

## **FRESH PROSPECTS**

### **Week 14 -- September 18, 2008**

In this issue:

- \* Chard Part Deux!
- \* Stupendous Street Trees
- \* The Truth About Bags
- \* News from Farmer Ted

### **Chard Part Deux!**

Our brave newsletter team first wrote about chard in early summer-- and now that it's fall, time to revisit this hugely versatile vegetable that shows up in this week's share!

According to Gardeners Net, Swiss Chard, the first varieties of which were found in Sicily, is probably the most underappreciated of all vegetables. Consider:

- It is vitamin rich and nutritious
- It's extremely easy to grow
- It tolerates poor soil, inattention, and withstands frost and mild freezes
- It tastes good and you can eat both the stalk and the leaves.
- The leaves can either be used as a fresh salad or cooked like spinach
- The stalks can be cut up and cooked in a variety of dishes

(Sources: <http://www.gardenersnet.com/vegetable/chard.htm> and Wikipedia)

That makes chard among the most delightful, yet demure, of all veggies. The New York Times has many helpful suggestions to make eating your chard the most delightful experience it can be:

-- Olive oil and sauteed garlic are the classic Italian flavorings, embellished with toasted nuts, anchovies, raisins or hot red pepper flakes. But chard works well with a range of seasonings, everything from chilies and cilantro to mustard seeds and ginger.

-- For something a bit more exotic, wilt some chard leaves, squeeze them dry, then season with sweetened soy sauce and sesame oil, or perhaps a little lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil. Serve the chard chilled as a refreshing first course. The greens also make an excellent addition to pasta sauces (chopped, blanched chard is delicious with garlicky beans and orecchiette) as well as soups and egg dishes. Large leaves can be blanched and stuffed with cooked grains, meat or vegetables.

-- Stems are best simmered in water or stock until tender, about 10 minutes, and then covered in a sauce and baked in a small gratin dish. A classic treatment is bechamel sauce and cheese, although lighter options, like tomato sauce and a dusting of Parmesan, better highlight the flavor of the chard. For more richness,

dot blanched stems with several tablespoons of butter, and sprinkle generously with Parmesan or Gruyere. Another delicious option is to layer chard stems with browned onions and cream. Top the dish with bread crumbs. From <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E1DD173FF936A35757C0A9669C8B63>.

## **Stupendous Street Trees**

For many in the city, street trees blend into the surrounding landscape without a second thought. But they're living creatures that we can care for and help! A few city organizations want to help us help our trees:

### **Street Tree Bed Gardening at Brooklyn Botanic Garden**

Thursday, September 25 | 6-8 p.m.

Street trees do so much to improve our environment, but they often receive little care. In this free class, learn the benefits of street trees, how to improve the health of a street tree by caring for the bed, get tips on tree-bed gardening and more in-depth information on street-tree care. Free. To register, call 718-623-7220.

### **Citizen Pruner Certification**

4 Mondays: October 6, 20, 27; November 3 | 6–8 p.m.

Outdoor Lab: Saturday, November 1 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

It's time to take care of those trees on your block! Completion of this course certifies NYC citizens to care for and prune young street trees. Learn to identify street tree species and the many factors that cause diseases. Also learn how to help trees survive a harsh urban environment. You will receive an instruction manual and information about tools at the first session. Taught by BBG arborist Christopher Roddick in collaboration with Trees New York. For more information call 212-227-1887.

### **The Truth About Bags**

Everyone knows that plastic bags are harmful. But why, exactly, and how? The website Plastic Bag Economics <<http://www.plasticbageconomics.com>> spells it out -- and offers plenty of solutions for average people. If it's hard to remember to bring your own bags to each distribution, this site will help you keep it in mind!

### **News from Farmer Ted: Dollars and Sense Edition!**

News from Windflower Farm

Week #14, September 16, 2008

This week's share of the harvest includes lettuce heads, bunches of parsley and Swiss chard, those sweet Japanese turnips you received in the spring, celery, Italian peppers, green beans, white-kernelled sweet corn, potatoes and onions.

We hope you enjoy it. This is the last of our celery, and it seems we didn't irrigate enough during the dry stretch in late August. As a result, their stalks are not as tender as we had hoped. Their best use might be in flavoring soup stock. In the coming weeks we'll begin sending celery root (aka, celeriac), which is another excellent ingredient in stocks, but can also be used when roasting and stewing vegetables. Next week's delivery will likely include salad greens, arugula, bell peppers, eggplant, celeriac, leeks, garlic, green beans, carrots, and sweet corn.

I rarely buy vegetables at the supermarket, so, when I visited the local Hannafords this week, I was somewhat surprised to find that one medium-sized head of organic Romaine lettuce was selling for \$4.00, and that organic arugula was selling for \$3.00/bunch. Three dollars buys one medium fennel bulb or one medium eggplant, unless you're looking for the organic stuff, in which case you can add \$1.00 to the price of each. A two-pack of organically grown cucumbers or zucchinis costs \$4.00, and three organically grown red or yellow peppers cost \$6.00 (yes, that's \$2.00 a pepper!). Medium-sized organic garlic was selling for \$2.00, and organic tomatoes were \$4.00/lb. For fun, we calculated the cost of last week's full share and found that you could have purchased a like quantity and variety grown conventionally for \$23.00, compared to our full share price of \$19.00/week. (Prospect Height's shares and all our Tuesday shares are  $\frac{3}{4}$  shares - they include one fewer item per week and cost \$17.25.) But, if you bought last week's share in Hannaford's organic section, it would have cost \$38.00! If you bought it at the Saratoga Farmers' Market, it would have cost \$31.00. I'm not suggesting that CSA is the best deal on earth. In fact, I know it's not. I realize that some weeks are less abundant than others, and that some entire seasons lack abundance. I know that spring shares are not worth as much as summer shares. I also realize that the lack of choice implicit in CSA diminishes value. And I don't imagine you'll ever find a bug or any sign of hail damage on grocery store produce. What I want to say is that I'm pleased we have been able to deliver shares that appear to be a good value, at least as measured by the local marketplace. And I want to say thanks to you for your participation in this great experiment called CSA. Let me know what you think (you can reach me at [windflowerfarm@earthlink.net](mailto:windflowerfarm@earthlink.net)).

Have a great week,  
Ted Blomgren

UNTIL NEXT WEEK, we wish you all happy veggie eating