



# Stone Soup

Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture  
862 Edmands Road, Framingham, MA 01701 - [www.stearnsfarmcsa.org](http://www.stearnsfarmcsa.org)

June 23, 2008 Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 3

## FROM THE FIELD: WINTER SQUASH & CORN PLANTING By Kathy Huckins



This was the week to plant at the Parkland, 1 ½ acres of farmland we use a half mile up the road from the farm. Since we had thousands of winter squash, pumpkins and corn transplants to put in, Brian and I drove to Belmont after work on Tuesday to pick up a two-seater transplanter that Brian had built for another farmer, Gretta Anderson. I didn't think we needed it at Stearns because we have so much help from all of our sharers. But the truth is that oftentimes the sharers are not free to help the day the planting needs to be done. That leaves us short on workers and long on work. Using the transplanter all of Wednesday and Thursday, we were able to plant 3,000 corn plants in a morning, followed by thousands of winter squash and pumpkins over the course of two days. Drive west from the farm and take a look at all those plants, happily watered in and content in their straight rows. A sight to behold. While we were over there sharers picked off the potato beetles from our potato crop. Brian later hilled them and cultivated the first planting of corn. It was a most productive time. I think we need a transplanter. Without it we would have been planting by hand for up to a week of workdays. Thanks to all who came and helped out. We were all exhilarated by the experience.

## ON THE STAND THIS WEEK (Dependent on Mother Nature)

Head lettuce, salad greens, spinach, beet greens, scallions, baby carrots, zucchini, basil.

PYO: Braising greens of chard, collards and kale; garlic scapes; strawberries; snap peas; herbs of parsley, lemon thyme, oregano, marjoram, sage.

## PYO: SWISS CHARD, KALE AND COLLARDS

For the past two weeks we have been picking these greens for you. This week they will be open for PYO. If we care for them well and pick them carefully we will be eating from them the entire season. To harvest, REACH FOR THE OUTERMOST OR LOWEST LEAF AND TWIST THEM OFF WITH YOUR HAND. Do not use scissors. Do not twist off a leaf in the middle of the plant. To keep the plants healthy, we take off the bottom leaves first and work our way up. If the bottommost leaf is compromised in any way, leave it on the soil in the bed. It will become good mulch. Then go to the next leaf up and so on, until you have the quality you want.

Always LEAVE AT LEAST 3 HEALTHY LEAVES ON EACH PLANT. Without sufficient leaves, it cannot collect the sun's rays. If too many leaves are harvested from one plant it will lose its vitality and be unable to last the season.

If you are unfamiliar with these greens, try one variety with the recipes in last week's newsletter. They are one of the healthiest foods you can consume. So give your body a treat. Find a way to prepare them that you palate will enjoy. Check the PYO board to see the quantity you can pick each week. ☺

## GARDEN SHOWCASE: GARLIC SCAPES

By Donna Savastio

Garlic what? Scapes? I will admit I had never heard of them until now and had to do some digging to find out what they are all about and how to use them. I'm glad I did because apparently there are many garlic lovers out there who wait all year for the scapes to be harvested and arrive at their farmers market or CSA.

Garlic scapes are part of the garlic plant, specifically the long, thin, pliable shoot that grows out of the foliage about a month before harvesting. If this shoot stays attached to the garlic plant it will curtail the growth of the garlic bulb, and so these shoots must be removed to allow the bulb to grow larger. They offer a wonderfully mild and fresh tasting garlic flavor, much less sharp a flavor than the bulb itself provides. Think of them as scallion or chive-like, pliable enough to curl into tendrils or tie into knots.

Harvest the scapes by snapping off the stem, no scissors needed, leaving the rest of the plant in place. There is a small window of opportunity, so enjoy them shortly after picking. Try dicing them into eggs or use as a garnish for rice dishes. They would be amazing in a vegetable sauté, a fresh green salad or a pasta dish. One other tip is to use the scapes to make a pesto-like sauce with olive oil and walnuts instead of pine nuts. I can't wait to try them! ☺

## WHY STEARNS?

By Sara Sullivan

Over the course of the season, we are exploring the benefits of being involved with a farm like Stearns. Each week we will offer a new reason to celebrate the choice you have made to eat healthy, locally-grown food while supporting a working farm in your community.

In the last two newsletters, we sent you back to science class with important information on herbicides and pesticides and why Stearns doesn't use them. This week's reason to choose Stearns Farm is a lot more basic but no less important, and it's so simple even a pre-schooler will instinctively get it.

**Why Stearns? To stay away from the supermarket.** Its fluorescent lighting, cavernous sterile spaces, and

bored cashiers don't always inspire feats of culinary exploration or enjoyment. Avoiding those check-out lines, endless rows of processed food, and all that high-fructose corn syrup is a good idea indeed. How wonderful to pick up a portion of your week's groceries steps from where they emerged from the ground, in an environment of fresh air and friendly faces. ☺

## GLORIOUS GREENS

By Natalie DeNormandie

At this point in the season, Stearns is producing a bounty of light, leafy crops, which will soon be joined by the heavier vegetables of mid-summer and fall. Now is the time to enjoy the abundance of greens that signals spring and our return to the farm: braising greens of chard, kale, and collards; the exotic salad greens mizuna, tatsoi, and arugula; tangy mustard greens; and dark green spinach. Don't overlook the tops of vegetables, either—vibrant beet greens and peppery radish greens can make wonderful additions to your table.

All of our greens can be delightful raw, but if you want to cook them, put your steamer away and try these tips instead:

- Sautéing, stir-frying, quick-boiling, and grilling all make softer, tastier greens.
- Fast and furious boiling preserves nutrients, color and taste. To quick-boil, "shallow-blanch" greens in a small amount of water: 2 cups of water for one bunch (up to one pound) of greens. Boil the water before adding the greens; the instant heat neutralizes the enzymes that would otherwise destroy pigments and vitamins in the boiling process. It will only take 3-10 minutes to soften the leaves depending on type (chard, for example, cooks quickly while kale takes longer). A large wide skillet with a tight lid is best; it enables the greens to spread out for quicker cooking. Drain off and save pot likker for other uses (add to soup broths or smoothies, make 'green cocktail' drinks, etc.). It has lots of non-water-soluble vitamins and minerals.
- Sneak them in! Include greens under fish, atop pizza, in lasagna or other casseroles, and in soups and stews. ☺

## THE GREENHOUSE GURU

By Nomi Sofer



Photo of John Blanchard by Wayne Hall

Why does John Blanchard want to give Stearns Farm a portable greenhouse? A former missionary, truck driver, and Laundromat owner, John has a farmer's soul and an activist's dedication to education. Adding a greenhouse will allow Stearns to extend its growing season and expand its mission of creating a model for sustainable local agriculture. And that's important to John Blanchard.

Now 77, John has been gardening since he was in first grade, when his dad put him to work in the family's garden in Pennsylvania. After earning a degree in Pomology (the study of apple and pear trees) from Pennsylvania State University, John joined a Methodist church mission to Sawarak—then a part of Borneo. Living among the Iban people from 1959-1963 was, John says, “a marvelous education for changing one's outlook on life,” and it also taught him the importance of sustainable development.

John returned to the U.S. and had many varied careers: including pastor, laundromat owner, and Big D supermarket worker. After moving to Framingham, John also became part of the Friends Meeting House, where he met Penelope Turton and began his decades-long relationship with Stearns Farm. During one of the first years that Stearns was a CSA, the farmer quit suddenly and John ran the farm for the rest of the season, despite the fact that he already had a full time job. In the years since, John has farmed on various pieces of land in the area,

selling his organic produce at farm stands and to area restaurants. Much as he loves farming his own patch, John always returns to community farming. When he learned about portable greenhouses at a Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) workshop a few years ago, he found a new mission. He discussed the possibility of installing a greenhouse with a number of local farmers, but only at Stearns did he find the right combination of land and people power necessary to construct, use, and eventually, move, such a greenhouse.

The greenhouse, which is scheduled to arrive during the current growing season, will be a “high tunnel” style with adjustable ventilation to control the temperature. It will be located below the flower garden and will keep both the air and the soil on which it sits warm. Kathy will use the greenhouse to extend the growing season of both warm season crops, like tomatoes and melons, and for cool season crops like lettuce. In conjunction with our soon-to-be completed root cellar, the greenhouse will significantly increase Stearns' ability to provide fresh produce in the fall and winter months.

Although he left church work a long time ago, John has remained a missionary. His lifelong dedication to sustainable agriculture, economic development, and education have taken him around the world. Now all Stearns sharers will benefit from John's dedication to bringing a greenhouse to our beautiful and productive farm. ☺

## VOLUNTEER UPDATE

By Gudrun Baubock

What Stearns volunteers have already accomplished this season:

- They took pictures on Burn Day and at the SpringFest
- They wrote articles for the newsletter
- They baked rhubarb bars for all the sharers on the first pickup days
- They put in many extra hours helping with planting and transplanting
- They constructed a couple of very practical and beautiful stands for the farm's plant sale
- They designed and installed the landscaping for the new sitting area between the sheds
- They kept our seedlings alive by watering the greenhouse on Sundays and Mondays

*Cont'd on next page.*

- They carved our fabulous benches from tree trunks for the herb garden
- They spent many hours in Board meetings
- They cut down the willows in the children's garden
- They provided music for our May Pole Dance at the SpringFest
- They planted thousands of lettuce seeds
- They work tirelessly to keep our machines running
- They mow the grass areas of the farm
- They are building our root cellar brick by brick
- They are repairing the kiosks by the flower garden and the herb gardens
- They are putting together the recipes for our newsletter
- They spent many hours with their children cleaning, planting, and mulching the children's garden
- They were available to answer questions for new sharers at their first pickup
- They provided the workers with special treats

Thank you to: Donna Savastio, Sarah Larson, Sarah Shonbrun, Shelly Jung, Diane Kelzer, Alissa Pinkoski, Marion de Laubenfels, Elin Calver, Diana Lin, Tom Yelton, Scott Cleveland, Salvatore Lampis, all the

people from Grace Church, Chet Pendleton, Sara Sullivan, Brian Holland, Mark Kelly, Ginger Ruddy, Daniel Webb, Brian Huckins, Jacob Balter, Chris Parechelli, Michi Baubock, Nomi Sofer, Wayne Hall, Natalie DeNormandie, Kathy and Gert Powers, Nadine Salisch, Adam Miller, Ben Lehnert, Anna Goering, Lynne Harvey, Jim Guinness, Dana Edmondson, Adele and Steve Molnar, Agustina Harmon, Amy Weader, and Esther Heimberg...for all the extra time and effort you put in. So many things would not get accomplished without you! ☺



*Photo of Stone Soup lunch after a morning of hard work*

### UPCOMING FARM EVENTS

Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>

Today will be a regular pick-up day.

Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>

Date by which half of your work hours must be completed or paid for.

### FARM CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Position	Email/phone
Stearns Farm	Main phone	<a href="mailto:contact@stearnsfarmcsa.org">contact@stearnsfarmcsa.org</a> 508 371-4310
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Janet Carlson	Administration	<a href="mailto:janet@stearnsfarmcsa.org">janet@stearnsfarmcsa.org</a> 508 309-7777
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Sara Abramovitz	Volunteer Coordinator	<a href="mailto:saralarry@comcast.net">saralarry@comcast.net</a> 978 443-9747
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The farm is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

### Mission Statement

To preserve the historic Stearns farm as a sustainable all-natural garden, providing locally grown food in partnership between the land, the farmer, and the community.

## STRAWBERRIES!

Ripe strawberries are too fragile to travel and the berries don't ripen after harvest. The only time to enjoy them at their fragrant peak is when they are growing nearby. Happily, that perfect time is NOW. These edible jewels need nothing more than the sun's warmth for seasoning, but their beauty and sweetness shine through in simple preparations. Store strawberries for a day or two in the refrigerator, loosely packed in a protective container with some air circulation. If you're lucky enough to have more than you can gobble up in day or two, it is possible to prolong the bliss. Spread the berries on a cookie sheet in a single layer and pop them into the freezer. Once they're individually frozen, you can transfer them to containers or plastic bags and keep them frozen for several months. Enjoy!

**FRESH STRAWBERRY SAUCE.** Pure ripe strawberry flavor can be ready in minutes to drizzle over cake or biscuits, spoon over ice cream or thick Greek yogurt, or mix into smoothies and cocktails. Adapted from *How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bittman.

**Raw:** 2 cups strawberries, washed and hulled Water, orange juice, fresh lemon juice, or white wine  
Confectioner's sugar to taste as needed (optional)

Purée fruit using a blender or food processor. Sweeten to taste. Thin with juice, wine, or water if desired. Use immediately or store for a day or two in the refrigerator.

**Cooked:** ½ cup water 3 Tbs unsalted butter  
½ cup sugar 2 cups strawberries, washed, hulled and sliced

Combine water, sugar and butter in a heavy saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring gently, until the mixture is syrupy, but not browned. Add fruit, reduce heat to low, and cook until fruit begins to release its juices, about 2 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature. Keeps for up to a week in the refrigerator.

**ADMIRAL PERKINS'S PIE.** I have no idea who Admiral Perkins was, but he sure knew his pie. Adapted from *Bentley Farm Cookbook* by Virginia Williams Bentley and described simply, "for the height of the strawberry season," perfectly ripe berries are the key here.

1 pre-baked pie shell 1 jar (about 10 oz) red currant jelly

Fresh strawberries, washed, hulled and thoroughly dried ½ pint plain heavy cream, whipped

Use whole berries of about the same size if possible. Cut very large berries in half. Arrange berries carefully in the pie shell in "one snug layer." Bring jelly to room temperature and stir to make it easy to spread. Layer berries with jelly and put pie in the refrigerator to rest for at least several hours, preferably much longer. Just before serving time, whip cream and spread it thickly on top of the pie.

**STRAWBERRIES WITH BALSAMIC VINEGAR.** Fragrant berries shimmer with sweet-sour balsamic vinegar and the aromatic burn of fresh black pepper. You only need a touch of the vinegar, so this is the time to open that special bottle. Adapted from *How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bittman.

1 pint strawberries, washed, hulled and sliced 1–2 tsp best-quality balsamic vinegar (or to taste)  
1/8 cup sugar, white or brown (or to taste) freshly ground black pepper to taste

Toss the strawberries with the sugar and let sit for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the vinegar, taste, and add more sugar or vinegar if necessary. Season very lightly with pepper and serve. 2–3 servings.

**SIMPLE SUMMER PUDDING.** Based on an old English dessert, this one's a bit retro, but ridiculously easy and fun to make. Adapted from *The Virginia Bentley Cookbook*.

Dense, high quality sliced white bread, crusts removed Sugar to taste  
Strawberries, rinsed, hulled, and sliced Heavy cream or whipped cream

You will need a deep, round bowl large enough to hold the fruit with some room to spare, a plate of the right size to fit inside the bowl, and a heavy weight, such as a brick or a book. Line the bowl with bread, overlapping and trimming as needed until the inside of the bowl is completely covered. Place the strawberries in a separate bowl, toss with sugar to taste, and allow to sit at room temperature until the berries soften and give up some of their juices. Taste and add more sugar if desired. Pour the berries into the bread-lined bowl and arrange more bread carefully over the top to cover the berries. Fit the plate into the bowl so that it rests on top of the bread-covered berries. Top with a heavy weight so that it presses the plate down onto the pudding. Refrigerate at least overnight, or up to 24 hours. When ready to serve, turn pudding out onto a large plate. Pile whipped cream around the pudding or pass a pitcher of heavy cream to pour over each serving.

*If you have a favorite way of using Stearns Farm veggies, please consider sharing it. Send recipes, tips on storage or food preservation, or other suggestions to [sarah@cornmuffin.com](mailto:sarah@cornmuffin.com). Thanks.*