

This week's share: Cabbage, Carrots, Eggplant, Lettuce, Onions, Peppers, Hot peppers, Potatoes, Shallots, Tomatoes, Basil, Lemon grass

This week's news: This is just a rough estimate because different varieties bear more or less heavily, but based on the two rows of Red Norland potatoes we dug this past Monday there are another five and a half tons of potatoes (Chippewa, French Fingerling, Russet Norkotah, Carola and Kennebec) out in the field. That's enough to give everyone ten pounds a week for the rest of the season (don't worry, we won't). Last Friday I dug 35 feet on the end of one of our carrot beds and got 200 pounds of carrots. If the remaining 2000 feet of carrots beds yield like that, and some of them look like they might, we could add ten pounds of carrots to those potatoes (not that we will do that either). We started cleaning the onions last week. We managed to get through all the red ones before boredom did us in—all fifteen tubs of them. The pile of yellow onions is larger, and there are another ten bushels or so of shallots to clean as well.

On the other hand, you won't get any rutabagas this year. Last year we handed out quite a few, sent piles down to our neighbor's Brooklyn CSA sites and still had half a ton left at the end of the season (including several boxes of ten pounders). This year we planted our 800 seedlings a bit later so they would not get so large and they failed to size up at all. This happens sometimes, though I have yet to find anybody who can explain why. As for our parsnip crop, it fell victim to the weeds. Parsnips grow slowly (they take about four months to size up) so you have to plant them early and they germinate slowly too. Consequently, the weeds have ample opportunity to take over, and in this weediest of years they did just that.

Perhaps some year every crop I plant will grow, but I doubt it. A few things always fail or fail to get enough attention. Some disease or bug comes along or the weather does not cooperate or we run out of time to weed and a crop comes to nothing. At the same time, though, some other crop prospers and so we tend to end up with a lot of some vegetables and none of others. Meanwhile, the other fifty or so crops we grow do well enough.

Our eggplants, for instance. Eggplants, I am forced to admit, will never do particularly well this far north. They hate cold nights (anything, that is, below about fifty-five degrees), which around here means they are only happy for about two months. That is not much time to grow a large sturdy plant and churn out quantities of sizable fruits. But if we put out enough big transplants and feed them well we usually get a good enough yield.

Lemon grass is not exactly adapted to this northern climate either. It would rather be on some Caribbean island (can you blame it?) or hanging out in Southeast Asia. But if we start it in the greenhouse and plant it in one of our herb boxes—filled with a foot of good compost—and wait long enough we get enough stems to give everyone a few. I suppose it would be gratifying in a way to produce huge piles of lemon grass, but I don't know

Fruit share: Stanley plums and Macintosh apples from O. A. Borden and