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Chard

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This week we dedicated a couple day’s work to mulching our squash plants. Hay was our mulch of choice. Even though applying it involved a fair amount of sneezing, some scraps, scratches and sweat, after all it does for us and for the soil, the hard work is all worth it. Here’s why:

Mulch 101
Mulch is a covering placed around the plants. It suppresses weeds, helps prevent erosion and water loss, and regulates soil temperature. If the mulch is made from plant material, it just breaks down and adds nutrients and organic matter to the soil. There are dozens of different kinds of mulches, but these are three that we use on the farm:

- Hay: this is where the scratching and sneezing comes in. Although application is laborious, its cheap/free, makes good use “usable” hay, and it gets the job done.

- Black Plastic: this is a huge labor saver. With modern machinery, laying the plastic is a breeze. The best perk is that plastic almost eliminates the need to weed.

- Living: this spring, we tilled in our winter cover crop into the planting beds. In the walk ways, however, the cover crop serves as a “living mulch”. Keeping the walkways mowed is important to limit the competition of the living cover with the crop.

In the future, we hope to explore the use of other mulches such as newspaper and cardboard mulch.

Thanks for supporting local agriculture!

Your USU Student Farmers,
Bethany, Sara, Crista, Ashley, Brianne, and Blake
A Bit About Chard

Chard is actually part of the beet family. It’s known throughout the world by many different names, such as white beet, strawberry spinach, seakale beet, leaf beet, Sicilian beet, spinach beet, Chilian beet, Roman kale, and silverbeet. Chard is often referred to as Swiss chard because of its extensive cultivation in Switzerland.

This may be your first time encountering chard. If so, this one tip will help you be able to use it. Know this—chard can be used in any recipe that calls for spinach. Just swap it out.

Recipes

Sautéed Swiss Chard with Parmesean Cheese

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1/2 small red onion, diced
- 1 bunch Swiss chard, stems and center ribs cut out and chopped together, leaves coarsely chopped separately
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- salt to taste (optional)

Directions

Melt butter and olive oil together in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in the garlic and onion, and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the chard stems and the white wine. Simmer until the stems begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the chard leaves, and cook until wilted. Finally, stir in lemon juice and Parmesan cheese; season to taste with salt if needed.

Gardening Wisdom of Old

Just a Spoonful of Basil Will Make you Feel Better

The later writers, among whom Simeon Zethy is one, do teach, that the smell of basil is good for the heart and for the head. That the seed cureth, the infirmities of the heart, taketh away sorrowfulness which commeth of melancholy, and maketh a man merry and glad.

*The Herball, 1633*

(Add dried basil to sachets to sniff when your head (or heart) aches. Basil tea, made from a teaspoon of dried leaves in a cup of boiled watre, may have a slight sedative effect.)

Chard with Pine Nuts and Raisins

2 tablespoons pine nuts
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 large onion, coarsely chopped (I prefer cut in quarters and then slice thinly pole-to-pole)
1 bunch chard, about a pound, washed, leaves and stalks separated (pull leaves off the stalks by folding together along stalk and pull the stalk away like pulling a zipper)
2 tablespoons golden raisins
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1/4 teaspoon salt
ground black pepper to taste

Toast the pine nuts until golden brown, set aside to cool. In a large deep skillet or a dutch oven heat the oil over medium-low heat, add the onions and cook them until golden brown and very soft, stirring from time to time, for about 10 minutes.

While the onions are cooking, cut the chard stalks into strips 2 inches long by 1/4 inch wide and tear the leaves into 2-inch pieces. Add the chard stalks and raisins to the onions and cook them until the stalks are tender, about 10 to 15 minutes. Stir occasionally while the stalks are cooking. Once tender add the leaves and vinegar, toss all about to coat the leaves with the oil, and cook about 5 minutes or until the leaves are wilted and tender. Season with salt and pepper, transfer to a serving dish and top with the reserved pine nuts.