

Hog's Back Almanac



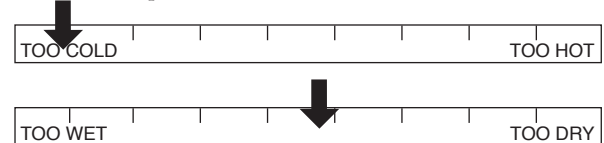
Winter 3 November 13, 2014

What's in the box and where does it go?

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Beets	Yes	Plastic	Red
Cabbage	Yes	Plastic	Green
Carrots	Yes	Plastic	
Celeriac	Yes	Plastic	
Kale	Yes	Plastic	Curly or Lacinato
Leeks	Yes	Plastic	
Onions	No	No	Yellows and a red
Parsnips	Yes	Plastic	
Peppers	No	No	Dried sweet paprika
Potatoes	No	Paper	Yellow and red mix
Radishes	Yes	Plastic	Watermelon
Shallots	No	No	
Winter Squash	No	No	Butternut and buttercup

Farm Report 11/13/14

Snowfall. 3"
 High Temperature. 42°
 Low Temperature 16°
 Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



IMPORTANT
Our next (and final) share delivery
is on TUESDAY, November 25th

Welcome to December

Back when we first started offering the winter shares we did one additional delivery after Thanksgiving. That last delivery usually was in the first or second week of December. After a couple of years I realized that we really weren't set up to handle deliveries that time of year since it generally was quite a bit colder than in November. We just are not equipped for deep winter deliveries at the farm.

So in 2005 or 2006 we dropped that last delivery to make things simpler, and because the Thanksgiving week delivery seemed a more natural place to end the season. Well, this year we find ourselves going back to delivering in December, or at least in December-like conditions.

We have four places at the farm where we keep produce this time of year. Two are walk-in coolers, one is the greenhouse and one the high tunnel. The high tunnel is completely unheated, so anything in there is fair game for subfreezing temperatures. The greenhouse is heated, but it's horribly inefficient since it's basically an uninsulated outdoor bubble. We do erect an inner structure in there this time of year, but that's kind of a band-aid. The greenhouse is where we keep the winter

squash until we need it because it just takes up too much space to go anywhere else.

The potatoes and onions live in what we call the 'warm' cooler, which is kept at a warmer temperature than the 'cold' cooler. Suffice it to say that during this kind of weather it's warmer in the 'cold' cooler than in the packing shed. The cold cooler is home to just about everything else.

I think next year I need to figure out a way to heat the packing shed. Being part of an old dairy barn, it really doesn't seal up from the elements very well at all. Too many large doors and openings. We can keep the snow out for the most part, but that's about it. That way we could at least have something a little better insulated than the greenhouse for these cold snaps. And then Jesse and I would have a place to work in that wasn't freezing cold.

The cold conditions have resulted in a little less diversity in your box this week. Two things that didn't make it into the box are the herbs and some late arugula. We had harvested the sage and parsley for this week ahead of time since they don't like sub-20° temps. I left the thyme in the field since it can handle about anything. Unfortunately it got a coating of ice which made it not an option to pick this week. We'll have a nice herb bunch for the Thanksgiving box.

The arugula from the high tunnel had too much freeze damage. Usually it can handle down into the 20's, but it must have dropped a bit below that.

The good news is that we did get all of the leeks and brussels sprouts out of the field last week. Many times we leave these guys out there until the last share, but this cold spell is no joke. The Brussels sprouts will be in the Thanksgiving box.

The other problem we have with cold conditions in our situation is water. Once the temperature gets this cold it becomes hard for us to wash anything without the packing shed turning into a skating rink. And we run the risk of freezing water lines. We do have a frost-proof hydrant which all the water in the barn is run from, but that has to be shut-off in order to drain and not freeze. Consequently I had to call up Jesse over the weekend and get him to come on Sunday and help me wash the leeks, since it looked like the last day above freezing. But we got them all washed for this week's share and the Thanksgiving share.

You can also thank Jesse for the kale this week since he helped me harvest it on Sunday as well. Most of these bunches are the very tops of the curly kale plants, although a few of you will get the last few leaves of the lacinato planting instead.

It's time for some cabbage! Green cabbage comes your way this week. We'll have a head of red for you next time. The cabbage has been very tasty this year. These late fall cabbages have very little of the sulfur-y flavors that can sometimes spoil one's cabbage eating pleasure. Slice this thinly for a nice fresh salad along with a sesame dressing.

Parsnips! Yeah! We had a nice crop of parsnips this year. We're giving you all we've got this week. Everyone should get about three pounds of them. Some are quite large, one-pounders are not uncommon. I never hear much enthusiasm for parsnips, so we don't grow too many of them. Squeaky wheel gets the oil, so if you love parsnips let me know. They're a somewhat difficult crop since they take every bit of our growing season to size up, and they take about 3-weeks to germinate, which, if you have to plant them as early as possible, leads to very nasty weed pressure. Kudos to Jesse, Michael and Brandon for freeing these guys from their weedy shackles back in May.

The squash this week is the buttercup and butternut squash we all know and love. We've been continuing our trend of roasting everything this year by cubing up buttercup or butternut into 1/2-inch cubes and roast-

ing them on a cookie sheet on parchment, tossed in oil, pepper and salt. Roast them at 375° until tender or browning a little. Great to add to a raw kale salad, or eat on their own.

The dried peppers this week are the Boldog Hungarian sweet paprika peppers we've been growing for a few years. We pick these during August and September and dry them in our industrial-sized drier in the summer kitchen. They are not spicy, but have a wonderful sweet paprika flavor. You can grind them up to use as paprika, but we use them in Mexican dishes in the same way you would use dried pasilla peppers, which will not grow in our climate. Toasted on a cast-iron pan for a couple of minutes and then seeded, these will make a wonderful sweet red pepper sauce.

The potatoes are a medley of yellows and reds this week. We're having more storage quality issues with the potatoes this year than we normally see, so we don't have quite as many as I'd like.

Coming next time for the Thanksgiving box:

Squash, beets, onions, carrots, radishes, shallots, leeks and celeriac similar to this week, 4-5 lbs. red potatoes, 2-3 lbs. Brussels sprouts, approx. 1-pound cornmeal (lousy year for it), red cabbage, maybe some high tunnel spinach if it survives, and parsley, sage and thyme.

Parsnip Purée

- 1 pound parsnips, peeled, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Kosher salt

Bring parsnips, garlic, cream, milk, and butter to a boil in a medium saucepan. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until parsnips are very soft, 10-15 minutes. Uncover and cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes; season with salt. Purée in a blender until smooth.

Roast Parsnips

- 1 pound parsnips, peeled, then cut diagonally into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 450°F. Toss parsnips with oil and salt to taste in a shallow (1-inch-deep) baking pan and roast in middle of oven, turning over halfway through cooking, until golden and tender, 30 to 35 minutes total.