

July 15, 2010



Vermont Valley Community Farm

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It is transition time on the farm.

We are transitioning from spring food to summer food. The difference shows up in various ways: the time it takes to harvest, wash and bag. Another difference most likely shows up in your kitchen where a different amount of time and effort are put into preparing greens or the 'easy' summer food. Greens seem to define the contents of the early season share boxes. Lettuce, salad mix, spinach, chard, escarole, radishes, repeat. And just as we are all craving a bit more variety in our diets, here



come the summer crops. Mother Nature makes us all wait for months before we can start enjoying those favorite summer garden veggies. It's all about the seasonality of this place called Wisconsin where we live and eat. On Monday we started harvesting zucchini, cucumbers, tomatoes and eggplant. Those crops take a few weeks before they hit full stride so you will not see all of those items in your share box this week. We divvy them out site by site until we have enough quantity to give them to you every week. And then it seems as if they don't stop for months. The labor and work load for the spring crops and summer crops is quite different. Salad mix

takes: 10 people 2 hours to harvest, 2 people 6 hours to wash, 3 people 4 hours to bag; 44 person hours each week. Spinach is similar. Lettuce heads take 10 people 2 hours to harvest and 4 people 1 hour to wash; only 24 hours. Radishes take 10 people 3 hours to harvest and 10 people 4 hours to band and wash, 70 hours! Spring turnips are similar. Pearl onions take even longer, about 90 hours. Swiss Chard, 10 people 3 hours to harvest, 10 people 4 hours to band and wash; again 70 hours. You are beginning to get the picture of how time consuming spring food is. Now, transition to summer. Zucchini is harvested 6 days a week! Yup, even on the weekend. 3 people harvest every day for about 1.5 hours. We accumulate the zucchini in our walk-in cooler until Wednesday when we send it through the brush washer; 4 people 2-3 hours, depending on how much squash we harvested that week. Cucumbers, broccoli and tomatoes are harvested Monday, Wednesday and Friday, like clock work. The cucumbers and tomatoes are also stored in the walk-in cooler until Wednesday, the day we finish the last harvest before our Thursday delivery, and then they are brush washed also. One person feeds the vegetables onto a short conveyor, they pass over soft brushes and get sprayed from above. They come out on a rotating round table where 2-3 people stand ready to count and sort the vegetables on the table. We count all of the vegetables so we know how much to put into each share box. We also weigh everything regardless if it is divvied up by weight or count. Broccoli is harvested by 10 people in 1-2 hours, depending on the quantity. It is then soaked in large tubs of cold water and counted into crates. One person puts the finishing touch on the crates with a couple of scoops of ice and into the cooler it goes. As you can see the spring vegetables happen once a week in one big harvest effort and the summer veggies are an on-going process. Summer vegetables do a far better job of ruling our lives. And here they come!

Storage Shares Are Still Available

The Storage Share includes two deliveries: November 11th & December 9th.

The cost of the Storage Share is \$160.

Each delivery includes about:

15# potatoes, 5# carrots, 5# onions; plus winter squash, cabbage, kale, leeks, daikon radishes, beets, celeriac, rutabaga, turnips, brussels sprouts, garlic, winter radish & pie pumpkins.

We include storage tips so you will know how to keep your produce.

If you are interested we need your signup by Sept 3rd
Send in your check to reserve a Storage Share.

Garlic Harvest Guaranteed to come during the hottest week of summer, or at least it always feels that way! This week was our annual July ritual of garlic harvest. This garlic was planted last October; it was probably not as hot that day. Garlic matures all at once and is harvested all at once. It must be harvested on time; it can't stay in the ground because the protective wrappers or skins will disappear and the cloves will be exposed to the earth. We had hoped to harvest garlic last week, but last week was one of those pesky rainy weeks. We like to wait until the soil is not too dry and not too wet, just about perfect is how we like it. Today was verging on a bit wet, but no complaints after all of the harvest we have done this season in the mud. Beginning at 7:00 this morning (after the fennel was harvested, which started at 5:30) 13 people started pulling up garlic bulbs.

First Jesse mowed off the tops of the plants, leaving about 8 inches of stem. This gives the harvesters a 'handle' to grab and pull up on, to get the bulb out of the ground. Next David undercuts the garlic with a 6 foot long blade pulled by a tractor. The blade slices beneath the bulbs and pops the garlic loose in the soil. A second harvest crew that began their day by harvesting lettuce and zucchini joined the garlic harvest at 10:00. Now there are 24 people sweating like crazy, pulling garlic out of the ground and putting it into black crates. Those black crates full of garlic were loaded onto a big wagon, driven to our barn, unloaded and stacked. Then the big fans were turned on to help dry/cure them. We grow lots of garlic, about 1 and 1/3 acres this year. Each clove of garlic is "seed" for next year's garlic. We have been saving garlic to replant for many years. As you have noticed, our garlic cloves are huge, there are



*Garlic for as far and the eye can see.
Harvesters pulling it out of the ground and cleaning the dirt
from the roots before placing it into a crate.*

about 5 cloves per bulb. This means we need to keep one bulb to plant for every four bulbs we eat, just to maintain our current plantings. So a lot of the garlic goes right back into the ground come mid-October. So if you don't eat it, you can plant it in October. You are the recipient of most of the garlic, with a small amount of the "seconds" used at the Pesto Fest. However we also sell garlic to Willy Street Coop. Right now you are getting "fresh" garlic, meaning it has not fully cured. Once cured, it will hold until about February. All of our garlic is "hardneck" garlic, as opposed to "softneck" garlic. You may guess one of the differences between them, but the more important difference is the flavor, with hardneck varieties being far more flavorful; and the bulbs are huge compared to softneck garlic varieties which you will usually find in stores. The work certainly doesn't stop after the harvest. Each and every bulb is hand wiped to clean off the dirt and the roots and top are sniped off. And with all of that garlic stacked upstairs in the barn, there is quite an aroma around here.



*Jen, Ann and Rob washing fresh garlic for
today's delivery.*



*Some of the 60,000+ garlic bulbs curing in
the upper part of the barn*

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