

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

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

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Basil	No	Plastic	
Cantaloupe	Yes	No	Ambrosia and Athena or Sivan
Carrots	Yes	Plastic	
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Green Beans	Yes	Plastic	
Parsley	Yes	Plastic	Italian
Peppers	Yes	Plastic	Hot cherry, green bell, Italian
Potatoes	No	Paper	Carola
Tomatoes	No	No	Reds, a few heirlooms
Watermelon	Yes	No	Sugar Baby
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	

## Melon Days

As much as I try to schedule the sequence of crops and when they'll be ready, sometimes they do get piled up. I can think of bigger problems to have than having too many melons to eat. The biggest problem is that between harvesting, packing and delivering I will have lifted each of these melons at least four times.

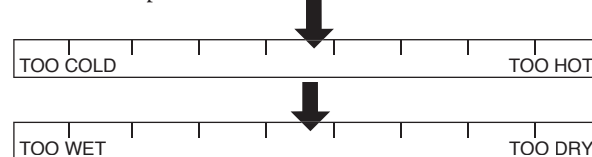
It should be fairly obvious which one the watermelon is. These are sugar baby, a fairly old open-pollinated type which does well in the North. You have to plant an quick to mature watermelon here or you end up with watermelon in September when you'd rather be eating squash.

In muskmelons, last week we had an athena in the box so you should be able to recognize that if you get another. The ambrosia is a rounder, greener netted melon. This is the first year I've grown ambrosia and am not real happy with it. It tends to be quite soft

## Farm Report

Rainfall . . . . . 3.0"  
 High Temperature . . . . . 92°  
 Low Temperature . . . . . 63°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



when ripe so I've been picking them a little less ripe so they have a better texture. If you have a smaller melon or two they are either sivan, french orange or charentais. These are all fairly sweet small cantaloupes. The charentais is the classic French melon and the sivan and french orange are muskmelons crossed with a charentais.

It's a skill to know when to pick a melon so that it's perfectly ripe. You may get an overripe one or an underripe one, but with 3 or 4 in the box they can't all be clunkers. I think the sivan has been my favorite so far this year. Enjoy them while they last, there'll be another one or two next week and that'll be it.

We did find room for a few other things in the box besides the melons:

More green beans and basil, almost a pound and a half of beans in the box. The basil is running down so enjoy it with the tomatoes.

The carrots this week are the last of the spring carrots, they're not up to my usual merciless carrot standards, but they'll be good for cooking.

Cukes and zukes are slowing down and will be dropping out altogether this week or next. We've had 7 weeks of them so it's bound to come to an end soon.

A nice bunch of flat parsley is in the box and makes a nice addition to a basil pesto. It adds a little flavor and also helps to keep the pesto nice and bright green after the basil oxidizes.

The potatoes this week are the yellow carolas. These are a nice potato to fry, roast or boil.

There's a green pepper and a couple of hot cherry peppers in the box. You may also have a sweet larger red pepper in the box, a long pointed one. These are a sweet Italian frying pepper and can be used just like a red bell pepper. We'll have more of them as they ripen.

Last but not least are the tomatoes. A pretty good pile of them this week. Some have some green shoulder on them which is the greenish/yellowish area around the top which is a little fibrous. If you get one or two like this just trim that portion off. The heirlooms are starting to ripen so there should be one in the box this week. The varieties I'm growing this year are the all-yellow persimmon, pruden's purple which is really pinker than purple, striped german which is large yellow and red, and the small but tasty green zebra known for it's green stripes over a yellow background (it's ripe when it looks like this and won't turn red).

## Farm News

We finally got some rain this week, although not in a very nice form. We had strong storms last Friday and again on Monday night. We ended up with 3 full inches which is more rain than we've gotten over the last 8 weeks combined. Friday's storm didn't do too much damage, knocked over some tomato cages and flattened some of the staked tomatoes. Monday's was much more violent, with very hard rain and strong winds. Pretty much all of the tomato cages got blown over, the turkey hut got blown about a hundred feet, 3 chickens drowned and about a 10 foot section of metal soffit came off the barn.

Even with the storminess, it sure is nice to have some moisture back in the ground, and to be able to take a longer break from irrigating.

Harvesting continues to be the major focus of the farm work right now. Friday we started to harvest the melons for this week, as well as the cukes and zukes. Geoffrey, Martha and I took the afternoon off to have some formal intern/farmer learning. They may have a farm of their own some day so I've been trying to tell them what they want to know about it when we've had the time (which is almost never).

Monday was busy with picking more melons, cukes and zukes. The strawberries we planted for next year got a thorough hand weeding. We also got the beans picked then since it was supposed to storm that night. Storms tend to make for wet, dirty beans. While they were picking beans I disked up next year's vegetable fields.

Tuesday morning was spent mending the storm damage and moving the chicken and turkey fencing to new pasture. The afternoon was dedicated mostly to picking tomatoes, which put us in pretty good shape for Wednesday's harvesting.

Wednesday was also the day to say goodbye to Geoffrey and Martha as they head back to college. They've been good workers and have been nice to have around the farm. We'll all miss them and it will be a slightly bumpy transition for the next week or two as we will have fewer strong backs around to get the work done. I've got a few leads on some more help so hopefully they'll pan out.

**Coming next week:** Tomatoes, muskmelon, watermelon?, cukes, zucchini, kale, onions, peppers, eggplant, green beans.

## Potato Gratin with Sweet Peppers and Tomatoes

- 2 large cloves garlic , peeled and smashed
- 2 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion , sliced thin
- 2 pounds all-purpose potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8-inch thick or less
- Table salt and ground black pepper
- Pinch cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup dry vermouth
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaf
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and sliced thin
- 3 medium tomatoes, sliced thin
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Adjust oven rack to center position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Rub bottom and sides of 5- to 6-cup gratin dish or shallow baking dish with garlic. Mince remaining garlic and set aside. Once garlic in dish has dried, about 2 minutes, spread dish with 1/2 tablespoon olive oil.

Heat remaining oil in medium saucepan and sauté onion and reserved garlic until soft and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add potatoes, water, vermouth, 1 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1/8 teaspoon pepper, basil, and cayenne (if desired).

Pour half of potato mixture into prepared dish; top with bell pepper. Add remaining potato mixture and cover with tomatoes. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste. Shake dish or use fork to distribute potatoes evenly. Gently press down potatoes until submerged in liquid.

Bake, basting once or twice, for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, and continue baking until top is golden brown, about 40 minutes more. Let rest 5 minutes and serve.