

FIELD *notes*

UCSC Farm
Community Supported Agriculture
First Harvest 6/15/10 & 6/18/10



What's in the box?

Salad Mix

Baby Spinach, *Crocodile*

Arugula, *Astro*

Pac Choi, *Black Summer*

Baby Turnips, *Hakurei*

Avocado

Strawberries, *Seascape and Albion mix*

Blueberries, *mixed varieties*

A note on variety selection...

Each week, we list the contents of your produce box with the variety in italics. Members may wonder what guides our variety selections. The factors are several, but overall, the leading considerations that guide variety choices for the CSA box are: compatibility with local growing conditions and flavor quality.

Keen gardeners and food lovers will enjoy the parade of varietal players that appear here week after week. Keep an eye out for interesting heirlooms and open pollinated varieties you won't find just anywhere.

Upcoming Event

A Garden of Poetry and Music

Saturday, June 26, 12 noon - 2pm

Alan Chadwick Garden, UCSC

Set aside time for an afternoon in the Garden as we listen to the poems and tunes of the region's artists at this free event. Questions? Call 831.459-3240 or email casfs@ucsc.edu

Welcome CSA members new and returning! We are very happy to be harvesting, and very grateful for your support! We look forward to bringing you a season's worth of our freshest, most delicious vegetables, and getting to know you as members. I'm sure you will enjoy the company of our wonderful 2010 apprentices, who labor long and lovingly to bring the food to the table.

Are we extending the season? Members have been asking how the late rains and later planting calendar will affect the overall CSA season. At this time, it looks like we will not go later in the fall than originally planned, but will aim to offer larger-than-usual harvests periodically throughout the summer to balance out the late start.

Fortunately, it looks like a fantastic apple season, the winter squash and heirloom tomatoes are thriving, and our usual mix of lettuces, carrots, beets, broccoli, and herbs are fine, just later than usual. Early potatoes and storage onions may not fare so well this year due to difficult planting conditions. We will be trying onions from transplant this year, rather than direct seeded, including two red varieties, a red "Torpedo" onion, and an heirloom red onion "Rossa di Milano." This first box and the first few weeks will be heavily weighted towards greens—salad greens and cooking greens, because those are our fastest crops. Enjoy!

Liz Milazzo, Field Production Manager



"Growing food is the most basic use of the natural resources of the Earth, and through food production, we make our own working landscapes. How each society or nation produces and distributes food in large measure determines its identity." from *Sharing the Harvest: A Citizen's Guide to CSA*



Field Trash or Soil Treasure?

An old saying goes, “The best fertilizer is the farmer’s footsteps.” Walking the rows frequently, we will see any problems developing and be able to respond appropriately.

Walking around the field this Sunday morning, I see the corn has shot up with the brief heat wave we endured yesterday, the green beans have turned a darker shade of green and the leaves are glossy—real heat lovers! The pumpkins we cultivated on Friday have responded to more air in the soil and are starting to vine. The Oscarde lettuce has turned a much darker shade of red, and the cipollini onions have shot up!

Looking down the furrows in the Main field, with the low angle of the morning sun, a distinct carpet of red shows where red root pigweed was able to sneak up in between the zucchini plants last year and set a load of seed. That’s where we will hoe Monday morning.

It’s a relief at this point in mid-June to know we have more than half of the year’s plantings in the ground and we will be harvesting the first quick crops! This year’s plantings are only three weeks later than the last two years, though it feels like two months!

For those new to the CSA, we count very heavily on our winter cover crop for fertility. If it rains long and a lot, the cover crop of bell beans, vetch, and oats can reach 7 feet tall before we are able to mow and turn it in! For long-term soil health, we refrain from working the soil too wet, so in a year like this where we had ample rains, the beginning of our season is dominated by questions of timing --when is the ground dry enough to work? When will the cover crop residue be broken down enough for nice soil tilth and good seeding conditions?

This year it looks like we deliberately spread straw over our fields, but what you see is just the residue of the oats in the cover crop mix. We will still see bits of oat stems on the soil surface until August!

In the short term, there is a “nitrogen rob” as the nitrogen in the soil is tied up in the bodies of the soil microbes breaking down the “trash.” In this interval, we often give the crops a boost with a homemade nettle tea fertilizer applied to the leaves with a backpack sprayer. In the long term, we are building soil carbon with the addition of so much cover crop residue, which is a good thing—laying the foundation for soil health over the long term. Within a relatively short period of time the nitrogen that was “robbed” will be given back.

The CSA Cutting Garden

For years, we have maintained a lovely garden of flowers and herbs for CSA members to cut at will and take home with them. The garden is an ideal spot for children to interact with insects and plants when their parents pick up boxes. Many children love helping to select the flowers for cutting. Many of the plants are labeled to provide an educational opportunity.

Please note that the Bouquet CSA add-on that was mentioned in earlier newsletters is a separate, optional program and does not affect use of the cutting garden. Also, members who elected for the convenience of the Bay & High Street pick up location are also welcome to use the cutting garden when they have the extra time to make the trip. We ask, however, that members come on Tuesday or Friday afternoons to help us maintain the garden on other days. Thanks!