



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter June 27-28, 2017

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

What a beautiful week it has been! Sunny, cool, and not all that humid. Perfect working weather. While cool weather invariably slows down plant growth and delays harvest, some of our cool-season crops—broccoli, spinach, and lettuce—grow very nicely in these conditions.

Let's talk broccoli. My interest in broccoli led me to choose it as one of my "test" crop for my graduate research at Iowa State University looking at reduced tillage systems for vegetable production. The head is a dense cluster of flower buds (also called "beads"), which, left unharvested, will swell, elongate, and branch out into yellow flowers. Cool weather during head development favors slow, steady, and uniform heads, so I find that the most reliably high-quality broccoli comes in the fall.

While the plant usually establishes well after transplanting, and, given adequate fertility, forms a large, leafy plant, the development of the head is affected strongly by weather and is subject to all sorts of aesthetic defects, some of which you may see on your CSA broccoli on occasion:

- **Bead uniformity.** As the head matures, the beads swell, darken, and loosen up. Sometimes this doesn't happen uniformly, and some beads are small, light green, and tight, while others are large, dark, and looser. There is a moderate amount of this going on in this week's broccoli. The management challenge here is deciding whether waiting to harvest will allow the tighter, smaller beads to mature without the larger ones overmaturing and starting to open.
- **Bead color.** Sometimes the beads do not mature to the same color, most commonly resulting in a pattern of light green spirals interspersed throughout a darker green head. I usually associate this with certain varieties maturing during very hot weather.
- **Head shape.** We're aiming for a nice, domed head of broccoli. However, sometimes they end up "knobby," where some florets are taller or shorter than other florets. Another condition, caused by warm nights during maturation, results in a more or less flat,

What's in the box?

European cucumber: It's our first year growing these long, thin-skinned, mostly seedless cucumbers. They're coming out of our high tunnel, leading to this earlier harvest. Store in a plastic bag to prevent desiccation.

Green or red butterhead lettuce: The butterhead lettuce I've eaten recently has been super mild without a trace of bitterness, and even slightly sweet! My new favorite head lettuce. You may see a bit of tipburn (browning of the leaf edge), but this shouldn't affect the eating quality. Also, we've had some heavy rains recently that have splashed a lot of soil onto the heads—we've cleaned much of it off, but you may find a bit more soil in/on the lettuce than usual. Just wash before eating.

Broccoli: We're starting to harvest the first of a few nice looking broccoli plantings. This recent cool weather, while it has *slowed* the pace of broccoli maturation, has been great for the quality of the crop. Larger heads, more uniform coloration of the beads.

Scallions: Finely slice both the white bulb and the green leaves for a zesty topping for a salad, garnish for a soup or Mexican-style dish, or in this week's recipe.

Spinach: This tender spinach will be the last of the spring. It's a lighter helping than you received from our larger early spring planting a few weeks ago, so a good candidate for fresh eating rather than cooking.

Green top beets: The smaller, early beets are tender and delicious when roasted or steamed and added to a salad or paired with goat cheese on crostini. You can peel if you wish, but I find these young beets to be fine unpeeled. There are nice greens on these, too. These can be sautéed and used like chard—separate leaves from stems and cook stems a little longer.

Lacinato or green curly kale: A versatile and nutritious leafy vegetable. People ask us what dishes we use kale in...we respond, "what dishes *don't* we put kale in?!" Add it to eggs, stir fries, soups, or raw in a massaged kale salad.

Sun Gold cherry tomatoes (rotational): The Sun Gold tomato plants in the high tunnel are loaded with fruit, but are at the beginning of their usual sigmoid ("S" shaped) yield curve. Yes, I had to look that up. Starts slow, then increases exponentially over 2-3 weeks, then plateaus to a consistent weekly harvest. Suffice it to say that only a few are getting cherry tomatoes this week, but don't worry, there'll be plenty for everyone later on.

Garlic scapes (full shares only): A scape is the developing flower stalk of hardneck garlic plants, and is a versatile, easy-to-use form of garlic. Chop it up finely and use it in sautés, stir fries, or in any other dish where you would use garlic cloves.

Sugar snap or snow peas (full shares only): We scrounged up another little harvest from our pea plantings to provide another small bags of either snap or snow peas. Both have edible pods and are great raw, but snow peas are commonly used in Asian stir fries.

Red leaf lettuce (full shares only)

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.

Green cabbage — Parsley — Cherry tomatoes — Purple spring onions — Green beans

rather than dome-shaped, head. This can sometimes lead to a soft rot, because rain pools on the head and facilitates decay.

- Hollow stem. Pretty self-explanatory—looking at the bottom of the stem, you’ll see a hollow cavity, occasionally accompanied by a bit of brown tissue. We saw this fairly often last summer. It can be associated with micronutrient deficiency, but not always. More commonly it’s a result of conditions favoring excessively rapid growth, such as hot temperatures or high levels of nitrogen. The head is unaffected, but the condition makes the stem less easy to prepare for eating.

There’s not much we can do about the weather, so we have little ability to curb these during the season. This is why variety selection is critical. We grow different varieties during the spring, summer, and fall that have characteristics making them better-suited to those seasons. We also often pair two varieties with different maturity dates in the same planting, thus allowing us to get 2+ successive weeks of broccoli harvest from a single planting. But even using that strategy, we’ll be planting broccoli 14 times this season, from April through early August!

Moving on...

For members picking up at the farm, Ferndale Market, Just Food Co-op, or River ridge, now’s your last chance to sign up for a flower share add-on! You may recall from an earlier email that we’ve partnered with our friends at Late Bloom Farm in Northfield to offer weekly or bi-weekly bouquets of fresh cut flowers to members of our CSA. We expect deliveries of flowers to begin next week. So if you’re picking up at one of the aforementioned drop sites and haven’t yet signed up for the flower share add-on, here’s our final plug!

Have a great week!

Dana



Broccoli Salad

I couldn’t help but recycle this recipe that appeared in a newsletter last year, as my mom made this for me a couple of weeks ago and I was reminded of how much I love it. The recipe comes from my grandma, by way of my mom. It’s a simple, yet surprisingly addictive way to use raw broccoli. It’s a great side dish for summer meals, but can easily turn into the main course if you’re not careful ;-). Although the flavor is enhanced by the bacon in this recipe, we have made it without the bacon, and it is still very tasty.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch broccoli, florets and peeled stem cut into small pieces
- 1/2 to 3/4 C red onion, finely chopped (or try substituting the scallions from this week’s box)
- 12 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 1/2 C mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp vinegar
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 C sunflower seeds

Preparation:

1. Cook the bacon using the method of your choice. We like baking it in the oven at 400°F for 10-15 minutes. It cooks evenly and, if you line the baking sheet with aluminum foil, clean-up is quite easy. Once cooled, chop bacon into 1/4 to 1/2 inch pieces.
2. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well.
3. Place in the refrigerator until chilled, then eat!