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USU Student Organic Farm

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What’s New On The Farm

Fall crops are coming up, and they’re amazing. We started digging up the potatoes today and it is so crazy to see how many potatoes can grow from planting a chunk of potato with a couple of eyes on it! Some of these plants have two pounds of potatoes growing off of them. The pumpkins are already enormous, and the butternut squash are still ripening but are really good-sized already. The melons are taking longer than expected, but look great. Our one warm-season failure seems to be the eggplant- but watch them produce like crazy now that I’ve said that. We’ll see how it goes. In any case, the greens and brassicas we planted last month are developing right on track, so there should be another round of fresh new kale, broccoli and kholrabi, as well as rutabaga (similar to kholrabi) and murdoc (a quick-growing cabbage) in September.

Fall Calendar

This is our last week of the summer schedule! Moving forward, we’ll be running the farm while taking full course loads. The volunteer activities in September will be fun projects like planting garlic and covering the hoop houses with plastic again. It’s a much less demanding place these days, since everything that’s going to is growing, and we’re just maintaining and harvesting what we’ve got for as long as we can before the first frost hits, probably sometime in late September.

I got the dates wrong for the campus farmer’s market!

Our CSA pickup schedule through the end of September is as follows:

**Wednesdays**
- Campus: 11 am to 3 pm - The SOF booth at the Farmer’s Market on Campus
- Farm Stand: 5 pm to 7 pm

**Saturdays**
- Farm Stand: 9 am to 11 am

U-Pick Tomatoes!!

We have so many tomatoes we literally don’t know what to do. So here’s what we’re going to do: offer them to u!

During CSA pickup hours on Wednesday and Saturday, the hoop house and field tomatoes will be open for you to bring a basket and friends or the kiddos, and take a pound home.

You can still let us know a few days in advance if you’d like us to set aside a bulk amount for you, and we’ll prep it for pickup.
Dan Drost is USU’s vegetable specialist. He is a very valuable member of the plant science department and with his knowledge has given us folks at the Organic Farm plenty of insight on how to properly care for our plants.

Dan grew up on a farm in Michigan that raised cows, sheep, corn, hay, and other commercial vegetables.

“I got interested in vegetables because when I was little my father would help the Michigan celery farmers and onion farmers. We would go out with him when we were little- just ride along in the truck- and got to see the vegetable industry. So when I got to the university I decided I wanted to study agriculture more.”

Because his family farm had animals, Dan raised breeding and springing heifers, bred them, sold them, and saved this money to fund his schooling.

Dan got more involved in vegetable farming when he got a job at a vegetable farm. On this farm he helped raise asparagus, celery, cabbage. When he came to Michigan State University, he began working with his professors on their research and learned even more about horticulture and vegetable science. He stayed at MSU to complete a Master’s degree in horticulture with a vegetable emphasis.

“After my master’s, I taught at a university in New Zealand for four years in the vegetable science group. That got me interested in teaching. Then I came back and went to Cornell University and got my PhD in vegetable crops.”

At the time, Cornell was one of the only two schools that had a vegetable science program and this makes plant specialists like Dan sparse. He is the only one here in the mountain west. With his unique perspective on farming, his vision for the future of farming in Utah is this:

"I think what farming is going to be is smaller farms because as the state grows, and as our population develops, we have to take land from agriculture to build houses, factories, and those types of things. Farm sizes are getting more compact, and we’re still going to see a strong demand for horticulture and vegetable crops so we have to be more intensive on what we do on those farms. If we can figure out how to use our urban environments more efficiently then small micro farms and any type of urban farm can be part of what we’re trying to do.”

Dan really likes working with his students, and it seems to be the highlight of his job.

“My favorite thing about working in the USU plant science department is just the fact that I get a to meet a wide variety of people that have a whole bunch of different problems and they come to me looking for the answer. I like working here because I get a diverse number of problems coming to me each day, but I also get to work with students and help them learn and explore. It makes my job fun every day.”

Dan is close to retiring but in the next couple of years he hopes to instill some passion in USU students so that things he’s started are maintained.

“If we’re looking at the [USU] Organic Farm, I would like to see the Organic Farm kind of grow and find a sustainable way to be managed and find a way for students to benefit from it. I’d like to see the vegetable industry in Utah continue to be successful, and the university needs to keep supporting this industry. I’d also like to continue my research projects that have benefit to society.”

Right now, Dan is researching the problems of fruit injury caused by high levels of heat and light. They put shade cover or randomized plots of crops to test the effects of the shade. From this experiment they are learning that the covers made plants grow faster in the spring time, and the shade during the summer significantly reduced fruit losses. They went from 40% of their fruit being damaged by heat, to almost 0% with the shade.

Every year Dan and his team share their findings at the Urban and Small Farms Conference in Salt Lake. These updates on research help farmers to be more efficient and successful on their own farms.
What's In The Basket

Potatoes - Storable purple and red potatoes  
Long Dragon-Tongue Beans - Gorgeous, sweet and fresh. Best sauteed or steamed  
Spaghetti Squash - These have been ripening all summer and are finally ready!  
Shungiku- Edible crysanthimum leaves! An Asian favorite  
Cucurbits - More bennings, crookneck and zucchini, as well as lemon cucumbers and dill cucumbers  
Tomatoes - A variety ripening daily  
Bell peppers- We have organic and conventional courtesy of Greenville Research farm for those looking for extra  
Jalapeno peppers- These have such a kick!  
Chard - You know it!  
Tomatillos - Available for all the salsa lovers  
Kale - It's ba-aaaaaack  
Parsley, basil - Always!  

Coming up: Melons, carrots

Un-RECIPE FOR  
Baked Tomatoes, Squash, and Potatoes

An Un-Recipe offers guidelines to create delicious dishes based on the way ingredients, kitchen tools and cooks interact in the kitchen. Email us with questions!

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
2 small tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch  
1 medium potato, sliced 1/4-inch thick  
1 onion, thinly sliced  
1 medium yellow summer squash, sliced 1/4-inch thick  
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper  
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Heat oil over medium and cook onion until tender and lightly golden, 6 to 8 minutes.

2. Arrange the onion on the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Overlap tomato, squash, and potato on top of the onion. Season with salt and pepper, sprinkle with thyme and Parmesan, and drizzle with more oil.

3. Bake covered for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake until golden, 30 minutes more.