

## As the Heat Turns Up

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

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I'm falling, as the heat turns up during the first few weeks of August, we are planting the fall garden. Lovely carrots and beautiful beets are dug and snug in the cave. The rows of the roots are turning from orange and red underground to green leaves waving in the air.

Gardening, like all of life, is change. As soon as a crop is finished, out it goes and in goes the next. By keeping the garden weed-free, it's relatively easy to sow again. And when it does get weedy, the bushhog and plows are ready to help.

The Chinese Cabbage and Bok Choy planted July 4th were already eight inches tall in a month, courtesy of the cool wet July. We cut them off two inches from the ground and sent four bushels of greens to the CSA. Then we dug up the plants.

I made beds in the old carrot patch and we planted them there. Inserting my fingers as deep as it will go, I gently get the long taproot in and squeeze the soil around it. A tug on the top insures me it is firmed in enough, and a cup of water gives it all it needs.

Down the row we go. These tiny seedlings can get 18 inches in diameter, and weigh up to five pounds. So we try to space them 16 inches apart, but they end up closer. We'll harvest every other one and the remaining heads will fill up the cracks. Plants have a way of utilizing every bit of sunshine, and will bend and sychronize with their neighbors to make the most of what's available.

The last bed is filled up with lettuce. It is a little early, so I used the summer crisp varieties.

These get planted a foot apart. They're my favorite for summer, and for that matter, spring and fall too, too.

The onion and potato fields are now in a buckwheat cover crop. Kale seeds was added in the onion sowing, and oriental greens in the potatoes. Everybody is up and growing, again thanking the cool wet weather.

But not all of our crops are happy. Nights in the 50's and constant moisture have taken their toll on the tomatoes. There is not much you can do when the blight creeps up the plants and the fruit roots. A bumper crop of sweet corn will have to make up for the poor yield of tomatoes.

During the next few weeks we'll say goodbye to early plantings of summer squash and beans.

Then we'll say hello to turnips, mustard, daikon radishes and all of the asian greens with unpronounceable names. Tatsoi, mizuna, komatsuna, Arugula, yukina savoy, michihili; thank goodness a rose by any other name smells as sweet. Slowly falling into fall, let's not name any names, but enjoy the heat of summer nestled in the shade by a cool, crystal clear creek after sowing our seeds.