

Great-grandfather's barn at Spring Brook Farm, circa 1901

What's in the box and where do I keep it?

Crop	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Basil	No	Plastic	
Cantaloupe	Yes	No	Athena, Delicious or French Orange
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Garlic	No	No	Chesnok Red
Green Beans	Yes	Plastic	Provider or Benchmark
Onions	No	No	Yellow, White and Red
Peppers	Yes	Plastic	Hot and sweet
Sweet Corn	Yes	Plastic	
Tomatoes	No	No	Assorted
Yellow Squash	Yes	Plastic	
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	

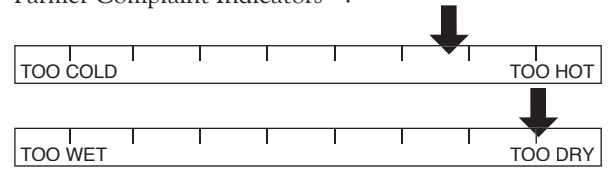
Melons

This will be the big week for cantaloupe. Last week Friday's shares got a sneak preview. When the melons start to ripen they all seem to come at once. I try and space them out over time, but the variety descriptions are notoriously inaccurate in terms of their days to maturity. This is further aggravated by the fact that we never seem to have weather that is the same two years in a row. Hopefully we won't end up with four melons in each box, but it could happen. In any case we're not going to have winter squash and cantaloupe in the same box, which is what happened last year, that was a heavy box!

As I said in earlier newsletters, this is a great year for melons. I ate a melon last week that was the best melon I've ever had, period. I've got five varieties of cantaloupe planted this year, actually to be technical only three could really be called cantaloupe, while the other two would be muskmelons. The difference

Farm Report

Rainfall 0.00"
 High Temperature 90°
 Low Temperature 52°
 Coming next week Watermelon
 Farmer Complaint Indicators™ :



is subtle, but cantaloupes tend to be smaller, round and closer in relation to the French Charentais type melons.

The two muskmelon varieties are Athena and Delicious 51. Athena is a large, hard, smooth, heavily netted variety, whereas Delicious is ribbed and lightly netted. If you have a large melon in your box it is one of these two varieties. Athena will be the most common since the Delicious were picked pretty heavy last week, and unfortunately a lot of them were chucked into the field because of rotten spots. I will not be growing those again. I tried them because they were an open-pollinated older variety, rather than a hybrid. Athena is a newer hybrid which I've found to be excellent, both for its reliability and flavor, although they never matured in the cool summer of 2004. It can also be a bit big for the shares, sometimes over six pounds. If you get more than one melon in your box and one is an Athena, eat it last because they keep very well.

There are three varieties of cantaloupe: French Orange, Charentais and Hermes. French Orange is the smallest, being about the size of a softball and about 1 1/2 pounds. There will be at least one of these in every box this week. They are absolutely fantastic, and when nice and ripe are cloyingly sweet with a flavor tending more towards a ripe mango than a melon. The Charentais and Hermes are slightly larger than the French Orange and are completely smooth, with distinctive stripes. The Hermes are just starting to ripen with the Charentais still green at this point. These melons are picked ripe and must be watched closely so that they don't split. They are darker and softer than a typical muskmelon and are traditionally eaten as a dessert item in France, or served with a nice shaving of Parma ham or Prosciutto.

Oh, yea I guess there is some other stuff in the box this week as well...

The tomatoes continue to slowly ramp up production. A few of the heirloom varieties are starting to show up now.

Hopefully there will be green beans in the box this week, their production has continued to be a bit spotty, with one variety last week being real disappointing.

The garlic this week is a smaller, spicier variety called Chesnok Red. There also is more of a variety of onions in the box this week and they have cured enough now that they will keep fine out on the counter.

We may see a few sweet red peppers this week, as well as a green one. I've also been putting in a hot pepper or two. If it's small and red it's probably hot. The three hot varieties are Hot Red Cherry, Serrano and Cayenne.

The cukes and zukes continue unabated. I took the time to look at the numbers last week and was surprised to learn that, on average, each zucchini plant has already yielded 17 zucchinis, while each cucumber plant has yielded 12 cukes. Looking at it differently, there's already been 28 cucumbers per share this year. This will probably not come as a surprise to anyone.

More sweet corn this week. I hope everyone is enjoying this as much as we are. And the basil continues to be nice, although some of it is a bit eaten by the bugs.

Farm News

Last week was a dry one at the farm, without so much as a drop of rain. Luckily we'd had some nice rain the previous week so that it took a while to dry out. We'll be irrigating pretty heavily this week if we don't get any of the rain that's forecast.

I wanted to take a moment this week to mention the next field day. The Labor Day tomato canning is right around the corner on Monday, September 5th. It looks like the tomatoes are going to cooperate this year so it's time to start planning the rest of it. What I could really use is one or two volunteers to help plan and coordinate the day. Let me know if you are interested, it's not a major time commitment. Email me and I can discuss it with you further. For those of you interested in attending, it should be a fun day of picking, cleaning, canning and eating tomatoes. It will be an all day affair and you can stop by anytime during it, but we

will plan on having a big meal late in the afternoon. There should be a fair amount of kids there, so bring your along. Hopefully the weather will cooperate, I'm submitting my order for a partly cloudy day with a high of about 75° and a light breeze.

Somebody sent an email about parsley, cilantro and dill, which we had a nice amount of last year. Unfortunately when the deer decided they liked fennel and carrots this year have also decided they like anything that looks remotely like fennel and carrots, such as parsley, dill and cilantro. I've got one more row of cilantro and dill planted so we may still see some of that and I've got a bunch of electric fence equipment to put up this week so that may give the parsley a chance to come back.

Here's a recipe idea, not really a recipe. The other night I had to make something quick and I made a salad of sliced cucumbers, tomatoes, red onion, garlic, crumbled feta, olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. Try different proportions of ingredients. It was really good, fast, and hit the spot.

I realized I hadn't really given folks much of an idea of what to do with extra basil if they get behind. We wash and dry the leaves, pack them in a food processor and then process them with enough olive oil to mix well. Then we spoon the puree into ice cube trays, freeze, and transfer to a zip-loc when frozen. We keep these in the freezer and add them to soups and sauces all winter long. This can be done with many different herbs. Another option, which I haven't tried, is to make herbed butter by pureeing the herbs in a little softened butter and then folding them into a larger chunk of softened butter. You could also then freeze these into ice cube trays and have herbed butter to spread on garlic toast in the winter.

You can also dry your own basil by using a food dehydrator or simply on a cookie sheet left on the kitchen counter. It will work better if you wait for some drier weather. Remove the leaves from the stems, wash and spin dry. Spread them evenly in one layer on a cookie sheet and leave in an airy location. Window screens work even better for this. Don't leave them anywhere they'll get exposed to sunlight because it will overheat them and tend to make them rot rather than dry. When dry and crumbly to the touch, store in an airtight container. Once they're dry, don't wait too long, because if the next stretch of humid weather rolls in they will absorb some of that moisture.