The peas are finally here! Today your bag of peas contains both snow and snap peas. They are both edible-podded (no need to shell them – eat them pod and all), and they are very easy to tell apart, so I thought it would be a good idea to save some bags and combine them.

The peas you will encounter first when you open the bag are snow peas. They are longer, wider, and thinner than the snap peas. This variety of snow pea is one that we grow and save seed for ourselves at the farm. It is called Sumo and it is certainly the largest snow pea I have seen. It is also quite sweet. When we did a pea tasting at the farm this week, the interns suggested using the Sumos on sandwiches. Of course they are also well known as a necessary ingredient in stir-fry.

The shorter, fatter peas in the bag are the snap peas. The variety is Sugar Ann, which is the earliest maturing pea that we have on the farm. Snap peas are and have been the darling of the pea world for quite some time. That reputation is earned through their extreme sweetness. Though all peas are sweet when picked at maturity, when we did that pea taste test, the snap peas were clearly sweeter than the snows. I am personally a big fan of the shell peas, so we shall see how those compare when they start to come on. For now you can expect more of both the snows and the snaps for next week. I am expecting a new variety of snap called Cascadia to be especially productive by then.

(continued on the back)

I, as many people, woke up to the sound of thunder, wind, and rain on Tuesday night. We have a sun porch on our house with windows on two sides. We sleep there in the heat of the summer to take advantage of the cooler nighttime air moving through the open windows. The disadvantage of this room is that with so many open windows the outdoor noises are quite loud. There was no sleeping through that storm on the porch. I woke up at 1:30 AM and had many hours to contemplate what might be happening at the farm.

I knew there would be huge puddles on the field road. I knew the paths would be muddy. I wondered if the kale, chard, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant would be hurt by the few minutes of hail that I heard fall at the very start of the storm. I also wondered how we could possibly finish the CSA harvest if the lightening did not stop long enough for us to enter that open field. Meanwhile the wind was whipping and I knew there were a couple of vents open on the new greenhouse. The builder told us that the vents could be damaged in strong winds so I went to the farm and closed the vents, listened to the weather radio for a while hoping for some good news, and then tried to rest before the harvest.

When I arrived at the farm on Wednesday morning, I was so grateful that the storm had finally passed. The road was muddy to the point of impassible, but at least the rain and lightening had stopped and it looked like we would be able to finish the harvest even if it took longer than usual to pick, pack, and finally haul out to our truck.

We started with usual Wednesday morning pea harvest. That’s when the bad news started to come in. The wind knocked over most of our very tall snow peas, in some cases breaking the stakes and/or strings of their trellis, and in most cases folding the vines in half making them very difficult to pick. Even the shorter vines suffered wind damage. Somehow I had not thought to contemplate the effects of the wind on the crops, so I was caught off guard by the site of the peas. Then, as I started to look around, I saw that the peas were not the only crop to suffer. The broccoli was pushed over, the tomatoes were sprawling, the CSA flower garden had been knocked about, and even the onions and leeks were lying down in places. I have been farming long enough to know that plants have an incredible ability to right themselves even after the most severe weather events, so after I confirmed that the hail did not do any real harm, I decided to look away from the damage and focus on the harvest. Perhaps when we go back into the field on Friday it will not look quite so wind swept.

For the last two weeks I have talked about the rain in this newsletter. I am still waiting for it to stop. Some of you will recall the late blight epidemic on tomatoes and potatoes from last year. The threat is back for this year. Late blight was first spotted in Pennsylvania a few weeks ago. On Monday it was reported in Michigan. Late blight is not much of a threat in dry conditions, but it thrives on all the wet weather we have had. Next week I hope to write about how the tomatoes are looking great after a week of sun! Rain, rain, please do go away.

(continued on the back)
Raffle to Benefit Community GroundWorks

At Home With Nature
A Commitment To Honor Nature’s Gifts

A partnership between The Madison Waldorf School and Community GroundWorks dedicated to educating individuals of all ages about the need for sustainable practices in everyday life.

Garden Raffle
Bringing together the talent of local green architects, builders and suppliers to offer structures for expanding outdoor experiences.

Drawing will be held Saturday, July 10th at 3:00pm - Troy Gardens, 500 block of Troy Drive-Madison, WI
Tickets for this raffle are on sale at all Baraboo locations, Tuvalu Coffee House in Verona, and Willy Street. Co-op, as well as during the Oblitch Gardens Home Garden Tour.

- 1 ticket $10.00
- 5 tickets $40.00
- 10 tickets $70.00
- 15 tickets $100.00

Structure will be on display at Troy Gardens, as part of the Oblitch Gardens' 2010 Home Garden Tour

Friday and Saturday, July 9th and 10th. In addition, come and enjoy an outdoor screening of "Mad City Chickens" and meet members of the cast - Friday, July 9th at 8:00pm at Troy Gardens
For more information click CommunityGroundWorks.org

Chicken Coop
Green Squared Building Association

“The chicken coop features locally grown, sustainably harvested, solar kilndried hardwood. The frame, walls, floor, doors and nesting boxes are made from a variety of wood species, including aspen, oak, walnut, and cherry. The coop is roofed with cedar shingles produced from a tree at Taliesin. The roof is made of a natural aspen tree trunk. The design, with its broad overhangs and Cherokee red accents, alludes to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The coop is designed to be mobile so that the chickens can be regularly moved to new patches of grass.”

Play Structure
Brian DiGeorge
and Frager Wood Products

“I wanted to build a play house that someone would want to keep in their garden or yard even if they did not have kids to play on it. The design allows children to enjoy the outside environment. Hopefully, the structure will provide a space for children to engage in some creative and imaginative play. The material is locally harvested black locust. This wood is naturally rot resistant and a great alternative to treated lumber.”

Garden Shed
Design Coalition
and TDS Custom Construction

“This 8’ x 8’ garden shed - constructed using salvaged and leftover building materials – is designed to accommodate a variety of possible uses. As a simple garden shed, windows illuminate the interior creating a day lit work space for gardening activities. In addition, if the structure is placed on site with windows facing south, the shed can provide a sheltered place for spring seed starts. If the structure’s orientation is flipped 180 degrees, the shed can be converted to a solar shed by mounting solar electric panels on the 45 degree pitch of the roof while storing batteries inside. The shed’s design also allows for easy conversion to other uses such as a chicken coop, a children’s playhouse, bicycle storage, and rainwater collection. Finally, the shed will be built using a panelized system allowing for easy deconstruction and transport.”

Troy Community Farm
Claire Strader • 442-6760 • claire@troygardens.org
www.communitygroundworks.org

(continued from “In the Share”)
Broccoli is the next big news item in the share. Even with our worries over the somewhat pale and irregular heads, the crop came on strong this week. You have about two pounds in your share. If that turns out to be more than you can use in one week, you can easily freeze the rest. Just blanch it in a steamer for two minutes, then plunge into very cold water to stop the cooking process. Once cool, dry the broccoli on a towel, pack into freezer bags, and freeze. Of course before you start all this you should peel the tough skin from the stem and cut the broccoli into bite-sized pieces as you normally would. Be sure to enjoy it either way. This week marks the peak of this crop, which will be in short supply as we head into July.

Bok Choy is new this week. Like the peas, bok choy is well known as an essential ingredient in stir-fry. Use both the white stems and the green leaves. Add the stems first and save the leaves for last so that they just wilt before serving. Broccoli, snow peas, bok choy and your favorite stir-fry sauce over rice will use up a bunch of vegetables fast this week.

The ever-popular summer squash is also new this week. You have only two pieces in your share today, but there will definitely be more over the weeks to come.

The salad greens are still coming, though they are slowing down. There are 10 ounces of spinach today – somewhat more than last week – but this will likely be the last spinach until fall. Lettuce is still coming on with some lovely romaines in addition to the Batavian this week, but even these are smaller these days. Salad season will soon come to an end with the heat of July.

Next week: More peas, summer squash, and lettuce. Also kohlrabi, and scallions.