



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter June 13-14, 2017

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

After a few days of unseasonable heat last week, we finally got the rain we'd been hoping for for nearly three weeks. This temporarily relieves the burden of irrigation that has been occupying us recently. Lacking a high capacity well or irrigation pond, we rely on a standard residential well to supply water to our house, packing shed, greenhouse, and nine acres of vegetable crops. This requires irrigating fields using highly efficient (but slow) drip irrigation, and subdividing our cropland into 25-30 irrigation zones. We run each one for about 12 hours to supply the equivalent of 1 inch of rain. This means our pump is running 24/7 and twice a day we turn off some valves and turn on others to direct water to a new area. Then we walk the field to repair holes where rodents have chewed or the cultivator nicked the hose. Needless to say, it's a lot easier to watch rain soak our fields.

We also have to mention that, while we were blessed with about 1.5 inches of rain (which came torrentially over a period of an hour or two), several other farms in MN and WI were hit with hail, shredding most of their crops. Many of them notified their CSA members that this week's box is cancelled, and the future is uncertain. This reminds us of our own vulnerability to the elements. One stroke of bad luck—ending up in an isolated hail-producing thunderstorm—and hundreds of hours of recent work and tens of thousands of dollars of future sales is erased. Not to mention greenhouse destroyed and other infrastructure damaged. We've now been spared three times this season when other farms were hit with hail—but one of these days, it will be our turn.

On that cheery note...our crops are mostly looking pretty good. Garlic is starting to produce scapes; high tunnel cucumbers are sizing up; tomatoes are full of green fruit (high tunnel) and flowers (outside); sweet potato slips are planted; and cucurbit (squash, melons, zucchini, cucumbers) plants are finally getting established after late, rain-delayed transplanting.

Strawberry update: Our strawberry crop is not faring as well, so I wanted to give you some background so you can better understand what you're

What's in the box?

Salad mix: A tasty mix of eight different kinds of baby-leaf lettuce. This variety of lettuce has more body to it than standard clamshell spring mix, and it usually has great shelf life (1-2 weeks). Pre-washed and ready-to-eat! Use it in this week's recipe.

Red radishes: Slice these up for a slightly spicy addition to your salad. Also, don't toss the greens! They can be sautéed like many other cooking greens and have fairly mild flavor. Use them in this week's recipe. Separate the tops from the roots and store in a plastic bag to preserve quality.

Green or red butterhead or red leaf lettuce: Most members are receiving butterhead lettuce this week, which has buttery flavor and a soft, blanched heart.

Dill: This tender, aromatic herb is great on salads, with potatoes, in soups, or in a tzatziki sauce (cucumbers coming soon). Use it in today's recipe.

Broccoli: We usually prepare broccoli by steaming it for 2-3 minutes and lightly dressing with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Simple and delicious.

Salad turnips: These small, white spring turnips are milder-flavored and slightly sweet when compared to their larger purple-shouldered cousins. These are delicious when eaten fresh, either on a salad or raw with dip. Due to muddy conditions during harvest, you may find some soil inside your bunch that we were unable to remove during the washing process. Separate the tops from the roots and store in a plastic bag.

Swiss chard: We generally eat chard in our scrambled eggs or in a sauté with garlic, lemon juice, and parmesan. Use it similarly to cooked spinach.

Strawberries (rotational): Only certain pickup locations will receive strawberries this week. Next week, another group of members (or perhaps all members) will receive them. With extreme heat on Friday/Saturday and loads of rain on Sunday (after a dry spell), these are quite ripe and are showing signs of skin splitting. You should consider these highly perishable and eat them right away. See farm update at left for some more background on our strawberry situation.

Sugar snap peas (full shares only): The first harvest of snap peas is always a little small, but as an added challenge, the seed lot we received from our supplier had low germination and contamination with a shelling pea variety with inedible pods. We've had to rogue out those plants to minimize the chance of shelling peas ending up in your boxes. As a result of all this, our snap pea crop is sparse and lower yielding than what we wanted for CSA. We hope to provide peas to half share members next week. On the bright side, the peas we do have are delicious!

On Deck

Each week, we'll give some hints about what new items may show up CSA shares in the next 1-2 weeks. Please note, this is not a guarantee, but our attempt to give you an idea of what's coming up.

European cucumbers — Chives — Green onions — Kohlrabi — Beets —

Strawberries (for those who haven't received any)

receiving. Last year, we planted an *everbearing* strawberry variety, which allowed us to harvest fruit the same year the crop was planted. This is in contrast to the *June-bearing* varieties that show up from late May through early July and comprise the vast majority of strawberries you buy on the market. Everbearing strawberries produce at a lower rate for a longer period during the season. The production system we used is designed to be annual, meaning the crop is re-planted each year. We decided to try and keep our 2016 planting for a second year—these plants are producing the berries (some of) you have received in your boxes over the first two weeks of CSA. By maintaining last year's planting, we're getting much earlier harvests (this year's planting is still a month away from the first harvest), but there are also certain quality issues, including smaller fruit size.

Another strawberry production challenge we have is from a tiny insect called the western flower thrips. The feeding damage from these causes a condition called *bronzing*, which you are likely seeing on many of your berries. The symptoms are pronounced/protruding seeds; a brownish, bronzed coloration; and slightly drier, chewier texture. I have actually found these berries to be tasty, having more concentrated flavor than some other berries. But they do look different from what you might be used to. The only real management option we have to prevent this condition is to spray an organic insecticide to kill the thrips, which we have thus far decided not to do. If the problem persists and worsens, we may choose this route, as the process of harvest and inspection is lengthened substantially when dealing with these defects. I hope that helps you better understand what we're dealing with on the strawberry front. Once our new planting gets into full swing, we hope to have another flush of nice berries for your boxes.

As we enter our second CSA week, we hope we've gotten the kinks out of our CSA delivery route. Members at two drop sites had their share deliveries delayed last week as a result of mix-ups on our end. To those members, thank you for your flexibility and understanding. This week, we're working hard to ensure deliveries go off without a hitch.

Wishing you all a great week full of tasty meals.

-Dana

P.S. This and all previous newsletters are archived on our website at <http://sognvalleyfarm.com/newsletters/>. This can be helpful if you misplace a newsletter or want to refer back to an old one (including to pull recipes from last year). We usually post these by midday on Tuesday, so it can also be a way to get a sneak peak of what's going to be in your box.

Spring Root Salad

We've been eating some version of this salad at least once a day for the last week. It's easy to prepare, very refreshing, and uses several items from this week's box. The dressing recipe comes courtesy of my cousin and CSA member Chandler Yorkhall. It's really less a recipe than a formula to use to concoct a salad dressing out of whatever you have in the kitchen—that's our style.

Ingredients:

For the salad:

- 1/2 bag of salad mix
- 1/2 head of lettuce, rinsed and torn
- 2 salad turnips, sliced
- 2-3 radishes, sliced
- Grated parmesan cheese (optional)
- Walnuts (optional)
- 4 hardboiled eggs, sliced (optional)

For the dressing:

- 5 parts oil (extra-virgin olive, sunflower, or other)
- 5 parts vinegar (balsamic, apple cider, or other); *adjust based on your preferences—Chandler prefers 5 parts or even more vinegar, but some of you may prefer a less acidic dressing*
- 1 part honey or maple syrup
- Fresh herbs, finely chopped, to taste (dill, rosemary, thyme, oregano, sage)
- Garlic or garlic scapes, minced or pressed, to taste [next week, try using garlic scapes from your CSA box!]

1. Mix together salad mix, lettuce, turnips, radishes, and parmesan.
2. Top with hardboiled eggs and walnuts.
3. Whisk dressing ingredients together (or shake in a mason jar) and serve over salad.

This recipe was inspired by Dani Lind of Rooted Spoon Culinary, via our friends and fellow CSA farmers at Driftless Organics. <https://www.driftlessorganics.com/organic-turnip-salad-with-summer-savory-dressing/>