



Red Fire Reader

A monthly newsletter from Red Fire Farm, growers of healthy organic food for communities in Massachusetts

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ISSUE NUMBER IV



IN THIS ISSUE

FALL FARM UPDATE
TOMATOFEST RESULTS
SCARECROW CONTEST
BULK ORDERING
RECIPES
PYO INFO

CALENDAR:

Red Fire Farm will be appearing at the listed Fairs and Events so come see us!

September 9th : Ona's cooking demo at the Newton CSA distribution

September 11th: 1st Annual Granby Agricultural Fair, 10-4PM, FREE

September 14th : Ona's cooking demo at the Springfield Farmers Market in Forest Park

September 18th: Holyoke Harvest Farmers' Market, 10-2PM, Open Square

September 19th: Hungary Ghost Wonder Not Bread Festival, 11-5PM, Northampton

<http://www.hungryghostbread.com/>

September 22nd : Ona's cooking demo at the JP Harvest CSA distribution

September 24th : Taste the View, Tri-County Fairgrounds, Northampton buylocalfood.org

September 27th: Tour of Red Fire Farm for chefs and CSA members. 10AM, please RSVP.

October 1st: Ona's cooking demo at the Granby Farmstand, 2-7pm

October 2nd : Boston Local Food Festival
<http://bostonlocalfoodfestival.com/>

IN SEASON IN SEPTEMBER

basil ~ lettuce ~ radishes ~ beets ~ carrots ~ kale
~ collards ~ mesclun greens ~ cilantro ~
garlic ~ herbs ~ onions ~ potatoes ~ cabbage ~ summer
squash ~ cucumbers ~ beans ~ eggplant ~ melons ~ onions
~ sweet corn ~ cherry tomatoes ~ tomatoes ~
tomatillos ~ hot peppers ~ leeks ~ apples ~ turnip ~
broccoli ~ cauliflower ~ raspberries ~ grapes ~ winter
squash ~ pumpkins and more!

SQUEEZING CROPS OUT OF HOT DRY FIELDS:

A FALL FARM UPDATE

As we roll into September, I am pleased to report that in general we managed to water the crops enough during July and August to prevent major losses. It has been an exceptionally dry and hot summer. Although there are a few crops that like these extreme temperatures, most crops have struggled a bit. For instance, in peppers we have seen blossoms drop without forming peppers on some varieties. In other crops there have been some size reductions on the fruits (certain tomato fields are an example) where we just could not pump as much water to them as would have been ideal. Greens like lettuce have not been happy with the weather this summer, but fortunately most of our summer plantings of greens crops just happened to be in fields with heavier, more water retentive soils, so they managed to make it through in better condition than I would have expected. Certainly this growing season is not a disaster and we have been able to pick thousands and thousands of pounds of wonderful produce, but neither has it been the easiest weather to deal with. We did have some measurable rainfall in the third week of August which replenished the soil moisture and allowed most of the crops to perk up, but as that was followed by more hot, dry weather, I would admit that I am hoping for more rain soon, and also for cooler fall temperatures which usually start coming our way by early to mid September.

For the fall crops it appears that we are poised to be harvesting very nice winter squash and cabbage soon. The cucurbits did like the hot weather this year, and on the fields that got enough water, or that had heavier soils, they grew well and set a good amount of fruit. We should have a decent carrot supply this fall, and the sweet potatoes also look like they will be making good yields. Regular potatoes did not do great (some varieties failed to germinate well in the spring so the fields had lots of gaps), so these may not be as abundant as ideal this fall. We recently finished the onion harvest with lots of good sized onions from the drip irrigation we had them on when they were growing.

This year has been quite a contrast to last year when we had too much rain and no sun. It is clearly a lot more work to keep things well watered, but the pay off is well worth it. Thanks to the dedicated irrigation crew who turned pumps on and off at all times of day or night, and the rest of our hard-working crew, we expect to have bountiful, beautiful produce as we get into the fall months!

-Ryan

Tomato Festival a HUGE success!

The tomato festival this year was a blast. We had a perfect day, an abundant tomato crop and about 2000 people here to taste all the varieties. My favorite part of the day was hearing the Nields play while I was watering all of the lettuce and brassica seedlings in the nearby greenhouse. It is not everyday that I get to hear an amazing live band singing sweet tunes while I am working in the greenhouse!

The tasting this year was organized in the same way as last year. Unfortunately our harvest crew forgot to harvest about half of the red slicing varieties that we grew for the tasting, but these are the boring ones anyway. Since most of them were missing from the tasting I will not even bother to report on the few that we did have. Fortunately we did manage to have pretty much all of the heirloom and cherry tomatoes that we grew in the tasting. Tasters were given 6 stars each and asked to put three stars on their favorite variety, two stars on their second favorite, and one star on their third favorite. This is not an excessively scientific tasting process and would probably not meet the criteria of any good graduate student's experimental design, but nevertheless we feel that it highlights the varieties which people like vs those that are not as popular. I definitely take the results of this tasting into consideration when I decide which varieties to grow a lot of next season, and also which varieties not to grow any of!

Please send us any comments to events@redfirefarm.com. Feedback can only make the festival better for next year.

-Ryan

..And the Winners Are...

Cherry Varieties	#of Stars
Coyote	147
Sungold	99
Matt's Wild	90
Chiquita	80
Juliet	65
Spoon	61
Yellow Mini	57
Gold Rush Currant	39
Chocolate Cherry	27
Red Grape	25
Super Sweet 100	25
Rose Quartz	20
Cherry Roma	18
Austin's Red Pear	14
Snow White	12
Riesantrube	10
Blood	6
Tommy Toe	6
Grahams Yellow Pear	4
Favorita	4
White Cherry	3
Brown Berry	3
Principe Borguese	2
Red Velvet	2
Green Grape	1
Suzanne	0

Heirloom or Paste	# of stars
Orange Russian	24
Black Prince	24
Prudence Purple	23
Elba	21
Dad's Sunset	20
Homer Fikes Yellow Orchard	20
Beauty	17
Cherokee Purple	17
Arkansas Traveller	15
Federle	15
Pink Beauty	15
Golden Queen	15
Bloody Butcher	13
Honey	13
Cherokeep Chocolate	13
Italian Tree	12
Mortgage Lifter	12
R. Charlie's Mortgage	12
Brad's Black Heart	11
Dr. Lyle	10
Big Orange	10
Yellow Ruffled	10
Esikos Botermos	10
Burbank 9	9
Amish Paste	9
Long Keeper	8
Rose	8
Indischa Fleishe	8
Carbon	8
Red Zebra	7
Richardson	7
Blue Fruit	7
Limmony	6
Tangella	5
Giant Oxheart	5
Black Krim	5
Golden Medal Yellow	5
Orlob's Yellow Giant	5
Carmello	4
Hyena Lee Golden Girl	4
Clint Eastwood's Roundy	4
Aunt Ruby's Golden Green	3
Japanese Oxheart	3
Bull's Heart	2
Bassinga	2
Apolko	1
Pinwall Scotty	1
Pink Accordian	1
Olga's Round Yellow Chicken	1
Mana	1
Brimmer	0
Pink Grapefruit	0

Heirloom and Paste Varieties	#of Stars
German Pink	64
Watermelon Beef Steak	58
Gary Ibson's Gold	52
Mr. Fumo	50
Chalk's Early Jewel	50
Mexico	50
Speckled Peach	49
Spears Tennessee Green	41
Mrs. Houseworth	40
Heart of Compassion	37
Lim's Black Ruffle	36
Peppermint	35
Paul Robeson	34
New Zealand Pink Pear	33
Tobolsk 33	33
Valencia 33	33
Striped German	27
Lilac Giant	27
Brandywine	25

3rd Annual Scarecrow Contest

It's time again to submit your funniest, witchiest, scariest scarecrow to the contest. Entries must be in by **October 9th** at the Harvest Party at the latest. The 'crows should be durable as they will be on display through Halloween. Help us decorate the farm stand and have a chance at some great prizes including baskets of veggies and large carving pumpkins. If you live in Boston and don't get out to the farm much, consider coming out for the cider making party and bringing your entry along. There will also be straw for last minute stuffing at the party. Be creative and have fun! More info on how to submit a scarecrow is on the website and in the weekly email.



One of last year's winners



Tomatoes of all sizes and colors in the Tomato Tasting Barn at this years Tomato Festival



A winning cherry tomato

Tomato Trot Results

The Tomato Trot had a great turn-out this year with over 200 participants, twice that of last year. Thanks to everyone who ran, walked and juggled through the course, it was great to see you out there. The top finishers on the 5K course were:

Men		Women	
1. Aaron Price	17:37	1. Heidi Bixby-Handy	24:10
2. Tim Condon	18:24	2. Jennifer Salvo	24:41
3. Jonathon Miganowicz	19:23	3. Aja Marsh	24:52
4. Ryan Kerrigan	19:30	4. Robin Stevens	25:45
5. Neil Wheaton	19:46	5. Mari Zagarins	26:02

Full race results are available online at www.redfirefarm.com

Herbed Couscous with Autumn Vegetables

1 cup cubed winter squash	1 red pepper
1 1/2 cup couscous	1 bunch kale
2 3/4 cups boiling water	1 cup chopped s.s. or zucchini
1/4 teaspoon salt	2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbs finely chopped fresh oregano, thyme or sage or a combination	
1/2 cup chopped onion	1 Tbs fresh-ground black pepper
2 Tbs. olive oil	

Preheat the oven to 400° and put the cubed winter squash on a baking tray with a little olive oil and bake until tender. Pour boiling water over the couscous and sprinkle on the salt and cover for five minutes, fluff with a fork and cover again. In a medium sized skillet, sauté onions in olive oil with the chopped herbs. When they start to become translucent, add in the peppers and summer squash (opt) and cover, stirring every minute or so. If they start to stick, add a little water. After 5 minutes, add the garlic and the kale, cover again and cook for a few more minutes. Add to the couscous with the other Tbs. of olive oil and any more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or chilled.

Mark Your Calendars Now!

Red Fire Farm Harvest Party

Saturday, October 9th: noon-dark

Come enjoy one last day at the farm pressing cider, eating homemade donuts and listening to some old-time music. We'll start the press at noon and you can bring your own apples or pre-order seconds apples from us at events@redfirefarm.com. Bring your own jugs and a dish for the community potluck at five. There will also be straw available to stuff your scarecrow for the 3rd Annual Scarecrow Contest. Bring materials and you can build your scarecrow while waiting for your turn at the cider press! Let's celebrate the end of a great season surrounded by the reds, oranges and yellows of fall. See you there!

THINKING OF WINTER!

At Red Fire Farm we now farm during 12 months of the year (and I don't just mean that we do planning during the winter to get ready for the summer growing season), we actually now harvest and pack produce all year long! This means that in order to get ready for the winter growing season (we grow in the winter in high tunnels and greenhouses) I must find time during the summer to make all of the winter crop plans. I found the time this season to do the bulk of this crop planning on excel spreadsheets on Sarah's laptop computer while I was riding with my family to our extended family reunion in Michigan this past July. While in the back seat on the 15 hour drive I pored through the seed catalogs, reviewed harvest records and other notes from last winters crops, checked my calendar to figure out the optimal starting dates for each type of green, and then began putting together crop plans for each of the 8 greenhouses that we expect to have growing greens this winter. We are building another high tunnel this fall and we also will be growing some salad mix, micro greens and possibly even sprouts in our new Montague greenhouses this winter. These types of greens love to grow in the cool conditions of unheated or minimally heated winter greenhouses, and winter is my favorite time to grow (and eat!) spinach, lettuce, arugala and other such crops! During the last few weeks I have been working on finalizing these winter crop plans, ordering the seeds, and now we are even beginning to plant the first of the winter greenhouse seedlings so that we have transplants ready to go into some of the beds starting in late Sept.

Now is the time for Red Fire Farm members to consider joining up to receive part of our winter harvest. We are for the second winter offering Deep Winter Shares which will provide winter greens (lettuce, spinach, salad mix, boc choy, etc), storage roots (carrots, potatoes, onions, beets, cabbage and much more) and also a smattering of other local farm products (cheeses, pickles, salsa, maple syrup, local flour, etc) every other week during January, February and March of 2011. This season we will also be providing some frozen produce from our summer harvest including peppers, tomatoes and peaches. It is our goal to help make it possible for our members to be year round Red Fire localvors!

Deep Winter CSA distribution dates:

January 14th and 28th
February 11th and 25th
March 11th and 25th

For more info on locations and how to sign up check the website.

Bulk Availability for September

TOMATOES - for canning, some minor blemishes, Specify red slicing types, mixed heirlooms, or paste/saucing types, \$30 per half bushel, Heirlooms \$35 per half bushel (about 20 lbs).

DILL - \$1.50 per bunch

GARLIC - \$1.50 per head

BASIL - \$7.00 per LB

SUMMER SQUASH/ZUCCHINI - \$35 per half bushel (about 20 lbs) (limited supply).

HUSK CHERRIES - (aka Ground Cherries) \$32 per flat of 12 half-pints

For Apples, Corn, Beans, and Peaches, order by 8am Monday for delivery that week, orders placed later than that come the next week.

APPLES - specify variety: Ginger Gold, Paula Red, Macintosh (more varieties later), \$35 per bushel box (about 40 LBs).

Not organic, grown using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods.

CORN - Organic \$35 per 5 dozen bag, Conventional \$25 per 5 dozen bag.

GREEN or YELLOW BEANS - \$40 per 25LB box (from Plainville Farm, Hadley, OG).

PEACHES - (not organic, but IPM) \$40 per 25 LB box.

PYO Update

Many summer crops are now at their peak for picking. In the pick your own patch this means we have an abundance of beans, ground cherries, and cherry tomatoes. We have been watering these plants all summer, so despite the drought the yields are abundant and we have been able to set generous picking limits. We also have an abundance of raspberries ripening. We have fall raspberries growing in two fields. One is right next to the parking area at the farm stand, but this patch was damaged by the drought earlier in the summer and the berries are not yet very abundant. At the moment our other field up near Taylor Street has much more abundant picking. This field is far enough from the farm yard that most people will want to drive up Taylor street and park on the road near the field. There are detailed directions posted in the farm on or near the PYO info chalkboard. The raspberries in this patch are not huge as the plants were impacted by the drought also, but they are very abundant and flavorful! It is worth the extra effort to go up there, and the view down over the farm is quite nice as well! Other crops that are open for PYO include Tomatillos, Cut Flowers, Hot Peppers, Basil and other herbs! -Ryan

The Red Fire Reader is compiled and edited by Ona Lindauer, the Red Fire Farm culinary intern. Newsletter topic ideas, recipes, writings, poems, and CSA community announcements are welcome and should be submitted to thefarmers@redfirefarm.com

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