



The Seedling Chronicle



In This Week's Share.....

Broccoli~ 'De Cicco'

Favorite multi-cut Italian variety. A traditional variety producing small 3-4", main heads as well as a large yield of side shoots. 48 days to maturity (dtm).

Broccoli~ 'Blue Wind'

Heads are medium sized, blue green with small, attractive beads. 49 dtm.

Cabbage~ 'Red Express'

Extra-early red savoy cabbage. Compact plants with round 2-4 lb heads with good appearance and flavor. Split resistant. 63 dtm.

Asian Greens~ 'Mei Qing Choi'

Baby green-stem Pac Choi. Compact, vase-shaped plant at full growth is about half the size of Joi Choi. Bolt-resistant. 45 dtm.

Brussels Sprouts~ 'Oliver'

Earliest Brussels Sprouts. Flavorful, medium-green, smooth sprouts are large and mature remarkably early. Vigorous, easy-to-grow variety. 90 dtm.

Cauliflower~ 'Snow Crown'

Remarkably early and dependable. Good-quality, medium sized heads whether harvested in summer or fall. 50 dtm.

Cabbage~ 'Early Mountain Wakefield' (Full Share Only)

Cone-shaped heads weigh up to 3 lbs. Great for coleslaw. 65 dtm

What's In A Name?

When picking out vegetables to grow in your garden, one of the decisions to make is whether you want hybrid, open-pollinated or heirloom varieties.

The term heirloom usually refers to open-pollinated seeds/plants that were developed prior to about the 1950's and which are no longer available in the commercial seed trade. All heirloom varieties are open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated varieties can be considered heirlooms. Open pollinated means that the plants were left for the bees, wind, or some other natural source to pollinate. Heirloom varieties are often tastier than hybrids, but also less uniform in their growth and fruiting patterns. Selected for desirable traits, like great flavor, heirlooms

have not been "bred", but rather gardeners choose the best vegetables from the crop and saved their seeds.

Hybrids are plants whose parents have been intentionally crossed so that desirable traits show up in the offspring, resulting in vegetables that boast bigger fruit, disease-resistance, or a whole host of other beneficial characteristics. Unfortunately, since hybrids available to us were usually originally designed for commercial purposes, the taste of hybrid vegetables have often been sacrificed for some other more industrial benefit (like bigger fruit or longer storage). But this isn't always the case—the hybrid cherry tomato 'Sun Gold' is regarded as a



favorite by many.

The starts that you will be receiving this season are a mixture of hybrid, open-pollinated and heirloom varieties. I tend to prefer heirlooms, because I do not strive for perfection or high yields in my home garden and feel growing heirlooms is an important way to preserve crop diversity. There are two varieties of broccoli in your share this week, one heirloom and one (F1) hybrid. The cauliflower and Brussels sprouts are both hybrids because my initial planting of heirlooms failed to germinate successfully.

Mei Qing Choi

If you're looking for a nutritious vegetable that is easy to grow and cook, Mei Qing Choi is a great choice. Mei Qing Choi is a plant that is in the cabbage family. It is a type of Pac Choi, which originated in China. Mei Qing Choi has a mild flavor. The leaves taste similar to Swiss chard and the stems are deliciously crispy and can

be substituted for celery in recipes. It can be used in stir-fries, sautéed in butter, or braised in broth. Since Mei Qing Choi is very perishable, it is an ideal plant to grow in your garden so that you can have a fresh and ready supply of it. This variety of Pac Choi is both cold-tolerant and bolt-resistant.

Stir-fried Mei Qing Choi

- ~A few bunches of Choi
- ~2 slices of ginger
- ~2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ~1 teaspoon sugar
- ~1/4 teaspoon salt
- ~1/4 cup water
- ~A few drops sesame oil
- ~1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil for stir-frying.

In This Week's Share continued....

Sunflower~ 'Lyng's California Greystripe'

The best sunflower for edible seeds. Bright, golden-yellow flowers up to 10" across. Attracts birds. Each plant produces one flower. 120 dtm.

Nasturtiums~ 'Jewel Mix'

Delicious edible flower. Bright single and double, 2" blooms in red, pink, orange, and yellow held above light green foliage. Ht. 16" 55 dtm.

Stock~ 'Giant Excelsior Mix'

Densely packed spikes with a spicy, clove-like fragrance. Ht. 24-30" 120 dtm.



Mountain Meadow Farm Tour

Sunday, June 1st 2008
11:00 am- 12:30 pm

Come and experience our small urban farm in spring on a guided public tour and sale. Included a 30 minute Bee Keeping introduction by Patrick Pynes. \$5 for adults, \$2 of which goes to Flagstaff Food-link to support their Youth Garden Project.

Native Grass Lecture

Saturday, May 17th 2008
9:00 am- 10:00 am

Join us for a FREE lecture/discussion of native grass use in residential and commercial landscaping. This lecture will be given by Patrick Pynes.

The Versatile Cabbage Family

Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts make up a group of cool season vegetables known as Cole crops. Cole crops are hardy and grow best in the spring and fall, as they don't tolerate heat very well. The varieties chosen should tolerate heat fairly well. You will be receiving some of these crops again later in the season for a fall planting.

Successful production of Cole crops is related to how each crop grows and which part is eaten. The edible parts of broccoli and cauliflower are the flower

heads which are quite sensitive to environmental and nutritional stress. Cabbage and Brussels sprouts produce leafy heads and can withstand greater fluctuations in weather and nutrition.

Cole crops will tolerate some shade, but full sun is always preferable. If garden space or orientation is such that some vegetables will have to be partially shaded, reserve the full sun area for warm season crops.

A wide range of soils are suitable, but fertile well-drained soils are the best. Cole crops are heavy feeders

and do best in a soil enriched with plenty of organic matter. Because Cole crops can easily become deficient in minor elements, at least part of the fertilizer material should be compost to ensure a supply of these nutrients.

When transplanting your seedlings, space rows 24-36 inches apart, setting plants at 12-18 inches for cabbage and 18-24 inches for cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.

The Use of Floating Row Covers

Growing a vegetable garden in Flagstaff can be frustrating. A short growing season, non-ideal soils, erratic weather, birds, gophers and insects discourage even the most dedicated gardener. We can use all the help we can get!

The floating row cover can solve some of these problems. Made of an extremely light-weight woven synthetic material that allows light and water to penetrate, row covers are available in rolls of various widths and lengths. The material is reusable for several years if handled carefully to prevent tears.

Row covers can be used early in the growing season to get cool season crops off to an early start. They work by trapping the sun's heat and warming the soil an extra 1 to 3 degrees. Crops, such as radishes, lettuce,

spinach, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, peas, Chinese cabbage, beets, carrots, turnips and parsnips, can be seeded directly into the garden and covered at planting time, leaving enough slack in the row cover to allow for growth.

Secure the edges with soil or hold them down with lumber, rocks, etc. Securing the edges prevents the entry of troublesome flying pests, such as cabbage worms, cabbage loopers and leaf Miners. Use drip irrigation or a soaker hose to water plants under row covers.

Use covers on cool-season crops only during the early part of the spring growing season. Remove the covers once unsettled weather has stabilized after four to six weeks. This allows beneficial insects to enter the planting area.

Row covers also can protect warm-season crops. Because they hold extra warmth, planting can be done up to two weeks earlier in the spring. Remember to uncover the plants that depend upon insect pollination for fruit production. These include melons, cucumbers and squash.



WARNING!

Nasturtiums don't always transplant well. Handle them carefully, as they have brittle taproots.