

### Report from the Field

In early August we started planting spinach and, unlike most years, it germinated very well. The cool nights were ideal and the warm days fostered quick growth. In hindsight, we should have planted much more. In past years, we tried repeatedly to get a good fall crop of spinach, and not until the end of August when the temperatures really start to cool did we get good germination. By then growth is very slow and we never harvest much from the beds. We do have some very good looking spinach beds now, but not quite enough to fulfill the demands of the entire CSA every week. Thus we are distributing it in turns (alternating Mondays and Thursdays).



The hakurei salad turnips are doing very well; don't forget to eat them raw! Other fall brassicas like radishes, bok choy, arugula, cabbages are also thriving at this time of the year.

Last week we began harvesting sweet potatoes. In the past two years we had good sweet potato harvests. This year, however, as we dug up the first plant there was virtually no potatoes, merely a fat root that would someday far off become a tuber if weather permitted. We continued digging plants and the situation did not improve. We then tried another planting of a different variety, and the situation was no better.



We were disappointed but not surprised; although the plants looked healthy, we knew that they got off to a very late start and had significant setbacks this season. Our initial planting drowned in the rains we had in June; very few of the plants survived. Once it was obvious how few plants would pull through the flood, we immediately order potato slips for replanting (a slip is a sweet potato sprout as we received them), but this put us a month or so behind. For a crop that takes 135 days to reach full maturity, this is a big deal. Sadly, it is unlikely that we'll have sweet potatoes for the CSA this year. If we harvested all of them now, the yield might be adequate for a dozen people. Instead we are going to leave them in the ground for as long as possible, up until the first hard frost.

One of the fall projects we have been working on is preparing an area for blueberry planting. Blueberries like acidic ground, and would prefer to not have competition from grasses. Our plan to realize this goal is to cover the ground in a deep mulch of softwood woodchips. Arborists dump their woodchips at our place and separate them into piles of hardwoods and softwoods. But before we could put down woodchips, we needed to kill the dreaded quackgrass plants. That started in the heat of the summer with clear plastic laid across the ground to try to fry the quack grass. We have had luck with this in the past, but not so this year. This was possibly due to the fact that the spot is shaded in late afternoon and the quackgrass was not hot enough, for long enough, to kill it. We then tilled it (which wouldn't have been necessary if we were able to kill it with the plastic) and, after the quackgrass started to grow back, we hand removed it.

The last stage of preparation, which we just completed this week, was to put a small amount of compost down and then a thick layer of woodchips.

Weeding will for sure be necessary next year, but it will likely be at a manageable level. In the spring we will dig through the woodchips and plant our blueberry bushes. Hopefully we will have happy, healthy plants.

Right now, we are in the midst of preparing our yearly CSA survey. You will be receiving it by email soon, and we do hope you fill it out. Your feedback is very important to us, and we use it to make changes to the CSA and to our farm going forward.

