



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter Sept. 26-27, 2017

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

Conversations with farmers' market customers indicate a perception that, this time of year, we're wrapping up the season, winding down. Lucky for fall CSA members, that's not quite true. There are lots of crops out there that we're still harvesting, and some that we've yet to harvest even once.

With that said, many plantings of succession crops (broccoli, lettuce, herbs, etc.) are now finished and tilled into the soil. The result is a patchwork of green, growing fields and brown, tilled fields.

Most of you have probably seen me write something about cover crops. (Disclaimer: you're about to see more!) These are non-cash crops we plant before, between, or after vegetable crops for the purpose of enhancing soil health. Cover crops include grasses such as oats and rye; legumes such as peas, clover, and vetch; and broadleaf annuals such as buckwheat and phacelia.

In an ideal world, a cover crop would be growing in a field before and after a vegetable crop, leaving the soil bare for as little time as possible. When the field is bare, it is vulnerable to soil erosion (plant leaves interrupt and slow rain droplets, while roots bind soil particles together). It grows weeds (nature's cover crop) that go to seed and increase weed pressure for subsequent years. It deprives beneficial *mycorrhizal fungi*, which require living plant roots for survival, of a host. And it means nothing beneficial is going on in that field—no vegetables, no nitrogen fixation, no organic matter production, no beneficial insect habitat.

Now to the part where I confess...that I do have some bare fields out there right now. My excuse is partially a lack of time to get those cover crops established. We're already spending the majority of the week on routine harvest and washing activities for market and CSA, and off-days have been spent planting the last vegetable successions and bulk harvesting storage crops.

What's in the box?

White cauliflower: Roast with garlic, oil, salt, and pepper for a very simple but satisfying side, or spice it up with this week's recipe.

Broccoli: Steam, sauté, and stir-fry are among our favorite ways to prepare broccoli. In case you forgot, store in a plastic bag in your fridge to keep broccoli fresh.

Spinach: This semi-mature spinach is tender enough to eat raw but bulky enough to be wilted or lightly sautéed and not completely disappear. Try it as a bed of greens to accompany the roasted cauliflower and cabbage? These are washed and ready to eat.

Green cabbage: This is a new variety to us this year and has a slightly flattened shape. Stir-fry, make sauerkraut, or use it in this week's recipe.

Snacking/lunchbox peppers: We tried a couple varieties of mini sweet peppers this year, one of which is a bell-shaped pepper and the other which is more elongated. They're sweet like a ripe bell pepper and great for snacking or packing in lunchboxes!

Acorn squash: This winter squash is traditionally cut in half, scraped clean of seeds, and roasted, cut-side-down, in a roasting pan with a little bit of water. When the flesh is soft, add a bit of butter and brown sugar or maple syrup, or lightly salt for a more savory version. Also a great candidate for stuffed squash.

Cherry tomatoes: We're at the tail end of cherry tomato season and you're receiving one or a mixture of the four varieties we are growing: 'Sun Gold,' 'Sakura' red cherry (larger), 'Bing' red cherry (smaller), and 'Black Cherry.'

Yellow onions: Standard yellow storage onions to dice and sauté. Use in this week's recipe.

Garlic: Use in this week's recipe. Some heads have a bit of discoloration on the outer dried skin layers, but this doesn't reach the inner cloves, from what we've seen.

Assorted bell peppers: You're receiving red and/or green bell peppers. In the event that you're receiving these faster than you can eat them, try freezing. It's really easy with peppers. Simply prepare as you normal would for cooking (remove seeds and membrane, chop), then put them in freezer bags. No need to blanch. Freezing in a single layer on a baking sheet before transferring to a bag will make it easier to remove a portion of the peppers without having to thaw the entire bag.

Romanesco cauliflower (full shares only): This fractal-patterned cauliflower is one of the more unusual crops we grow. Wonderful flavor and stunning appearance. Roast, or try steaming and then dressing with garlic butter and a balsamic reduction.

Green beans (full shares only)

On Deck (for the last summer CSA box)

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.

**Brussels spouts — Butternut squash — Red cabbage — Uncured sweet potatoes
— Potatoes — Turnips — Beets — Kale — Celeriac**

The other hang-up is choosing the appropriate cover crop to establish. A poorly chosen cover crop can create management challenges that are ultimately harmful to the end goal of producing vegetables. The most major decision is whether to plant a cold-hardy cover crop that overwinters and continues growing in the spring (e.g. cereal rye, hairy vetch, winter wheat, white and red clover) or a frost sensitive cover crop that will die back over the winter (oats, field peas, buckwheat, crimson clover, sorghum-sudangrass, sunn hemp). Winter-hardy cover crops will keep producing biomass and fixing nitrogen in the spring and taking up nitrate that may otherwise be leached into groundwater during spring rains—these are optimal if the *following* cash crop will be planted after at least May 1st, or ideally after June 1st. If an overwintering cover crop is planted in a field where I want to establish early broccoli on April 10th, I'm going to be hard pressed to get into the field and kill that cover crop ahead of vegetable planting. The broccoli planting would likely be delayed.

So that's the biggest no-no: planting an overwintering cover crop ahead of an April-planted vegetable. The converse—planting a winter-killed cover crop ahead of a late-planted vegetable—is not as consequential for management, but just minimizes the benefits of the cover crop because there is no growth in the spring.

So, getting back to my excuse for having not speedily seeded all my bare fields to cover crops: I don't yet have the 2018 field plan worked out, therefore I don't know whether I should plant an overwintering or winterkilled cover crop. And during the height of the growing season in August and early September, no vegetable farmer has time to sit down and make a crop plan. That's a complex and arduous process more suitable for winter. The lesson here is that I should aim to think at least two years ahead when planning my crop rotation. What's going in Field 9 in 2018? What in 2019? And, therefore, which cover crop makes sense to plant after the 2018 vegetable crop?

If I haven't put you to sleep by this point, I commend you! Thanks for putting up with the musings of a nerdy vegetable farmer.

Have a good week,

–Dana

Roasted Cabbage & Cauliflower Salad With Peanut Dressing

You've probably now gathered our tendency towards roasting vegetables. We also love intensely flavored foods like those with peanut sauce and curry, so this one fits the bill. The chickpeas add protein and make this potentially a standalone dish, but it works well as a side, too.

Ingredients

1 head cauliflower, cut into small florets
1 head of cabbage, thinly sliced
1/4 cup olive oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black pepper
1 (15oz) can chickpeas - or 2 cups of homemade beans, warmed
1/4 cup green onions or chives, sliced (optional)

Peanut Sauce

1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
2 Tbsp brown rice vinegar
1 clove garlic, chopped
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
1/3 cup hot water

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Place cauliflower and cabbage onto a baking dish. Drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper. Mix well and roast for 30 minutes or until cabbage and cauliflower are browned.
3. Meanwhile, mix together peanut sauce and set aside. You can add more water to thin the dressing if needed.
4. Once cauliflower and cabbage are done, let cool for a few minutes then mix cauliflower, cabbage and chickpeas together. Add more salt and pepper as needed.
5. Serve over grain of choice or greens and drizzle with peanut sauce. Garnish with green onion or chives if using.

Adapted from: <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-13100/roasted-cabbage-cauliflower-salad-with-peanut-dressing.html>