In the Share

Cherry Tomatoes, members 81-107
Choice of Winter Squash, see signs
Yellow Potatoes, 1 bag
Carrots, 1 bunch
Leeks, 1 bunch
Red Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Carmen Red Peppers, 3 pieces
Edamame, 1 bag
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Tomatoes, see signs on crates

After a complete potato crop failure in 2010, I am pleased to include the delicious and versatile spud in your share again today! I have struggled with potatoes over the years. If it is not the potato beetle chomping the crop to the ground, it’s a lack of rain that causes us to come up short at harvest time. I have tried a number of tactics for combating these two issues over the years, and this year the variables finally aligned to produce a lovely crop. The two most important factors were timely hand squishing of the potato beetles (thanks to second-year intern Laura Jasieczek who motivated the crew through this unpopular task) and timely irrigation (thanks to our new Hy-Vee sponsored system.)

Potatoes are such a simple and familiar food. We love including them in the CSA shares because no one ever asks “what should I do with these?” Most people know and love them without any prompting from us. This particular batch is newly dug, so you can steam them and serve them with butter and parsley for a delicious “new potato” dish. We also included the first leeks of the season in this share, so you can also make the potato leek soup recipe on the back. You have two pounds of (continued on the back)

Claire’s Comments

Tucking in the Bees for Winter

Goldenrod nectar has a very distinct odor in the beehive. It took Sarah and me a few years to figure that out. There is something about the smell that is a bit off, as though is could be sickness or disease instead of nectar. Two Septembers ago, during the best goldenrod honey flow that anyone can remember, that particular smell was coming off of our hives in waves and we became very worried. When the bee inspector came out, we asked him about it. He assured us that nothing was wrong. It was just the smell of goldenrod. Now we look forward to that odor because it means the bees are pulling in the last stores of honey that will get them through the long, cold, flowerless winter.

As I mentioned a few weeks ago, we are trying a new system in our tiny apiary that relies heavily on successful overwintering of the hives. It is imperative that each hive has about 100 pounds of honey stored away in order to make it through the dark season. Unfortunately, even though we have harvested no honey, only one of the hives at the farm is anywhere near that 100 pound goal. So, in an attempt to boost the chances of the other four hives, we combined them down to only two. The theory is that with doubled the foraging population, those two hives will be able to take full advantage of the goldenrod honey flow to build up their reserves.

Combining hives is can be a difficult process at this point in the year. After the bounty of summer, each hive has tens of thousands of bees. Since there can be only one queen per hive, we have to find a queen in one of the hives to be combined and remove her. Everyone has tips and tricks for finding her, but no matter, it is always a challenge to find one bee among thousands.

As we were searching through Mora (one of the hives destined for combination), we were delighted to find the queen on only the second frame we removed. Yippee! Then as we were moving through the rest of the hive, organizing it for joining with Ophelia, we happened to spot a second queen. We were not even looking for her; she was not supposed to be there; it was pure luck that we saw her. And she was busy too! We saw her lowering her abdomen into cells and laying eggs. Only rarely have we seen queens actually laying eggs before. Usually they are annoyed by being exposed to the sun and quickly try to run around to the dark side of the comb. (Looking for the running bee is one way you can spot the queen.)

As we removed this second queen, we speculated on how she could have come to be. Our best guess is that for some reason Mora did not like her original queen and so raised another to replace her. This process is called supersedeure and is quite common. Occasionally when a hive supersedes, the mother and the daughter queens will live together for a short time until the daughter or the worker bees kill the mother. It seems we opened the hive at just the right time to find both queens in this process. What a surprise!

With all the queens found, and the four hives combined down to two, we now also have a “queen hotel,” where the extra queens are staying temporarily. Each queen has her own separate accommodations in the hive so they cannot fight. And the worker bees keep them fed and groomed as usual. These queens will be moved into hives at our farm or in friends’ apiaries as needed when everything settles down and the bees cluster up for winter with their stores of goldenrod honey.
In the Share

potatoes today, and the soup recipe calls for just one pound, so you might just have enough potatoes for both of those meals. A word of caution on the soup: I have a tendency to increase the amount of potato over what is called for. It has taken me some time to realize that this soup is really about the leeks and not the potatoes. So, really, just one pound. Also the leeks are lovely and huge, so two will be plenty for this recipe.

Winter squash is back this week, but with some new variety choices. The delicata from a couple weeks ago will be familiar to all of you. Or you could choose one of two new varieties, both completely new to the farm: buttercup and sunshine. The green buttercups are a standard variety, but we have never grown them before. They are some of the best tasting squash around, especially after they sit for a week or two to let the m cure and sweeten. The sunshine are a newer variety likely be popular because of their stunning color. These are especially good for baking, mashing, or even pie. Let us know what you think of these two new squashes and help us decided if we should grow them again next year.

The red peppers are finally starting to come on strong. These are one of my very favorite crops. I especially like them roasted and served with bread and cheese or made into a sauce for pasta. To roast them, put the whole pepper under the broiler and turn it every few minutes until every side is blistered and blackened. Then remove the pepper from the broiler and remove the skin and seeds as it cools. The aroma is equally as good as the flavor!

You have another full pound of edamame in your share this week. This crop is also one of my favorites, so I am delighted to have so much of it for all of you this year. If somehow you have become tired of it after three weeks, you should know that it freezes very well. Just blanch it in boiling salt water for about 3 minutes, plunge it into ice water to cool, dry it, and pack it into freezer bags. It is a quick and delicious winter treat!

Tomato season is quickly coming to an end. The plants are only producing second quality fruits now, and not very many at that.

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Community GroundWorks

at a Good Food Garden Party

Saturday, September 10, 2011
8:00-10:00 p.m.
On the big lawn at Troy Gardens, 500 Troy Dr.

Thank you very much for your support of local food and local farms for the past 10 years. I hope you can join us on September 10th to celebrate this major milestone in our community!

Recipes

Heidi’s Calling – Potato Leek Soup
from Heidi Shatz

It is even better if you can wait a whole day to try it. The flavors blend overnight.

2-3 leeks, whites and greens, chopped
1.5 tsp. rosemary
4 cloves garlic, pressed or chopped
2-3 Tbs. butter
1 lb. potatoes, cubed
2 squares of your favorite stock or bouillon
Milk or unsweetened soymilk

Use your large soup pot to sauté leeks, garlic, and rosemary in butter until the leeks are clear and soft. Add potatoes (Heidi likes large chunks) and sauté until the potatoes are covered with leek mixture, plus a couple of minutes. Then add water, not too much, so potatoes are still showing just on top. Next, when the water is warm, add your favorite bouillon. Let boil and then turn heat down to medium until your potatoes are to your tenderness liking. Add milk just to turn the water a good hearty creamy color. Add salt and pepper to taste. If you want a thicker soup, puree 1/4 to 1/2 of the mixture and add it back to the pot.

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