

February 7, 2010

Since we had a few responses from people who were unsure as to whether or not we are accepting 2010 CSA applications yet, we want to start off by saying...Yes, we are! In fact, we are actively soliciting for new shareholders, so if you do want a share for this season, please send us a deposit to reserve it as soon as possible. Our 2010 brochure is attached for your convenience.

We have started getting our seeds in – several different broccoli types (for spring and fall production), broccoli raab, cultivated dandelion greens, escarole, a couple new types of Asian eggplant (the long, thin type), celeriac, fennel, diakon, and some new boc choy-type stir fry greens. The largest part of our order will come from Fedco, a seed cooperative in Maine; we are still waiting for that. Our potato order has been placed too, but that doesn't come until it is almost time to plant, usually in late April or early May.

Last month, Chris attended the first in a year-long series of workshops on growing Nutrient-Dense food. This is something he's been reading about for several years, and it was really exciting to meet the instructor, Dan Kittridge, who has been practicing the ND methods for several years now on his farm and is seeing very real and positive results with better yields, greater nutritive value, better taste, and increased disease, pest, and weed resistance. One new thing we're going to try this year is making our own potting soil mixture with compost, peat moss, soft rock phosphate, alfalfa meal, high calcium lime, sea kelp and beneficial fungal inoculants. This mixture should give the seedlings a really healthy start – and then we will inoculate the soil in our gardens with more beneficial fungus, so that when we transplant the seedlings, these funguses will colonize on the roots of the plants, then spread their runners far and wide to scavenge for minerals that the plant needs. The fungus and the plant have a symbiotic relationship; the fungus gives the plant the nutrients, and the plant gives the fungus sugar. Healthy soils should have both minerals and beneficial fungus in abundance, but since most soil is lacking (ours included) we need to give it back both.

They also talked about planting heirloom varieties being preferable to hybrids because of the heirloom's better ability to "scavenge" for nutrients. We happened to pick up a copy of Acres USA that same weekend, and it had an article in it called *Backbreeding for the Future*. The author puts out that maybe we have our priorities wrong with the way we currently breed and hybridize our plants. We now select for certain traits that make it necessary to pamper the plants and control their environment. With the climate changing at a rapid rate, it is not going to be possible to have that kind of control – so maybe we should be breeding some plants back with their wild ancestors to regain some of the tenacity. His first example is probably the best – you plant carrots in your garden and select a plot to keep over (carrots are biennial, so they produce their seeds in the second year). Don't keep up with your weeding too well, and you are likely to find some Queen Anne's Lace growing nearby. Just let nature take its course, and those carrot seeds will have a little more "wild" in them. He showed a picture of the carrots he grew from that combination: kind of hairy, a little wild looking – only just on this side of domesticated. Of course you would not want to take this too far – there's a reason no one wants to eat the roots of Queen Anne's Lace! Anyway, it's an interesting theory that we thought was worth sharing.

We have added more egg-laying hens to our flock, and at just the right time, too –our original group of hens are beginning to molt, and so their collective production has dropped. The new hens are just beginning to lay, so the production should stay about level for the next month until all the new ones are laying, when we should have a few more.

Thank you to everyone who has already signed up for the coming year, and thank you to even more of you who let us know that you still enjoy hearing from us – we appreciate your comments and like hearing from you, too! We hope you are keeping warm with daydreams of summer, just like we are!

Best wishes from your farmers,

Samantha, Chris, Alex & Benjamin