

Pinehold Gardens *Field Notes*

Vol. 20 No. 14, Week 12

September 24, 2014

In This Box

- Bean medley
- Broccoli
- Green oakleaf head lettuce
- Cucumber
- Tomato
- Garlic
- Red Bull onion
- Stir fry bag: carrot, Hakurei turnip, Carmen pepper, green onions, Yukina Savoy

Next Week?

- Spinach
- Kohlrabi
- Fennel
- Russian kale
- Shallot
- Peppers
- Broccoli

A DAY IN THE LIFE

We don't have children, but many days I feel like our plants are our children. Really. Farming is not just how we earn our living, it is our life. And in our life we take great care of what we have charge over.

In early January I order the seeds we will need for the season. Often it is a difficult task as varieties that we have grown in the past are not available, either due to crop failure or discontinuation by the seed company or the supplier to the seed company. It is getting harder to find our favorite yellow storage onion and the early onion I usually grow had a crop failure. This past winter I drove to Madison for a four-hour workshop on lettuce and onions, two crops I wanted to make sure were in almost every CSA box this year. I got some suggestions for onion varieties to try and I feel that I made some good choices.

On March 3 I started planting onions in seed trays in the kitchen of our house as it was minus one degree outside and we don't have a heated work space other than the house. The planted trays were carried outside to the insulated space of our walk-in cooler which with the addition of utility racks covered with shop lights doubles as a germinating chamber. They lived in the "chamber" until we thought it was warm enough to put them in our transplant greenhouse. This past winter we had many cold nights and the plants were covered with blan-

kets with a heater below them to keep them safe and warm.

On April 23, although it was 31 degrees when we woke up, we started planting ten thousand onion and shallot plants, with David driving the tractor and me sitting on the transplanter.

We weeded and watered them weekly, spending hundreds of hours weeding. It was going to be a great allium year. We were determined to make it so. Then came the summer and the rain. The onions loved it. They kept growing. They were beautiful. Then just as they were maturing, it rained way too much in August.

I was trying to compare raising our onion crop this year to raising a child to our worker shares this morning. I said maybe it is like doing everything you can do to raise them right and they end up in the wrong environment that you have no control over. Our onions ended up in the wrong environment: rain and wet, cool dewey mornings. We probably will lose over half of our crop to rot. But unlike children, there is no chance this year to make things better, only next year, to try once again.

FIELD NOTES

We are experiencing a glorious Indian Summer. Someone once told me that if your crops make it through the first frost that usually occurs after the full moon in early September you should have a few good weeks left in the growing season. Luckily it is true this year and the plants are really loving the sun and warmth. Beans that had flowers and small beans on them for the past three weeks, suddenly ripened to mature beans. Peppers are finally ripening to red. The broccoli is maturing right on schedule. And instead of worrying about whether we can leave a crop in the field until the next week because it might rot, we discussed whether the fennel might bolt before next week.

We did have a scare last Saturday right before midnight as another torrential rain storm dropped 0.4 inches of rain in 6 minutes. I thought for sure the lettuce would be torn to shreds.



DEVOUTLY NOT TO BE WISHED are the prospects of last winter's arctic vortex, which brought bone chilling subzero temperatures. But our wish may not be nature's command as NOAA climate prediction is calling for a winter perhaps similar to last winter. Perhaps not too similar we hope.

We have most of the winter squash harvested and curing on trailers in the sun for our October deliveries.

BOX NOTES

The beans are a combination of yellow and green Romano and regular green beans. Romano beans are traditionally used in soups but they can be cooked just like a regular bean.

Enough broccoli matured for everyone to receive a head. If you did not receive broccoli last week, this week you will receive a large head.

Continuing with the theme oriented boxes, this week is the salad and stir fry box. It is definitely the last summer salad as these are the last cucumbers from the field and the last tomato out of the greenhouse. Very sad thought. Was there a summer?

The stir fry bag contains crops that will make a perfect stir fry. Of course you can also add the items such as broccoli and garlic that aren't in the bag to your stir fry. The Yukina Savoy, the green plants that are rubber banded together, are an Asian green, similar to tatsoi and pac choi. The worker share crew all thought the green onions smelled great. It is a new Japanese variety, Ishikura, that we tried. Be sure to use most of the green part of the onion.

Four people spent over an hour doing their best to make sure the red onion was presentable and usable. While not perfect, that red onion is one of the tastiest and sweetest onions I have ever eaten. I have been enjoying onion, potato, kale, egg skillet breakfasts.

Stir Fry and Yukina



The Asian method of cooking meat, seafood and vegetables by braising it quickly in a scant amount of liquid or oil under high heat, called stir frying, produces not only a delicious meal but can preserve a lot of the flavor and nutrients of the ingredients. The trick in being successful on a basic level of skill is not having a wok, although that is helpful, it is rather the proper preparing of the ingredients and a good simple sauce. The sauce and rice, which is typically served with stir fry though noodles such as soba noodles work as well, can be and on some good authority perhaps should be prepared ahead of time. Then it leaves just chopping and stirring. A featured ingredient in today's stir fry bag is Yukina Savoy. Yukina is an Asian green similar to tatsoi. It cooks quickly like spinach, but it's flavor is that of mild cabbage or broccoli. **Store:** Kept in a closed plastic bag in the refrigerator it will store for a week at least. **Preparing:** Wash, drain and coarsely chop. **Use:** Yukina can be used raw in a salads but is often used in stir fry added at the end of cooking to provide some color and taste to the dish.

These variations on a stir fry theme are based on information from the mother of all cookbooks, *The Joy of Cooking*. Our friend and Pinehold member, Martha Davis Kipcak (owner of Might Find Foods), provides another new idea.

Simple Stir Fry Sauce

1 Tbl. Corn starch	1/2 or more to taste
3 Tbl. water	grated or finely
1/2 tsp salt	chopped fresh ginger
1 Tbl. Soy sauce	

Blend corn starch and water until smooth. Add other ingredients. *Remember this is a simple one. Other ingredients can be added, such as chopped garlic, chilli or bean paste.*

The Vegetables

The amount and variety of vegetables depends on taste, interest and what you may have available. The key is the size of pieces and the sequence to which they are added to the pan. Cutting the vegetables to provide as much cooking surface as possible is important so diced or diagonally cut vegetables is best. Separating the stems from the Yukina and using the stems before the leaves is a good idea. Always cook the tougher, firmer vegetables first, such as carrots, then add the less firm, such as the turnip and broccoli and finish with the most tender, such as the Yukina and green onion.

Add a tablespoon or so of sesame or peanut oil to the pan if you have it when the pan is very hot. (Drop of water should dance on the metal.) Otherwise use canola. Flavor the oil with any aromatics such as garlic or onion. Begin adding vegetables and stir. A minute or two of each should be sufficient.

Martha suggests trying potatoes julienned into strips. Stir fried until golden brown but still firm and dressed with scallions, rice wine vinegar, salt and black pepper.

Meat, Seafood and Tofu

Chicken, pork, beef, tofu and shrimp are all the obvious choices for a stir fry. The key here is again to have your choice prepared ahead of time and cut into a appropriate smallish, bite size pieces, except perhaps for the shrimp, which should be smaller-sized shrimp, washed, shelled and deveined. The tofu should be firm and drained, then cut into smallish pieces. With the exception of the shrimp, meats and tofu should go in early. The shrimp should be added late.