

CSA Crop Planning

Claire Strader

Designing a Share

Overall Goals

1. Please Members – even through different members like different things, most members will be pleased if they:
 - feel that they are getting a good value for their money
 - receive plenty of familiar vegetables
 - get to try some new things they may not have been exposed to before
 - receive clean and beautiful vegetables in a box that is full, but not stuffed
 - are not overwhelmed by more vegetables than they can handle
2. Emphasize what you can grow well and also what you like to eat and cook with – these two factors will set you up for success with members playing to your own production and culinary strengths.
3. Provide somewhat predictable shares from year to year, while still improving over all – returning members should know what to expect.

Share Specifics

1. Include 7 to 13 items per week - fewer items in the spring, more as the season goes on
2. The quantity for each item should be large enough to provide the base for a main dish or salad – having a larger number of items in very small quantities can be difficult for members to figure out how to combine and make into a meal.
3. The quantity for each item should be small enough to be used up before the next share arrives – on occasion providing extra of an item that members can freeze or preserve can also work as long as you provide instructions
4. Include only one or two “unusual” items in a share – too many unknown items can make members feel stressed and overwhelmed.
5. Groups of vegetables to consider

Group	Vegetables	Notes
Alliums	green garlic, garlic scapes, garlic bulbs, green onions, onions, leeks	One (or sometimes two) in every share. When multiple alliums are available (in fall), will rotate green onions, onions, and leeks over three week intervals.
Salad Greens	lettuce, salad mix, spinach, baby mustards, chinese cabbage	One or two per week in the spring and again each week in the fall. Include summer salad greens whenever possible.
Cooking Greens	bok choy, kale, collards, chard	One bunch per week early in the season and again each week in the fall. Sometimes include summer bunches when needed to fill a share.
Brassicas	broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage	Broccoli – every week in the spring and 2 or 3 times in the fall. Cauliflower – 1 or 2 total shares. Cabbage – 3 heads in the spring, 1 or 2 in the fall.
Peas and Beans	snow, snap, and shell peas; green, yellow, and romano beans; edamame	Members do not seem to tire of these. Will deliver multiple types of peas every week they are available (.5 to 1.5 lbs. each). Will deliver one or sometimes two types of beans when they are available (.5 to 2 lbs. each).
Roots	beets, carrots, radish, turnip	One bunch every week, sometimes two. Rotating beets and carrots when they come on. Radishes for 4 to 6 weeks in the spring and again for a few weeks in the fall, combined with or rotating with turnips.
Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes	potatoes and sweet potatoes	Try for four total deliveries of potatoes and two or three of sweet potatoes, rotating if possible, starting in September.
Summer Solanacea	tomatoes, peppers, eggplant	Tomatoes – every week they are available, up to 15 per share. Peppers – every week they are available, up to 7 per share. Eggplant – 3 or 4 times a year, 1 to 3 per share.

Summer Squash and Cukes	summer squash, zucchini, patty pan, cucumbers	Mix of summer squash, zucchini, and patty pan - every week it is available, up to 4 per share. Cucumbers – every week they are available, up to 4 per share.
Winter Squash	delicata, sunshine, carnival, acorn, butternut, pie pumpkins	One or two types per week starting in late August. Usually deliver 2 delicatas or carnivals in a share. Often combine 1 butternut with 1 other type of squash in a share.
Special	salsa basket, fennel, kohlrabi, rutabaga, celeriac, Chinese cabbage, popcorn, ristra, jack-o-lantern	Only one or two of these in a share, spread out over the season as the fun/unusual treats. Can deliver the salsa basket for 5 or 6 weeks total over the season.
Herbs	basil, parsley, cilantro, dill chives, thyme, oregano, sage, mint	One bunch in every share. Can have a choice of herb or large bunches of one particular herb that goes with a recipe for the week. Large bunches of basil for pesto are popular.

2012 Actual Box Contents

31 May

Spinach, 1 bag (8 oz.)
 Salad Mix, 1 bag (6 oz.)
 Butterhead Lettuce, 1 head
 Pea Shoots, 1 bunch
 Radishes, 1 bunch
 Green Garlic, 1 bunch
 Choice of Spouts, 1 bag
 Cilantro, 1 bunch

7 June

Spinach, 1 bag (12 oz.)
 Salad Mix, 1 bag (6 oz.)
 Batavian Lettuce, 1 head
 Pac Choi, 2 heads
 Radishes, 1 bunch
 Green Garlic, 1 bunch
 Purple Kohlrabi, 2 bulbs
 Broccoli, 1 head
 Choice of Spouts, 1 bag
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

14 June

Spinach, 1 bag (16 oz.)
 Salad Mix, 1 bag (6 oz.)
 Leaf Lettuce, 1 head
 Pac Choi, 2 heads
 Turnips, 1 bunch
 Garlic Scapes, 1 bunch
 Green or Purple Kohlrabi, 2 bulbs
 Broccoli, 2 heads
 Basil, 1 bunch

21 June

Spinach, 1 bag (16 oz.)
 Salad Mix, 1 bag (6 oz.)
 Batavian Lettuce, 1 head
 Snow Peas, 1 bag (8 oz.)
 Summer Squash, 2 pieces
 Broccoli, 3 heads
 Radish, 1 bunch
 Fennel, 1 bulb
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

28 June

Spinach, 1 bag (8 oz.)
 Romaine Lettuce, 1 head
 Snap Peas, 1 bag (8 oz.)
 Shell Peas, 1 bag (16 oz.)
 Fennel, 1 bulb
 Radishes, 1 bunch
 Scallions, 1 bunch
 Beets, 1 bunch
 Broccoli, 1 head
 Summer Squash, 2 pieces
 Cucumber, 1 piece
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

5 July

Batavian Lettuce, 1 head
 Green Cabbage, 1 head
 Green or Yellow Beans, (8 oz.)
 Japanese Eggplant, 2 pieces
 Carrots, 1 bunch
 Scallions, 1 bunch

New Garlic, 1 head
 Summer Squash, 4 pieces
 Cucumber, 3 pieces
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

12 July

Green and Yellow Beans, (16 oz.)
 2 Japanese OR 1 Globe Eggplant
 Green Cabbage, 1 head
 Carrots, 1 bunch
 Beets, 1 bunch
 Summer Squash, 4 pieces
 Cucumber, 1 piece
 Choice of Kale, 1 bunch
 New Garlic, 1 head
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

19 July

Green OR Yellow Beans, (16 oz.)
 Cauliflower, 2 heads
 Sweet Onions, 3 bulbs
 Beets, 1 bunch
 2 Japanese OR 1 Globe Eggplant
 Summer Squash, 6 pieces
 Cucumber, 1 piece
 Collards or Chard, 1 bunch
 Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

26 July

Red Cabbage, 1 head
Sweet Onions, 3 bulbs
1 Japanese AND 1 Globe Eggplant
Salsa Basket, 1 bag
Carrots, 1 bunch
Summer Squash, 3 pieces
Cucumber, 2 pieces
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Tomatoes, 3 pieces

2 August

Melon, 1 piece
Carrots, 1 bunch or bag
Scallions, 1 bunch
Eggplant, 1 Globe OR 2 Japanese
Salsa Basket, 1 bag
Summer Squash, 5 pieces
Cucumber, 2 pieces
Kale, Collards, or Chard, 1 bunch
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Tomatoes, 6 pieces

9 August

Cherry Tomatoes, members 1-30
Melons, 2
Beets, 1 bag
Carrots, 1 bunch
Scallions, 1 bunch
Eggplant, 1 piece
Sweet Pepper, 1 piece
Beans, 1 bag (16 oz.)
Summer Squash, 5 pieces
Cucumber, 1 piece
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Tomatoes, 10 – 20 pieces

16 August

Cherry Tomatoes, members 31-60
Red Cabbage, 1 head
Melons, 1 piece
Beets, 1 bunch
Beans, 1 bag
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 4 pieces
Edamame, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Summer Squash, 5 pieces

Cucumber, 1 piece
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Tomatoes, 10 – 20 pieces

23 August

Cherry Tomatoes, 61-91 & EOW
Salsa OR Edamame, 1 bag
Onions, 1 bag (2 lbs.)
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 4 pieces
Red or Yellow Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Purple Carrots, 1 bunch
Belgian Greens, 1 bunch
Green OR Dragon Beans, (16 oz.)
Summer Squash, 3 pieces
Basil or Cilantro, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head
Tomatoes, 10 – 20 pieces

30 August

Cherry Tomatoes, 1-45 & EOW
Delicata Squash, 1 piece
Beans, 1 bag (16 oz.)
Scallions, 1 bunch
Purple or Orange Carrots, 1 bunch
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 4 pieces
Cucumbers, 1 piece
Belgian Greens, 1 bunch
Summer Squash, 3 pieces
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head
Tomatoes, 10 – 20 pieces

6 September

Cherry Tomatoes, members 46-66
Carnival Squash, 1 piece
Green Beans, 1 bag
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 2 pieces
Red or Yellow Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Edamame, 1 bag (16 oz.)
Leeks, 2 pieces
Beets, 1 bunch
Dragon or Romano Beans, (16 oz.)
Lettuce, 1 head
Garlic, 1 head
Tomatoes, 10 – 15 pieces

13 September

Cherry Tomatoes, 67-91 & EOW
Green Cabbage, 1 head
Green Beans, 1 bag (16 oz.)
Carmen Sweet Peppers, 1 piece
Red or Yellow Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Poblano Hot Peppers, 3 pieces
Edamame, 1 bag (16 oz.)
Chioggia Beets, 1 bunch
Salad Mix, 1 bag (6 oz.)
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head
Tomatoes, 10 – 15 pieces

20 September

Cherry Tomatoes, EOW Green
Carnival Squash, 1 piece
Red OR Yellow Potatoes, (2 lbs.)
Kohlrabi, 1 bulb
Leeks, 2 pieces
Radishes OR Turnips, 1 bunch
Brussels Sprouts, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Carmen Sweet Pepper, 1 piece
Edamame, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Carrots, 1 bag
Lettuce, 1 head
Garlic, 1 head
Tomatoes, 10 – 15 pieces

27 September

Carnival Squash, 1 piece
Sunshine Squash, 1 piece
Yellow Potatoes, 1 bag (2 lbs.)
Carrots, 1 bag
Kohlrabi, 1 bulb
Scallions, 1 bunch
Bok Choy, 2 heads
Brussels Sprouts, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Green Sweet Pepper, 1 piece
Collards, 1 bunch
Cilantro, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head

4 October

Sweet Potatoes, 1 bag (2 lbs.)
Beets, 1 bag
Turnips, 1 bunch
Leeks, 2 pieces
Celeriac, 1 bulb
Salad Mix, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Mustard Greens, 1 bunch
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head
Butternut Squash, 1 piece
Pie Pumpkin, 1 piece

11 October

Sweet Potatoes, 1 bag (2 lbs.)
Broccoli, 2 heads
Leeks, 1 bunch
Kale, 1 bunch
Salad Mix, 1 bag (12 oz.)
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 head
Butternut Squash, 1 piece
Acorn Squash, 1 piece
Ristra, 1 string
Popcorn, 1 bundle or bag
1 Jack-o-lantern OR 3 Gourds

18 October – Intern Solo

Butternut Squash, 1 piece
Sweet Potatoes, See Signs
Leeks, 1 bunch
Cabbage OR Bok Choy, 1 head
Turnips OR Radishes, 1 bunch
Mustard Greens, 1 bunch
Carrots OR Beets, 1 bag
Rutabaga OR Celeriac, 1 bag
Broccoli, See Sign
Garlic, 1 head
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

Overview of Crop Plan and Implementation

1. Determine Harvest Goal
2. Farm Plan/Planting Schedule/Seed Needs for each crop
3. Place Seed Order (do it early for best availability/supply)
4. Develop Rotation (will not cover rotation here, see Elliot Coleman)
5. Farm Map – plan out where everything will go including cover crops
6. Planting Calendar
7. Record Keeping

Types of Crops

By planting and harvesting information

1. Plant once/harvest once
 - Usually these crops store well after harvest
 - Examples are onions, garlic, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash
2. Plant once/harvest over a long period
 - Usually these crops either produce for a long time, or they keep well in the field once they are mature
 - Examples are Brussels sprouts, chard, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, kale, leeks, tomatillos, parsley
3. Plant multiple times for a constant supply
 - These crops must be succession planted for a number of reasons depending on the crop. Examples are:
 - A. Plant multiple/Harvest once: Beets, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, radishes, scallions and the like do not keep producing from the same plant, when they are harvested they are done and need to be planted multiple times for a constant supply.
 - B. Plant multiple/Harvest over a long period: Beans, cucumber, peas, salad mix, spinach, summer squash, cilantro, dill, basil and the like will keep producing from the same plant, but the quality and quantity of the harvest goes down after a while. Subsequent plantings invigorate supply.

By temperature sensitivity

1. Likes to be cool
 - These crops do not do well in the heat, plant in the early spring and then again in late summer for fall harvest.
 - Examples are radishes, spinach, salad mix and lettuce, broccoli, cabbage
2. Likes to be hot
 - These crops do not do well in the cold. Do not plant them until soil is warm and there is no danger of frost.
 - Examples are beans, basil, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, winter and summer squash, cucumbers

3. Tolerant of a variety of conditions
 - These plants may prefer to be warm or cold, but will tolerate a wide range of conditions.
 - Examples are potatoes, carrots, beets, kale, chard
4. Taste much better after a frost
 - Plants use sugar as antifreeze in cold weather. A frost will bring up the sugar content and the flavor of these crops
 - Examples are spinach, Brussels sprouts, kale

By how to plant

1. Direct seed into the ground
 - When seed is cheap and reliable – radish, turnip
 - When you need to plant it too thickly to make transplanting worthwhile – salad mix, dill, cilantro
 - When the roots of the plant do not like to be disturbed and can be hurt by transplanting – peas, beans, carrots, beets, parsnips
2. Transplant from starts
 - When seed is expensive and you need to make sure every one has optimal conditions to grow – tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, broccoli
 - When the plants are sensitive to the cold, but you need to start them early to get a crop – tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, basil
 - When you need the spacing in the field just so for optimal growth for every plant – lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, kale
3. Direct seed or transplant depending on conditions
 - Some crops can be done either way – winter and summer squash, cucumbers, parsley
 - Transplant these crops when they will benefit from it – when it is too cold out to start them early
 - And direct seed them when weather settles – later in the season when they will get off to a good start on their own.

Crop Rotation Tips

1. Divide the field into sections of roughly equal size square or rectangular shapes (as much as possible). Be sure to consider your optimal bed length when determining which size/shape to use.
2. Group crops by family. Crop families typically share similar nutrient needs, diseases, insect pests, and even cultivation practices.
3. Divide or combine families based on the amount of space needed for each and space available in a standard section. Each final grouping should fit in a standard section.
4. When combining or dividing families consider timing of planting (i.e. group early brassicas together), cultivation practices (i.e. group all two row crops together for faster weeding), and other production practices that could influence your groupings.
5. Order your groups to allow for the maximum space and time between any groupings of the same family. For instance if you have 8 sections and two groupings of brassicas, one group should go in section 1 and the other group should go in section 5 to allow for the maximum number of years to pass before brassicas return to any one section.
6. When ordering groupings again consider production practices to maximize the benefits of rotation. For instance since brassicas are heavy feeders they might benefit by following a crop that was mulched or a heavy cover crop in a fallow section more than a legume would. Or, for instance, since onions are notoriously hard to keep clean, they might benefit by following a crop that is easy to keep weeded like winter squash. Thus the onions would be planted into a section that might have a decreased weed seed bank due to the previous year's cultivation.
7. Made a map of the field and keep a blank template of the map on file. Each year record which grouping will go in each section on a copy of the template and use that current map in the field for the year both as a guide for what to plant and a record of what was planted.

Tips for Using the Crop Planning Template

1. It will all be easier if you are already familiar with excel.
2. It will take some time to input your information the first year. After that it will all be there waiting for you in subsequent years and you can simply focus on making needed changes to timing, varieties, quantities, etc.
3. The Planting Calendar pages are meant to be printed out, cut in half so that there is one date per page, ordered by date, and stapled at the top to produce a flippable calendar for use in the greenhouse and the field.
4. When adding information to the Planting Calendar, be sure to maintain each page ordered by date/week number so that you can print easily. In excel, choose print at any time to force the dotted page divisions to show up. Seeing the dotted divisions will make it easier to keep your data tidy.

Resources

Reference

- *The New Seed-Starter Handbook* by Nancy Bubel – for seed viability chart and seed starting information
- *The New Organic Grower* by Eliot Coleman – for rotations and farm design

Contact Info

Claire Strader – Small Scale and Organic Produce Educator	
Dane County UW-Extension	FairShare CSA Coalition
5201 Fen Oak Drive	303 South Paterson, #1B
Madison, WI 53718	Madison, WI 53703
608-224-3701	608-226-0300
strader.claire@countyofdane.com	claire@csacoalition.org