Winter Production and Marketing

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Simple Gifts Farm
Overview Winter Production and Marketing

- Storage crops and facilities
- Marketing outlets
- Winter Growing
Winter Share

- Started 2008-9 with 35 shares
- Has gone as high as 100 shares, steady now at 80 shares
- Initially bought in storage crops at $1/lb., share price calculated at $1.50/lb.
- 8 bi-weekly pickups, 15 lbs. storage crop per pickup, 10 bags greens over the season. Winter squash one-time distribution of ½ bushel
- Price $265, or $475 in combo with Spring Share
Spring Share

- Started 2013 with 60 members. 45 signed up so far for 2014
- 10 Weekly pickups, ~ 5-10 pounds storage crops, 3-4 green items
- Late March-May
- Featured May carrots and strawberries
- Price is $225, or $475 in combo with winter share
Winter Farmer’s Market

- Started December 2010
- Initial sales $500/week
- Best week $1700
- Limited more by supply than by market
Storage of winter crops

- Started out with just a walk-in cooler
- Have rented additional space since fall 2010
- Additional space has been in a refrigerated warehouse, an old apple storage, and an experimental walk-in at Umass
- Generally one cold and moist, one cold and dry
- Would like to add one warmer storage for sweet potatoes and winter squash
WELCOME TO THE WINTER SHARE

FROM THE WALK-IN COOLER TO YOUR LEFT:

• ONE BAG OF SPINACH

AND

• FIFTEEN POUNDS MIX AND MATCH:

Potatoes, Carrots, Parsnip, Onions, Cabbage, Turnips, Daikon Radish, Watermelon Radish, Celeriac, Beets, Rutabaga, Kohlrabi

NOT A MEMBER? ITEMS WITH A STAR * CAN BE PURCHASED FOR $2 PER POUND
Elliot Coleman in Maine has pioneered these systems. Maine is at the same latitude as St. Tropez, France—if we can moderate temperature, we have the daylight.

“Persephone Months,” when days drop below 10 hours, growth slows dramatically.

In Massachusetts, this period is November 9 – January 31.
Principles of Winter Growing

- To harvest during the “Persephone Months” greens need to be grown and stockpiled during the winter
- Or, greens can be overwintered at a small size, and will grow when daylength increases
- The warmer the temperature, the shorter/less extreme the Persephone period
- “Pyramid” of structures from lower to higher level of protection can be used at different times of the season, and for more or less hardy crops
Principles of Winter Growing

- Sun heats structure
- Larger structures retain heat better
- Layers of protection
- Ventilation is important
- Added heat = more growth
Principles of Winter Growing

- Most Hardy Crops: Kale, Spinach, Miner’s Lettuce, Totsoi
- Less Hardy: Arugula, Bok Choy, Mizuna (and prone to bolt in the spring), Cilantro, Cress
- Least Hardy: Lettuce, Chard, Radish, Turnip
How We Grow at SGF
How We Grow at SGF

Low Tunnels
- Cheap and easy structures
- Can cover large sections of field
- Hard to access in winter
- Best for overwintered crops for early spring harvest
- Carrots, lettuce, kale — Plant early November, harvest March (lettuce and kale) or May (carrots)
- Strawberries -- Plant September, harvest May
How We Grow at SGF
“Caterpillar” tunnels
Also cheap and easy to construct
Easier winter access than a low tunnel
Good for late fall harvest of somewhat tender crops or overwintering
Stockpiled lettuce (plant September, harvest December), kale (plant September, harvest December-January), spinach (plant September, harvest December)
Overwintered onions, lettuce
How We Grow at SGF
How We Grow at SGF

- Hoophouse = unheated greenhouse
- 100’ X 14’
- One set of hoophouses is “early”
  - Lettuce, bok choy, radish, salad turnip—Plant September
  - Harvested in December and then used for chicken housing
- Second early house is planted to spinach in September and harvested December-February
How We Grow at SGF

- Second set of hoophouses is “late”
- Tomatoes grown into October
- Spinach, miner’s lettuce, lettuce, chard
  - Plant mid-October, harvest February-April
How We Grow at SGF
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- Rolling Hoophouse can move between sites
- Greens can be planted in September and then house moved over site after tomatoes are done in October March? Overwintered greens could be grown and new greens started in a third spot.
- Sprouting Broccoli undersown with early winter greens all planted in early September
How We Grow at SGF

- Greenhouse heated to 30° — just kept from freezing
- Head lettuce in deep winter
- Start early September, harvest December and January
- Interseed with fennel, bok choy, chard to come in later
- Also, heated bench is used for seedlings and for microgreens