



THE ALLEGED FARM NEWS

1 November 2007

The end is nigh. In fact, very nigh.

Oh, not that end. Even with global warming speeding up and drug resistant staphylococci on the rampage, I figure our species has a fair number more generations to go until we are nothing more than a curious exhibit in a natural history museum. I suppose you could call our extinction nigh in geologic terms, but then just about everything counts as nigh on that scale of time.

As for the end of the world or the universe, well the former is unlikely to occur nighly in any terms—the planet is probably good for another billion years even if we put off repairs—and as for the latter, it is not at all clear that the universe has any end, which is oddly both a comforting and a dismaying idea at the same time. There's nothing like boundlessness to make you feel small. Except maybe standing at the bottom of the Grand Canyon or hanging out with elephants or trying to play basketball against Kareem Abdul Jabar or... Well, anyway, boundlessness, despite the hope it offers, tends to highlight your insignificance.

But before I plunge you into some sort of existential funk related to the universe or your pachyderm pals, let me hasten to reiterate that the nigh end of which I write is nothing cataclysmic or cosmic and totally, so far as I know, unrelated to elephants. I just mean that this is the last CSA delivery of the season.

How you take this news—whether with a whoop of joy or moan of despair—I cannot say. But, having spent so long with the vegetables myself, I understand both reactions. I did not notice any signs of grief in the packing room this afternoon as we put the lettuce in the last bag. We did not stand around waxing nostalgic about the produce we have sent out this year—the excellent tomatoes, the beautiful heads of lettuce, the surprisingly tasty husk cherries, the piles of sweet red peppers, all the broccoli. If we thought of much of anything as we left the barn it was what a lovely warm afternoon for an outdoor nap it had become.

It will be hard, though, not to think back longingly to the piles of fresh vegetables this winter as we wander disconsolately through produce sections stocked with bedraggled specimens from god knows where: tortured lettuce with no real flavor and pale tomatoes with even less flavor than that, old beans with no snap left in them, bitter eggplants, roughed up bok choy and those packages of sad little lathed carrot pieces.

And what piles of produce they were. Not exactly what I might have predicted were I foolish enough anymore to attempt agricultural predictions. I might have guessed we would have more potatoes, zucchini further into the season, plenty of turnips, bigger onions. On the other hand, it would not have occurred to me could grow that many red peppers or hand out broccoli—big heads of it—so often. I did not know we could grow parsley root that large and I was starting to think we would never get another parsnip crop. Finding a variety of white carrot that could not only size up but also taste so good was a pleasant surprise, as was finding so many winter squash to harvest. Getting any spinach at all on this farm almost counts as a miracle at this point.

This week's share: Beets, Cabbage, Carrots, Celeriac, Newmex chile, Cress, Escarole or radicchio, Garlic, Lettuce, Onions, Parsnips, Potatoes, Winter squash, Sage

That is, I suppose, the one thing I can accurately foretell: that we do not know in the spring as we set out the transplants and sow the seeds which will prosper and which disappoint. We can only be sure that not everything we work on will come to fruition and that the season will bring surprises of various sorts, successes and failures both obvious and inexplicable. Sometimes the most reliable crops let us down and ones we plant out of mere pigheadedness do more than we dared hope. Which is one of the reasons we plant so many different crops. We could pare our list down to the basics—lettuce, potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, squash—but with so few crops a bad year for any one of them would leave us short.

It would also leave everyone—growers and eaters alike—bored. Having seventy different crops out in the field serves as a sort of insurance—enough things will have done well each week in whatever conditions we have to fill the bags. But mostly we grow all those crops so that we will have different things to work on and you will have different things to eat. I doubt we would get many complaints if we decided not to try growing cress, but it does not take much effort to sow some in the fall greens patch and if it works then everyone gets to try a bit in their salad or a cream of cress soup. We do not expect that everyone will like the cress—or the husk cherries or artichokes or shell beans or tatsoi or salsify or radicchio or fennel or mustard greens or daikon or lovage or celeriac. But we hope some of you are happy to see it and some happy to discover it and some interested or amused enough to give it a try. And since the cress is only one of fourteen crops in the bag this week setting it aside will hardly leave you with nothing to eat.

That won't happen until next week when you go to your site and find no bags and remember that the season has ended and you have to do without vegetables until next June. Well, that is not quite true. This is the last bag of the CSA season, but it does not have to be the end. Those of you whose taste for vegetables has not quite been exhausted yet have a chance to get one more delivery on Tuesday, November 20 by ordering from the list below (send your order to Thomas@theallegedfarm.com).

Beets	\$1.50/lb	Onions, red and yellow	\$2/2 lb bag
Carrots	\$1.50/lb		\$4/5 lb bag
Celeriac	\$2.25/lb	Shallots	\$4/lb
Parsnips	\$2.25/lb	Garlic	\$7/lb
Parsley root	\$2.25/lb	Winter squash	\$1/lb
Potatoes, yellow	\$1.25/lb	Pumpkin	\$1/lb
Fingerling	\$1.75/lb		

No matter how you feel about cress or any other vegetable right now, we feel grateful to you for having been a member of the CSA this season. You have supported us. Thank you.