



# The Weekly Weeder

A weekly publication for CSA members

**AUGUST 18, 2010—BOX #11**

WWW.RIDGELANDHARVEST.COM CSA@RIDGELANDHARVEST.COM

## Box Contents and Tips

**Basil, Purple Opal**

**Beans, Green or Yellow Wax (Full Shares only)**

**Cabbage, Green Savoy: (Full Shares only)**

**Carrots:** This will be the last offering until our next plantings mature.

**Edamame Soybeans: (Half Shares only)**

See the Newsletter from week 9 for cooking edamame for a quick snack. Also great to cook, then shell the beans for use in salads. Keep in plastic bag in the refrigerator.

**Eggplant- Oriental OR Globe (Half Shares only):** The globe is thicker skinned, use salt rub for 10 minutes to help get bitterness out. Store in refrigerator, but wrap in towel then into a plastic bag. This will keep it from getting rubbery too quickly (they don't like to get too cold).

**Garlic, Asian Tempest:** Yes, garlic is back! We started pulling down the garlic last week during the hot afternoons. It was a welcome task to sit in the shade of the tobacco barn and clip garlic. Store in cool dry location 50 degrees or on countertop

**Onion, Cippolini—** we are just starting to clean onions. Our Reds need more time to dry down. It is a nice feeling having a supply of onions on hand— especially considering the difficulties many farmers have faced this year with rot. We pulled some of our onions just in the nick of time and some others a little too early, but it looks like we will be able to offer a nice amount of alliums this year. Store in cool, dark, and dry place 45-50 degrees.

**Peppers, Carmen:** a Sweet Italian Pepper, Usually we harvest these ripe, but it is not looking like a good pepper year for us. The plants aborted many fruits/flowers during the cool wet June.

**Raspberries (Select Sites)** Fragile—use promptly. Store in refrigerator until used.

**Sweet Corn: (Half Shares only)** This is the last from the first planting we hope that the second planting will mature before frost as we certainly have not had our fill of sweet corn either. The late planted second planting is looking healthy, keep your fingers crossed for an extended fall.

**Tomato Heirloom Slicers & Sungold Cherry's:** A mixture of Black Krim, Cherokee Purple, Japanese Black, Zapotec and Crimson Sprinter. Stores best at room temperature .

**Tomato, Roma's (Full Shares only)**

**Zucchini & Patty Pan Summer Squash:** Maybe the last giving.

## News from the Farm —

### *A word about tomatoes....*

Tomatoes are a very important crop for many Midwest CSA farms. They are extremely intensive to grow organically. And to hear once again our fellow farmers in Wisconsin are being hit by a second season with late blight is worrisome. We hope that we won't have to add another task/input to an already intensive crop. It is a troubling sign for the future of commercial production of tomatoes in the Midwest. Its not clear how well people understand the value of tomatoes, and what a farmer risks while attempting to raise a tomato crop. They are an intensive crop to grow from seed to harvest, and farmers do things differently. Many practice variations of the following: sterilizing seed, raising transplants, planting transplants, mulch, trellis, harvest, and finally sort/pack.

**We start our season in the greenhouse,** sowing each seed into open flats to germinate. Two weeks later, when true leaves have developed, they are planted into individual cells, handled with tender fingers and a delicate touch. Weeks later we move the flats into cold frames where they're fertilized with kelp (root stimulant) and fish fertilizer (nitrogen) to stage them before going into the field. Once transplanted we mulch with local straw or corn fodder. Bales come in 800 pound round bales, and it took about 30 bales to mulch our first planting. We find this process is expensive in material (\$30 a bale) and labor (60 people hours) to spread the mulch bales. The mulch is essential to maintain soil moisture and weed control. In years that are dry, we will also have to irrigate once per week.

(Continued on page 2)

## News from the Farm (continued)

**In the field.** After they are planted and mulched, we begin the trellising phase. We have found the best luck with T-Posts spaced every 7 plants, which equates to about 400 posts. In trellising we weave the plants into a hedge, tying off string at the posts. This becomes a weekly chore for the crew during the month of June and July. Some of us wear long sleeves, especially during hot weather as the tomato resins when combined with sweat can cause serious irritation— also known as a case of the Itchy Arms or Tomato Neck.

**Now we enter the pre-harvest phase.** The plant turns from vegetative growth to fruiting. Soon the vines are heavy with green fruits. They test the strength of our trellis. For us this is the most critical time— we have now been intensively managing the crop and have yet to receive a return on our investment. To hear that a farmer loses their crop at this stage is heart breaking— out the entire investment. It is during this time that we lie awake at night during every storm hoping that the loud patter on the window isn't hail. And are relieved and happy after at least half of the trellis still stands after 2 inches of rain and high winds are weathered.

**At last the harvest.** This is both the phase we are most excited to begin, as well as end! During this time the tomatoes need to be harvested every other day to prevent them from becoming over ripe. During peak harvest times it can take our well trained and experienced crew 4 or more hours to pick our entire patch. If we miss a day, especially on the Sungold cherry's, we are in deep trouble as we then have to sort out the overripe fruit while harvesting— now the fingers have to think and inspect while picking. If we don't sort here they will no doubt split and become a gooey problem in the packing shed. We also have to sort the slicers in the field. Not every tomato gets picked. In fact, this year most of them aren't getting picked. We estimate this year that we are harvesting only 50 percent of the total fruit. This is due to cracking, cat-facing, or sunscald. The heavy rains have caused a lot of fruit to damage— they just can't take the added water. This year we have had some problems with Early blight and have lost a lot of vegetation, further exposing the fruit directly to the sun's rays which burns the fruit. If there is noticeable damage then it is best to leave it in the field. The same rule applies to tomatoes as does apples— it only takes one bad one to ruin the whole bushel. That being said there is still sorting that occurs in the packing shed and with the repeated harvest there is also an added level of craze during tomato season. We are harvesting on average 2 pallets every other day— if you are not careful and spend too much time in one spot, you will become surrounded and trapped by tomatoes!!

As the season progresses and air begins to carry the yeasty scent of decay and rot. The bees and hornets can become a problem during the late August and September as the sugars in the fruit become the food of choice after the flowers decline and nectar becomes scarce. Our knees are stained, seeds stuck to dry, evidence of the bounty! Enjoy— Mat and Cate



# Recipes! Recipes!

## Oven Roasted Tomato Sauce:

2 1/2 pounds tomatoes (roughly chopped)  
1 onion, thinly sliced  
4 thyme sprigs  
2-3 Tbsp olive oil  
Salt and Pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 425-degrees. Put tomatoes in single layer in a baking pan with the onion and thyme. Drizzle oil over all. Season with salt & pepper. Bake until soft, shriveled, and falling apart. 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Remove thyme branches, and puree or put into food mill. Season with salt and pepper.

## Grilled Tomato Sauce

2 pounds ripe tomatoes  
3 Tbsp olive oil  
1/2 small onion, finely diced  
Garlic (if desired)  
Salt and freshly milled pepper  
Pinch of sugar (if needed)

Rub the tomatoes lightly with oil. Then grill, broil, or sear them in a heavy skillet, turning them frequently until blistered and charred. Puree them, skin and all. Don't worry about the black flecks. Meanwhile, heat the remaining oil and skillet over medium heat. Add onion, and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the pureed tomatoes and cook, stirring frequently until the sauce has thickened.

Season with salt, and pepper, and sugar to correct the acidity if needed.

## Cherry Tomato Sauce

1 pound tomatoes  
Salt and freshly milled pepper  
Pinch of sugar  
2 Tbsp olive oil or butter  
1 tsp of chopped herbs (basil or thyme)

Put tomatoes into sauce pan or skillet with 1/3 cup water over high heat. Cover and cook until the tomatoes begin to split. When most of them have burst open, pass them through a food mill or sieve to remove skins and seeds. Season with salt, pepper and sugar. Stir in the oil or butter, and herb.

Source: Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone  
by Deborah Madison



## Bulletin Board

**Raspberry U-Pick is now Open!** We're so happy that members are taking advantage of the berry picking. The patch is in peak form now, but will continue for another month.

Picking is open Thursday—Saturday beginning at 10 am. Bring your own containers or we have pints and flats available for use and sale. If you bring your own, we suggest using shallow, wide containers to prevent smashing the fragile berries.

Before you come: contact the farm to reserve a picking spot, receive picking conditions, and with the number of people to be picking so we're sure not to overload the patch. CSA members pay \$3.50/pound and non-members pay \$4/pound.

**Bulk Purchase Opportunity:** Place your order by email or phone by Sunday 4 pm for delivery to your CSA drop site.

**BASIL:** 12 leafy bunches. Perfect for freezing batches of pesto or drying. Choose from Genovese, Thai or Purple Opal. \$15

**TOMATOES:** 10# Grade B Canning Slicers or Plum Tomatoes \$18

**GARLIC:** Choose from German Extra Hardy or Asian Tempest

5 lbs \$35; 10 lbs \$70, 20 lbs \$120

Send check to the farm:

Ridgeland Harvest  
E5538 Nelson Road,  
Viroqua, WI 54665

**Need more recipes for seasonal cooking ideas?**  
The Madison Area CSA Coalition (MACSAC) From Asparagus to Zucchini: A Guide to Farm-Fresh Produce is now for sale through the farm. Place your order and we'll pack your copy in your weekly CSA box. Mail your check to the farm for \$17.00

## Coming Soon...

More Green Beans, Cabbage, Green Peppers,  
Eggplant, Cured Garlic &  
Onions....much more!