

Raphael Garden CSA Newsletter

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DECEMBER 2011

Goose Foot Family:

Beets
Chard

Curcurbit Family

Winter squash

Mint Family

Rosemary

Amaryllis Family:

Onions
Garlic

Brassica Family:

Kale
**Chinese Cabbage
Cauliflower
Broccoli
Collards
Mustard
Daikon

Umbelliferae Family

Carrots
Cilantro
Celeriac

** Indicates this month's
Veggie of the Month!

STEERING COMMITTEE Thursday, December 15, 4:15 pm in the RSC Library.

All are welcome!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

There's lots to do! . Contact Harald if you can help!

Mucking.....Carpentry.....Weeding.....Mucking.....Harvesting.....Weeding.....

APPRENTICE WISH LIST

Armchair

Tupperware (empty or filled with cookies! either would be OK)

ANNUAL CSA MEMBERSHIP MEETING: SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2012 3-5PM

Mark your calendars!

GARDEN NEWS

Where is the rain? It is a beautiful fall, and it brought us many colors--one of the best years ever! Now with the wind and a little rain, most of the leaves are gone. The grass in the unirrigated areas is barely surviving; much more grass is needed so that the cows will be happy with their winter diet. On the good side the farmers have been able to plant or transplant almost all of the last crops. There are still lots of weeds that are needing to be pulled, however. Because of the good weather, no attention has been given to the seed cleaning work yet. So there is lots of work to do before the end of the year.

The cover crop areas in the garden where our nitrogen-fixing crops like clovers and grasses, beans, peas, vetch and oats have been planted and are looking much nicer now. Many of the fall crops are somewhat slow, though, and have not produced too much yet. There was a good initial harvest of broccoli, and it has slowed down, but more will come later. Cauliflower will be harvested very soon. At least the kale and collards are productive and will give a well-needed reliable crop for this season. They will get even sweeter once the frost sets in.

Not all of the garlic has been planted yet. You may have received individual cloves rather than full bulbs in your share box. These were the leftovers from the planting of the garlic. Garlic is not reproduced by seed, but by replanting individual cloves. Each plant produces about 10 to 15 cloves per bulb and with our care in making a good selection, often 10 are usable ones for replanting, while the smaller ones are used for eating. (Otherwise, we would get smaller and smaller garlic!)

Beets and carrots from our planting from the summer have not been producing as much, either. Our beloved hon tsai tai is slow this year. We will not see much until the new year. The celeriac crop looks quite good, as well as the parsnip crop. These will be available next year. Another set back has been the winter squash planting. Not too many butternut, the most productive kind, came up this year. That was compensated by more Red Kuri and Blue Kabocha squash. These other types of winter squash did not translate into a lasting harvest, however. Next year there will be more butternuts again; we'll use good, fresh seeds for planting.

The weeding takes quite some effort right now. As the weather is better, any help would be greatly appreciated, and it is so much fun to transform a bed from chaos to order! And there are always good conversations to be had! One of the weeds that we have is the annual stinging nettle. It is not so pleasant to touch, but it makes a wonderful soup. So helpers best bring their gloves (or we can provide them), and then they can get the stinging nettle which we have been reluctant to distribute even though it is a very healthy and delicious plant. Many people would not like to pick them up. You can learn more about stinging nettle when you come for weeding. (If you have arthritis, it will alleviate the pain.)

Mucking is yet another urgent matter that needs to be handled. As the manure and straw piles up in the barn, there remains less space for two-legged heads to clear the rafters. Anyone who wants a serious work out, please contact the farmers. It is great fun, and is a highlight of the farming year! So far, it has had to be postponed for other pressing issues like planting the last crops before it is too late.

Besides the weeds, the crops are quite healthy at the moment with little need for additional treatment. There are very few aphids and most other bugs have disappeared. There are still cutworms in the ground. They are like caterpillars that come out of the ground at night and chew holes into the leaves. The smaller holes in leaves are made by the larvae of the vegetable weevil, which can be a problem in some of the brassicas. And, of course, there are slugs! The ducks have been reluctant to do enough work in the garden.

In the next weeks a few boxes of seed will be sent to Turtle Tree Seed in New York state. The smaller boxes will be for germination tests, and the other bigger boxes are seed for sale. This is an important source of income for Raphael Garden. Many people all over the country appreciate our seeds because these are rarer crops that people can hardly find anywhere

else, and certainly not in biodynamic quality. Check out Turtle Tree Seed Company at: www.turtletreeseed.org and look for "RG" for seed from our garden.

WE STILL NEED VOLUNTEERS TO MAKE SURE THAT all the fall work gets done. Any volunteer help would be appreciated--be it helping with the harvest on Tuesdays and Fridays, weeding, or mucking out. If you have time, please contact the farmers or Harald to arrange a time to come help.

APPRENTICE NEWS

Jonas, who had stayed at the Apprentice house after graduating from the garden, has left now for Eugene, Oregon to coordinate a school garden with a strong outdoor education program. Congratulations Jonas! Diego is going to leave in a couple of weeks. He will first see some family in Southern California and then also move to Eugene where he will pursue further studies. For a short time that will bring the apprentice number to two! At the end of December, Jeremy Lopez will be joining us, and hopefully a fourth person will join soon, too.

ANIMAL NEWS

Cows: Luna, our yearling Heffer calf, is gone. She moved to the Frye Vineyards in Redwood Valley where there is more space on the pasture than we have here. Luke Frye picked her up at the end of the film festival. Mamma Mona hardly noticed, still being enough in bliss with her younger daughter, Stella. The news is that Luna has acclimated well to her new herd of cattle friends at the Frye's.

Stella has managed to get out of her enclosure at night and have an extra drink from mom, not leaving much milk for the farmers. The enclosure had to be improved so that milking is done first and she gets the rest afterwards. There is no more grazing on the pasture, which is turning browner as the Bermuda grass is dying back for the winter. However, the beginning of the winter grazing has started in the olive grove where the animals, contained by the electric fence, will be rotated through all the open areas through the winter months.

Sheep: The sheep still have enough to eat on their pasture. There is more grass than they could eat, and the cows have helped for a couple of weeks in November. In a while, they, too, will be grazed in the olive grove. It is time now to butcher the lambs. They grew up well and look beautiful with their tails. We knew that most of them would not become bearing ewes, so we left the tails on. We did not encounter any problems, like flystrike, by doing so. (Flystrike: the flies eat them alive if their bottoms are too poopy.) This has been a good experiment.

Ducks: The ducks are supposed to work in the garden, but they have done very little so far in terms of slug eating. Most likely this is because there are only two of them left, and they

feel intimidated or scared. Everyday they are herded into the garden, but everyday they want to go home again to their more secure enclosure. We hope this will change where they become more at ease in the garden.

Chickens: There were some surprises with the chickens a week ago. Somebody dropped off some chickens which look very much like Fair Oaks chickens. Some people must think that we must want more, but they didn't bother to ask first. This included roosters that got very loud at night. The farmers tried to catch them to transform them into dinner or to take them to the Village.

Bees: There are more bees now at the bee stand. Mojan Fischer, a local beekeeper who has taken some classes here, put her bees into our bee stand. Now we have more bees here, and Mojan takes care of them. Hopefully there will be some swarms from these hives next spring.

ENDS OF YEAR NEWS

This year's CSA ends with harvest on Tuesday, December 13 and Friday, December 16. The new year's harvest will begin on January 3 and January 6. The Steering Committee is trying to simplify the CSA renewal by simply continuing payments for December which would not normally be necessary. You will hear about this soon via e-mail and a letter in your box.

The annual general membership meeting is not going to be on Sunday, January 1, but rather two weeks later on **Sunday, January 15 from 3-5pm**. Please mark your calendars. With too many activities at the beginning of the year and people not always being ready, we have chosen this later date.

FOOD RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL--The Report

The Food Rights Film Festival on Nov. 20 was a great success. About 100 people gathered to look at the issue of food rights. A large percentage of the group was farmers from the area and biodynamic farmers that came from as far away as Covelo in Mendocino County. It helped to become clearer about what issues we are facing with our food today. A ballot initiative for the labelling of genetically engineered crops here in California was presented.

There was also viewing of the new film, "Queen of the Sun" about the honeybees that included a few biodynamic beekeepers in it. We ordered some extra copies of the "Queen of the Sun" which has not been released yet. They are available for \$25 from the garden, and make a great Christmas present. Please contact the apprentices or Harald to get your copy.



STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee has been looking at completing the budget for next year and looking at continuing to simplify procedures. We are, however, also interested in having more input from members in matters of fundraising and community events. We hope that as many of you as possible can attend the annual general membership meeting or that some of you could come to the Steering Committee meeting on Dec 15 to shape the future better. This input by shareholders is most important for any properly functioning CSA project. The CSA is not just about a different way of getting vegetables. It is also about being in touch and holding a particular piece of land together, and taking on some of the responsibility of that task. Harald is most grateful for all the past input that came from Steering Committee members, and there is still room for more members to join this group. If you are interested, please contact Harald.

CROP OF THE MONTH

Chinese Cabbage

Chinese cabbage is a very close relative of turnips, bok choy, hon tsai tai and misuna with which it can be crossed. All of these plants are in the cabbage family, but this particular species, *brassica rapa*, is more tender than the European cabbage and somewhat more watery. Chinese cabbage grows best from summer to fall into the winter. It is more challenged if it is grown in the spring. The best Chinese cabbage here develops in this season before it gets too cold, but with cooler days. The open-pollinated (non-hybrid) varieties are not going to make it at all in the spring; they will simply try to go to seed quickly. Chinese cabbage grows well with ample moisture and fertile ground. The heads can form quickly, somewhat faster than other cabbage members.

Here at Raphael Garden three different types are grown. Nozaki Early, is a fast-growing variety which Harald has grown for many years from seed. It has a somewhat longer and more open head and is not overly dense. Houchu is a Japanese variety that was first introduced through our shareholder, Yumiko East, and Harald has now grown seeds for many years, also. This variety is more of a barrel shape and forms denser heads. Finally Granat, a German biodynamic variety, has a longer and densely packed head. This may be the easiest to grow of all these varieties, turning out most of the time quite well.

With their strong growth there can sometimes be problems. Sometimes almost undetected, some brown spots can develop in the heart. Chinese cabbage will not hold as long as other cabbages; it will have to be eaten relatively quickly after harvest. Aphids could be a problem with growing, as well.

The heads can be prepared similarly to regular cabbage into soup, or mixed vegetables. But Chinese cabbage is also well suited for salads, being more tenderly leafed than regular cabbage. A delicious way of preparing it is by adding some raisins, walnuts, apples and some oil and vinegar, of course. It can also be used for cabbage rolls.

It makes a great winter food and certainly is easy to grow. Harald's favorite way of preparing it is by frying some onions and garlic and then steaming the Chinese cabbage, preferably with sesame oil. It is good to add caraway seeds, cumin, dill or coriander in addition to salt. All these seeds help to prevent gas from the Cabbage family members. Also add some raisins to bring some sweetness and some grated ginger. When the cabbage is almost ready, make a peanut sauce by taking peanut butter and vinegar and water and make it into a semi-thick consistency that can be poured over the cabbage. This is a delicious meal or as a side dish. Enjoy!