

Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for September 23rd

1 head red cabbage
1 fennel
1 bunch red beets
1 bunch Nelson carrots
1 bunch arugula
1 bunch Lacinato kale
1.5# red 'Desiree' potatoes
1 bunch Piricicaba sprouting broccoli
2 sweet peppers

Next week's produce (we think): carrots – golden beets – Red Kuri squash – cauliflower (maybe) – kale – radishes – lettuce – peppers

Large box additions

½# romanesco
1# tomatoes

Local Roots Farm News

We turned the page to fall this week, easing into the season with a little rain, a little sun, and a lot of harvesting! At this point in the season I can map out a rough outline of the contents of the boxes for the rest of the year. We know what produce remains in the field, and every day we are bringing in a little more of our fall storage crops (squash, carrots, turnips...) There are fewer surprises at this time of year – plant growth slows, and crops “hold” longer in the field. In late July, a head of broccoli is at it's ideal condition for about twenty-four hours, but in late September we have at least a week's time between when the broccoli reaches full size to when it starts to flower. All these things mean that we have a little more freedom to choose what goes in the boxes when, and we have a growing “back-stock” of items to draw from to complement the week's fresh-picked items.

Project Time! This fall we are undertaking several large improvements to our farm infrastructure. Starting next week, our 80 year old farmhouse will be elevated about 7 feet, and a new foundation poured. We are the beneficiaries of a King County program to elevate all the farmhouses in our flood-prone valley; although our house has never had floodwaters inside it, we are below the level of the projected 100-year flood, so we are goin' up! This will be a fairly disruptive project for our household, as well as for our crew (our wash and pack shed is the carport attached to our house, definitely part of the construction zone). So, one of the other projects we are working on this week is to shift some of our harvest and packing activities over to a barn on the other side of our farm. We are laying the groundwork to build a third large refrigerator in this barn, and the timing of the house lifting is giving us extra motivation to get the “auxiliary” wash station running smoothly.

Lastly, a grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service is allowing us to deal with a vestige of this farm's dairying past: the million-gallon manure storage pond. NRCS helps pay for farms to properly clean out these old “lagoons” and repurpose them. Ours is adjacent to a large barn, which we will be able to use for catching rain-water to fill the pond in the winter for use as summer irrigation. This pond has been sitting, its banks covered in 8-foot high blackberry bushes, since we moved to the farm almost four years ago. The prospect of ever even conquering the brambles was daunting. But last week, as part of the NRSC grant, we hired the “Brush Monster” to come out with his boom mower and he blitzed the blackberries away in just a day. By the end of October (fingers crossed!), our farm will be looking much different than it does today. All we have to do is survive the chaos of the next 6 weeks!
Happy autumnal equinox! ~ Siri, and the Local Roots crew

Ideas and info for this week's produce

Most of today's produce should be pretty familiar and user-friendly. A couple highlights:

Piricicaba – We are huge fans of this sprouting broccoli. It was bred at an ag university in Brazil to be more heat tolerant than standard “heading” broccoli. It forms a small central head at first, followed by prolific amounts of side-shoots, which we pick and bunch. At the farmers market, I like to tell people that piricicaba is “everything that's good about broccoli and nothing that's bad”. It has tender, thin-skinned stems, and a sweet, mild broccoli flavor. You can use them just as you would “regular” broccoli, but in our house, we usually roast the florets on a cookie sheet. The thin stems I leave whole, but if they are thicker than my thumb I slice them in half lengthwise.

It took some careful management for us to have 240 bunches all ready at the same time from this crop. The plants are very non-uniform, so predicting the total number of bunches that a bed will yield is tricky. As we get better at assessing and maintaining this particular special vegetable we hope to give more of it in the future.

Red Cabbage – A perfect vegetable to lead the way into fall. This beautiful cabbage will pair nicely with beets, fennel, or carrots, either as a raw slaw or a long-cooked braise. I'll include several recipes for this in today's email.

Notes on managing vegetable supply:

If you are falling behind on vegetable consumption, please note that many of this week's items will store for several weeks (months even!). Beets and carrots, with all their greens removed, will store in a sealed container in the fridge almost indefinitely. Red cabbage is also a very long-storing vegetable. Fennel will keep in good condition for a week or so, and in ok condition for two to three weeks. Potatoes will happily sit in a dark cupboard for several months.

Arugula, broccoli, and kale are best eaten soon!