

FIELD *notes*

UCSC Farm
Community Supported Agriculture
Fifth Harvest: 7/13/10 & 7/16/10



What's in the box?

Redleaf Lettuce, *Vulcan*
Chard, *Rhubarb Red* or *Bright Lights*
Baby Beets Greens, *Red Ace*
with **Spinach**, *Organic Seed Alliance 15*
Salad Mix
Cilantro, *Santo*
Carrots, *Nelson*
Cabbage, *Primax*
Onions, *Purplette*
Strawberries, *Seascape & Albion*
Blueberries, *mixed varieties*

Words from the Field

second-year apprentice, Lili Ringold-Brown

What's in a seed?

It all starts with a seed; cool spring mornings spent in the greenhouse pushing miniscule lettuces, teardrop squash, smooth round cabbage and caterpillar-like calendula into the damp fertile soil mix, which will be their new home for the next six weeks. Every seed is a potential plant and every plant the parent to many potential seeds. Seed security is food security and as the organic farming movement grows in our region it is necessary to look to the seed, and to become stewards, breeders, and conservationists to an ever-shrinking pool of genetic resources.

Many of the seeds sold in the United States are grown overseas in climates very unlike our own. A seed grown in Mexico may not produce a flourishing plant in our cool coastal climate, just like a seed grown in our region may not be well adapted to the sandy arid environment of the southwest. Plants are dynamic, responding to our growing practices, climate, soil type and soil structure, moisture, fertility and the thousands of other daily interactions that take place in our farms and gardens. Very little work has been done on seed breeding for organic production systems and today's seed market is dominated by hybrid and GMO varieties. Seeds used on organic farms often come from plants that have been grown using chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides (under the USDA Organic Standards you can use non-organic seed on an organic certified farm). Plants that are appropriate for organic systems need to be selected for deep roots that can seek out living soil-based nutrients, vigorous canopies to create weed competition, positive growth responses to organic fertility practices, broad spectrum pest and disease resistance. We also want plants that offer the best flavor, the highest nutrient content and are regionally and seasonally appropriate.

With all this in mind we have decided to start growing and saving some of our own seed at the farm. Not only is this a wonderful education opportunity for our apprentices who will get a literal seed-to-seed interaction with some of our crops, but it is also a chance for us to preserve diversity, select for varieties that grow well on our farm, and to start a conversation around creating a cooperative where all the farms in our area produce and share some of their own seed.

Growing seed has many challenges but you don't have to be a professional breeder or plant geneticist to get started. Individuals and communities have been preserving and passing on seed for thousands of years and with a few basic terms and concepts any home gardener can begin saving seed.

Upcoming Workshop: Summer Pruning for Fruit Trees

Saturday, July 31, 10 am - 1 pm
Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm

Summer pruning is one of the best ways to ensure the health and productivity of your fruit trees. Learn summer pruning techniques from pruning experts Orin Martin and Matthew Sutton in this demonstration workshop. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a snack. \$15 for Friends' members; \$20 general public, payable at the workshop. No pre-registration necessary. Questions? Call 831.459-3240 or email casfs@ucsc.edu.



Carrots originated in the Middle East where early cultivated varieties were yellow and purple. The modern orange variety developed in Holland in the 1600s from the mutant seed of a yellow carrot.

Storage tips: Trim off leafy tops (which are edible and can be chopped and added to salads) and store them in plastic bags in the refrigerator where they should last for 2 to 4 weeks.

Nutrition info: Carrots are high in vitamin A, beta-carotene, calcium, potassium and other trace minerals. Scrub off dirt but do not peel carrots, as trace minerals are found close to the skin surface.

Carrot Orzo

from: Fresh from the Farm & Garden Cookbook 2004 edition

- 2 cups finely grated carrots
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter or olive oil
- 2 cups orzo (rice shaped pasta)
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons chopped onions
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary (available in the CSA cutting garden)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese or 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in heavy medium-large saucepan and saute onions and garlic for a few minutes. Add carrots and orzo. Cook, stirring, 2 or 3 more minutes. Add liquid, bring to boil and turn to low. Simmer, uncovered, 10 to 15 minutes or until liquid

“What’s in a seed?” (continued)

At the farm this year we have decided to start simple, planting four different varieties of open-pollinated lettuce, three heirloom tomatoes and one open pollinated dry farm tomato, three different annual herbs, seven different dry beans, and some winter squash.

Most of the plants we choose to work with this season are self-pollinated, meaning that the plant is literally its own mother and father using pollen from its own flowers for pollination (the lettuce, tomatoes, and beans fall into this category). Other plants such as the winter squash are cross-pollinated, meaning in this case that insects move pollen between plants within the same species. It takes more planning to save seed from cross pollinating plants as the chance for an unwanted cross may occur (I love acorn squash and I love zucchini but I don’t necessarily want their genetics mixing in my seed crop). By only planting one variety from each species or isolating the plants in space in time we can guarantee that our seed crop stays true to type.

As our seed saving program develops so will our seed cleaning techniques. Currently we are cleaning all of our seed by hand which can be a great community building experience. One of my favorite seeds to clean is bean seed. When the plants have begun to dry in the field they are harvested and spread out onto a large tarp. Once the plants have fully dried the dancing begins, the more wild and wiggly your moves are the more beans are released from the dried pods. The feeling of the plants crunching between your dancing feet and the beautiful outpouring of jewel toned beans is a sight to warm any farmer’s heart.

Ideas for Baby Beet Greens

Baby greens are not only packed with nutrients, they are also delightfully tender and mild in flavor. Here are some ideas for how to bring them into your cooking:

- Add them to your salad mix for a nutritional and flavor boost.
- Lightly saute some chopped onions in oil and add the greens in the last 2 or 3 minutes. Don’t overcook the greens. When they have turned bright green they are ready. Serve over rice or pasta.
- Cook them into a frittata or quiche with savory herbs such as dill, basil or rosemary.