

Winter Delivery

December 2009

from **One Step at a Time Gardens**

Raising healthy food...raising hope

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Delivery contents: Carrots; Yukon Gold & Red Viking Potatoes; Onions; Beets; Red Cabbage
Butternut & Acorn winter squash; Garlic

The Power of Light

With this, our final delivery of the season, and heading into the “deepest” part of the year, the gardens really close down. As of this week’s major snowstorm, both snow cover and the temperatures are a factor, but so too is the availability of light. The newspaper reports we are at about 9 hours of light a day right now (on Dec. 3 sunrise was at 7:27 a.m. and sunset at 4:37 p.m.). The next opportunity to seed greens (in our hoophouse), Johnny’s Seed catalog counsels, will be when the “day length exceeds 10 hours (in February)”. We wait for the light.



Our chickens wait too. They haven’t laid an egg for quite a while. We’ve taken to leaving their light on at night to encourage the return to laying. They wait, we wait.

Winter Solstice 2009 will happen on December 21, at precisely 12:47EST. This astronomical event is explained through its Latin root of *sol* (sun) and *sistere* (to stand still). At the solstices, the apparent movement of the Sun's path north or south comes to a stop before

reversing direction. Simply put, Winter Solstice is the turning point at which we, in the northern hemisphere, welcome the return of the sun.

Winter Solstice celebrations around the world and through time remind us that rhythms of the earth resonate deeply with humanity. Newgrange, in the Boyne Valley, Ireland stands as testament to this observation. Newgrange, a Passage Tomb, was built 5,000 years ago in such a way that at dawn on the shortest day of the year, the Winter Solstice, a shaft of sunlight shines through the roof box over the entrance and penetrates the passage to light up the chamber. The dramatic event lasts for 17 minutes at dawn between the 19th to the 23rd December each year. Thousands of people enter a lottery drawing every year to be able to participate in the event.



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Rhythms of the earth can also be experienced when we eat along with the seasons. Today’s delivery contents reflect this late season - they are long storage crops, whose energy stores will wait and help feed you through much of the winter. These foods are not the light and wildly effusive greens of early spring or the volatile sweet, but fleeting treats of late June snow peas. Eating seasonally ties you to the energies of the earth. Eating with a direct connection to a specific piece of land, whose character you begin to fall in love with as you learn about it over time invites you to experience these rhythms all year long.

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I'd even invite you to take this draw toward earth connection a step further. Visionaries like Rob Hopkins, of the Transition Movement, believe these earth connections hold a key for our ability to move beyond oil dependence toward sustainable development. "Rebuilding local agriculture and food production, localizing energy production, rethinking healthcare, rediscovering local building materials in the context of zero energy building, rethinking how we manage waste, all build resilience and offer the potential of an extraordinary renaissance – economic, cultural and spiritual." (Rob Hopkins "The Transition Handbook"). From alternative energy to redesigning around local economy, visionaries find in basic natural systems key concepts they believe hold promise for our future. Eating locally may be just a tad revolutionary.

This kind of revolution needn't come violently. In fact, advice from one Winter Solstice website has this to offer about paying attention to celebrating this earth rhythm: "It is the time of year to have good friends around, and to be a good friend. Share your food and warmth. It is the time of year to be hospitable to strangers and travelers. It is the time of year for telling stories around the fire, the time of hot firmaments to warm the soul; the time to raise spirits..... celebration of the promise of the Sun's return in all its power. It also offers a chance to consider how the food you eat can connect you to prehistoric earth rhythms that also offer a clue toward future sustainability.

Be it sunlight, food or the future ...we all wait for the light.

~ Jan & Tim

Storage Tips for your Winter Supply

Use a thermometer to verify your refrigerator's temperature. If you have a "fruit cellar", check out its temperature as well. Some thermometers also come with humidity gauge.

Carrots, Beets, Cabbage - *Cool & high humidity preferred (32-40 degrees, 90-95% RH).*

Bagged in refrigerator, all three vegetables should keep for over a month or two.

NOTE: Keep in mind that ethylene gas, emitted by apples can turn carrots bitter.

Potatoes - *Cool & moderate humidity preferred (32-40 degrees, 90-95% RH). Keep potatoes in a paper bag in refrigerator*

Garlic - *Cool and dry preferred (32-50 degrees, 60-70% RH). Store small supply on counter for ready access. Store the rest in dark cupboard in paper bag. If you observe rooting sprout, you may want to separate and peel the cloves then store in a jar of olive oil in the refrigerator or freeze. The bonus is you will also get garlic infused oil for cooking.*

Onions - *Cool & low humidity preferred (32-40 degrees, 65-70% RH). Keep in refrigerator or cool spot in basement.*

Winter squash - *Moderately warm and dry (50-60degrees, 60-70% RH). Keep in cool basement, breezeway, garage or entry - avoid freeze and protect from mice.*