include winter rye, hairy vetch, oats, field peas, buckwheat, and sorghum-sudangrass. Next, I will touch on a few of the potential benefits of cover crops:

*Reduced soil erosion.* Whenever soil is tilled and bare, it is vulnerable to being blown away by wind or washed away as water runs across the soil surface after a rain. The foliage of cover crops reduces erosion by intercepting rain drops and protecting soil from wind. The roots physically hold soil particles together to keep them from blowing or washing away.

## What's in the box?

**Brussels sprouts:** We time the planting of our Brussels sprouts crop so that it matures after the first frost in the fall, which cues further sugar development within the plant. The result is a much tastier Brussels sprout. Try them in this week's recipe.

**Spinach:** The last couple of weeks have brought perfect weather for growing spinach. The leaves have bulked up quite a bit since you last received spinach, so we've provided you with a larger helping. While it's certainly still tender enough to eat raw in a salad, this spinach is also well suited for sautéing or adding to eggs or lasagna.

**Yellow potatoes:** With potatoes and leeks in the same box, consider making a soup, gratin, or one of the many other recipes out there that pair these two veggies.

**Leeks:** Leeks are milder in flavor than onions, but can be used similarly. Eat the white bulb and light green part of the shaft. The leaves are not edible, but can be simmered with carrots, celery (or celeriac), and chicken bones to make stock. Leeks commonly catch soil that splashes onto the leaves during growth, which in turn gets sandwiched between layers. You may want to rinse between the layers of the light green part on the upper half of the leek. Just peel back a leaf and check for grit.

**Red kuri squash:** A winter squash variety with a sweet, nutty flavor and smooth flesh. It's great in soups, or just baked: cut in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, place cut-side down in a baking pan with ~1/4 inch of water in it, and bake at 350° for an hour or more, depending on the size of the squash. You'll receive either one larger or two smaller squash.

**Broccoli:** This should be quite similar to the broccoli you received two weeks ago. I've been enjoying this stuff more than any of the broccoli we have grown this year.

**Garlic:** Use it in this week's recipe.

**Arugula:** This arugula is larger than what you may see in a clamshell at the grocery store. It's a little spicier and not quite as tender as baby arugula. I would recommend sautéing it with some butter and garlic or adding to eggs, as cooking diminishes the hotness. We rinsed the arugula after bunching it in the field, but I would advise rinsing it again after removing the rubber band.

**Red beets:** Beets are sweet, earthy, and full of flavor. They can be roasted, steamed, or shaved and eaten raw in a salad.

## On Deck

*Some of the items you'll likely see in the next week or two..*

Sweet potatoes — Cauliflower — Cipollini onions — Carrots —  
Purple top turnips — Sun Gold cherry tomatoes??

*Increased soil organic matter.* Soil organic matter is an extremely important component of soils—think of it as the remains of organisms (plants, insects, fungi, bacteria, algae) at various stages of decay. Books have been written on the topic, but suffice it to say that increasing organic matter is pretty much universally beneficial to the agronomic and ecologic functions of soil. Of particular importance to a farmer, organic matter improves water- and nutrient-holding capacity of the soil (making both available to crop roots). Some cover crops, such as winter rye and sorghum-sudangrass, have the potential to produce huge amounts of biomass, leading to eventual increases in soil organic matter.

*Nitrogen fixation.* Nitrogen is a nutrient required in large amounts by vegetable plants, but which is deficient in most soils. As a result, most farmers apply nitrogen fertilizer to their fields each year, be that from a synthetic source like anhydrous ammonia or urea (commonly used by corn and soybean farmers around here), or dehydrated, composted poultry manure like we use. Alternatively, it is possible to obtain nitrogen from legumes, which are plants that form symbiotic relationships with bacteria capable of converting atmospheric nitrogen (unusable by plants) to a plant-available form. Green beans and snap peas are both legumes, but so are several cover crops we grow: hairy vetch, field peas, Sunn hemp, and cowpeas. These plants produce lots of nitrogen-rich biomass, which, once tilled back into the soil, is released and made available for uptake by the subsequent vegetable crop.

I could go on and on about cover crops and geeky soil-related stuff, but I have neither the time this morning nor space in this newsletter to do it justice. For those of you interested in this stuff (and not put to sleep by it), keep an eye on our blog this fall and winter. I'll probably write several posts, expanding on these and additional concepts.

Have a nice week.

Best,  
Dana

## Yorkhall Brussels Sprouts

*Our cousins Kara and Chandler Yorkhall brought a Brussels sprout dish to Thanksgiving dinner last year, and we LOVED it. We asked them for the recipe. They didn't have a precise recipe, but came up with some rough measurements for what they usually put in it. Since they are also CSA members, I think it is quite appropriate to share it in this newsletter. You should have enough Brussels sprouts to 1.5x this recipe, if you want to use them all in one dish.*

### Ingredients

1 lb Brussels sprouts, trimmed and rinsed  
1 Tbsp butter  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
1 Tbsp garlic, minced or pressed  
1 Tbsp stone ground mustard  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
Parsley, cilantro, or oregano, *optional*

### Directions

1. Steam the Brussels sprouts until tender, about 6-8 minutes. While the Brussels sprouts are cooking, mince garlic and get remaining ingredients ready.
2. Drain water from pot. Add all remaining ingredients while Brussels sprouts are still piping hot, and stir. This will melt the butter and allow the garlic to be slightly cooked.
3. Eat right away!