

In the Bag

Broccoli, 1 bundle
Spinach, 1 bag
Scallions or Green Garlic, 1 bunch
Radishes, 1 bunch
Kale, 1 bunch
Lettuce, 1 head
Choice of Spouts, 1 bag

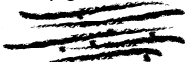
Broccoli! It is early and tender and beautiful and you have close to a pound in your share. I say steam it lightly and eat it as is. It will be hard to beat this spring broccoli in the hot months to come.

And Spinach! I've been waiting for this spinach. My favorite spring meal is raw spinach topped with scallions sautéed in olive oil, feta cheese, and kalamata olives. I could eat it every day. We triple washed the spinach in your share this week, but don't be surprised if you still find some dirt. We harvested it after those 4 inches of mud-splashing rain.

And Kale! This is the best, most tender, most delicious kale of the year. It is the first harvest from a stand of plants that looks to be one of the best I have ever seen. I've offered kale to the CSA enough times to know that not all of you will be as excited about the kale as I am. I also know that if any kale will turn a kale hater into a kale lover, this is it.

My favorite way to eat kale (all year long!) is to first sauté some onions and/or scallions and/or garlic in olive oil. Then add the kale cut into bite-sized pieces and still a bit wet from washing. Cover the pan to let the kale wilt and turn bright. After a minute or two add equal parts tamari and cider vinegar. I never measure mine, but it's probably a tablespoon or two of each. Stir the kale and let it steam covered for a few minutes more. Eat! I have a friend whose two-year-old was raised on kale. He is getting picky about plenty of other foods but still eats kale every day! It is truly a yummy food!

troy gardens



Claire's Comments

(Later) Early Starts

I'd like to think I've learned my lesson. As we harvested this beautiful broccoli (a full 120 pounds!) and this delicious spinach (54 pounds!) and a bounty of the sweetest, most tender kale of the year (over 140 bunches for CSA and market and another 200 for wholesale to Willy Street Co-op!) I was remembering some of my first words to the CSA last year. In the first newsletter for 2006 I had a list of the items I tried to overwinter or seed especially early in order to have something more than salad for you in June. It didn't work. The overwintered spinach and the extra early bok choy both bolted before the pick-ups began. The early broccoli buttoned into tiny heads that I had to bag up into skimpy ½ pound quantities. The peas that I planted on that unique, warm, sunny day in the first week of April hardly germinated enough to be worth trellising. I felt foolish having pushed so hard only to be put in my place by the unbeatable reality of our changeable springs.

This spring is a different story. This year Jake and I chiseled and tilled the farm on the exact date that Maggie and I did it last year, April 18th, and we didn't plant anything to the field until the 19th. By that date last year Maggie and I had already planted all of our peas, the first plantings of lettuce, radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and more. We were feeling excited with the possibility of being first to market with all these crops. Next to flavor and quality, being first to market with a crop is an important point of pride for every farmer. Like I said it didn't work out. At that time I promised myself I would be more patient the next year.

This past winter as I sat before this computer putting together the planting calendar, it was difficult to actually change my planting dates as I said I would. The warmth of the little heater at my feet and the anticipation of getting out in the fields again were both powerful factors pulling me toward thinking that earlier planting is always better. The pea dates I changed after consulting my notes once more. But truth be told, the only reason that the first broccoli and lettuce were delayed was because at the time they were scheduled to be planted I was busy interviewing candidates to fill the Assistant Farm Manager position that Maggie had decided to leave. By the time Jake came on, I had already been forced into later plantings somewhat against my will.

It was all for the good. This year, not only was it easier to plow without having to maneuver around a patchwork of crops already in the ground, but all those crops put in "late" on the 19th actually have produced more and earlier than if we had planted them at the beginning of the month. I'm thrilled. And I know we will still be first to market (at least the Northside market we attend) with both broccoli and kale.

I think I've learned my lesson. But I know the true test will come this winter, when I sit down to write the planting calendar again.

The Rain

Most every farmer loves rain. But the farmers who love it most are the ones who don't have irrigation. Jake and I here at Troy happen to fall into the later category. We don't have irrigation but we do have good soil. We are lucky because the soil at the farm is good both at absorbing our rains enough to let us work them soon after a storm, and also at holding the moisture in to help the plants through the dry spells. Even so, both the soil and the farmers have our limits when it comes to love of rain.

On Monday we saw a river of water coming out of the sky, down the field, into the drive roads, and out of the farm gate into a virtual pond near the wash shed. That was after we had over 3 inches of rain on the weekend. Then we had more rain on Wednesday and the forecast is for strong storms today. With that amount of rain, both the soil and the farmers have had enough.

In order to provide a steady supply of basic crops like lettuce, broccoli, beets, carrots, beans, and more we plant every two weeks. But when the soil is as wet as it is today, it cannot be worked and we cannot plant. Nor can we weed effectively. Our feet sink into the mud, our hoes get mucked up with wet soil, and many of the weeds simply re-root themselves rather than drying out and dying. There is still much planting and much weeding to be done at the farm.

But there is a very good side to rain, even in the excess we are getting this week. As long as the sun comes out now and then, many plants thrive on so much water, growing big and lush. The kale and lettuce and broccoli in your share this week are good examples. In the dry times, that is why I am jealous of the farmers who can still provide their plants with water through irrigation. They can act as the rain god themselves and still grow lush crops.

But none of us can stop the rain. So, we are standing at the ready with our transplants, seeds, and hoes, watching the plants grow and ready to take advantage as soon as the rains abate.

Upcoming Events

Farm Volunteer Days

*Fridays, 8:00 to 11:00 am
at Troy Community Farm*

The farm has an open volunteer day every Friday morning. This time is for fun jobs like transplanting (early in the season), mulching, weeding (Claire honestly loves weeding!), and some harvesting of large crops like garlic, onions, and squash (later in the year).

Everyone is welcome to join the usual crew of interns, worker shares, and youth in our Farm and Field program whenever they can. You will leave with some dirt under your fingernails, a stretch in your hamstrings, and as many flowers and herbs as you can carry (from the CSA herb and flower garden).

Savor the Summer Festival

*Saturday, 11 August, times TBA
at Troy Gardens*

Mark your calendars now for this annual Troy Gardens event! This year you can see the completed and fully inhabited co-housing development, food and flower workshops, plenty of kids' activities, and more. This will be a great day to spend on the land with friends, family, and lots of fun!

Recipe

I asked Jake which recipe I should include this week. He had a copy of Joyous Kale from our worker share and long-time member Megan. Jake loves the Joyous Kale and suggested it, not realizing that it came from Troy originally! So, here it is again, back by popular demand. Maggie and Ryah created it in 2003 when they were interns on the farm and set on helping CSA members enjoy kale.

Joyous Kale

3 T tahini
2 T olive oil
3 T lemon juice
3 T soy sauce or tamari

3 cloves garlic or 2 stalks green garlic, chopped
Lots of Kale, washed and chopped
1/4 cup sunflower or sesame seeds

Mix tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, tamari, and garlic. Combine this sauce with the chopped kale in a hot frying pan or wok. (Use more kale than you think you need. It may seem like a lot now, but will become much smaller once it wilts.) Cook for about 5 to 10 minutes or until kale is thoroughly wilted. You may need to add a small bit of water and cover your pan to steam the kale. Toss in seeds. Serve hot (perhaps over rice) or cold.

Troy Community Farm

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