



THE RED HILL ROOT

Newsletter for the Members of Red Hill Farm CSA

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Winter Farm Share

Our Winter Shares are in full swing. We're enjoying the challenge of providing our members with a bountiful share each week. Upcoming veggies include Butternut Squash, Kale, Spinach and more. Check out our recipe for Kale & White Bean Soup in this issue!!



Beautiful crèche at Our Lady of Angles convent in Aston.

At this Christmas time,

May you recognize in your life the presence, power and light of your soul.

May you realize that you are never alone, that your soul in its brightness and belonging connects you intimately with the rhythm of the universe.

During this Christmas season,

May you realize that the shape of your soul is unique, that you have a special destiny here that behind the façade of your life there is something beautiful, good, and eternal happening.

This Christmas,

May you learn to see yourself with the same delight, pride and expectation with which God sees you in every moment.

-Adapted version of a poem by Irish poet John O'Donohue.

Merry Christmas to you and all your loved ones.



Winter farming....Hoop Hoop Hooray!

By Joanne Rosenbaum

We are fortunate to have two hoop houses, which allows us to extend the growing season on both ends of the year. You have already enjoyed the benefits of the earlier than normal harvest of those amazing sweet English cucumbers and Asian eggplants, which were available for you in June!



Now we are in the mist of extending our season into the winter. Some might think growing in the protective hoop house is pretty easy- just plant the plants, give a little water now and then and we are home free. But, there is so much more to consider.

We have to take into account; the hoop houses are not heated, less hours of sunlight, sun is less intense and temperatures are always fluctuating. When it is warm outside the moisture can build up and lead to disease on the leaves, constant monitoring soil moisture and we are always on the lookout for pests. Planning and planting takes place way before the first frost hits, from late August into September. That is why getting started early is paramount, and realizing growing slows down as we get deeper into the winter. The plants need to be pretty well established and then we focus on keeping them going throughout the winter. Choosing cold tolerant plants is important too- spinach, hardy lettuce, kale, chard, scallions, and bok choy.

Early on we focused on making sure the vegetable plants were “cold tolerant” and ready for the winter by keeping the doors and the sides of the hoop house open. In the winter, to ensure the plants don’t freeze, the weather forecast is monitored daily. When the temps go below 32F, all the plants in both hoop houses are covered with agricultural covering (remay) to trap in the warmth from the sun heating up the soil during the day. When it is sunny the covers are taken off-even on the weekends, to let the sun in to promote growing, and to get rid of the excess moisture the doors are opened on warm days.



So as you can see, lots of daily work of covering, un-covering, some weeding, checking for any signs of “bad bugs”, watering when necessary, frequent harvesting of kale, chard and spinach-all the leaves are picked individually, so new leaves are encouraged to grow. I am sure you can imagine the spinach harvest can take some time.

We decided to take Kohlrabi that was growing in the fields and transplanted them to one of the hoop houses. They survived the slight trauma of being transplanted and have perked up nicely, so keep your fingers crossed that they will grow.

We are also experimenting with growing some Asian greens in crates in the heated greenhouse. With constant warm temps and glass enclosed, they seem to be doing well.

Winter growing is fun, rewarding, but also challenging and work intensive. The veggies are sweeter as their sugar production increased in the cold. (Sugar is like the plants antifreeze). But the growth rate can be a little frustrating. Enjoy the winter harvest!



Pasta, Kale and White Bean Soup



Ingredients

- 6 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 carrots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan, plus 1 small piece rind
- 1 1/2 cups small pasta, such as ditalini (about 8 ounces)
- 1 15 -ounce can white beans, drained and rinsed

Directions

Put the bacon in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 4 minutes. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 3 minutes. Add the carrots, garlic, thyme, and 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper and cook until the carrots begin to soften. Add the chicken broth, 4 cups water, and the parmesan rind. Increase the heat to high; cover and bring to a boil.

Add the pasta and beans and cook, uncovered, 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add the kale. Simmer, uncovered, until slightly thickened, about 7 minutes. Remove the parmesan rind, stir in half of the grated cheese and season with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and top with the remaining cheese.

Special Request!!

In an effort to better label the You-Pick garden next year, we are in need of the lids that we use for labeling. We would appreciate any lids that you may have from large (32 oz.) yogurt, sour cream or ricotta cheese containers. We will be using them on Martin Luther King day for an in-service project.

