Feature

Community Supported Agriculture
By Connie Schultz

According to Wikipedia a CSA or Community Supported Agriculture is “a form of alternative food network...; a socio-economic model of agriculture and food distribution consisting of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farming operation where the growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production. CSAs usually consist of a system of weekly delivery or pick-up of vegetables and/or fruit, in a vegetable box. Sometimes this includes dairy products or meat depending on the farm.”

CSAs are an important way for small farms to insure a market for their produce by finding consumers who will buy their produce for a whole season and for local consumers to find healthy, fresh, local produce – right from the farm! Here in Johnston County we have several CSAs. I spoke to some of them for this article:

Ben's Produce
Benjamin Shields
Clayton, NC
919-800-8898

Ben's Produce is an organic vegetable farm with about 2 ½ acres under cultivation that provides vegetables (spring/summer and fall) for consumers who purchase a “share.” A share is a predetermined amount of vegetables determined by the size of your family and how much your family consumes a week. Share prices vary with size but each week a box is packed with a mixture of produce with more popular...
vegetables being provided over a longer period of time (like lettuce or tomatoes) while other vegetables (like broccoli and cabbage) may vary from week to week. Consumers can pick their vegetables up directly from the farm or may use drop-off points at various farmers’ markets. Ben also provides a newsletter for customers and offers cooking classes on how to use various produce or newly introduced vegetables. At Ben's their mission is to strive for healthier people, community, agriculture and planet by growing and sharing the best tasting food they can produce. Visit Ben's web site at http://bensproduce.blogspot.com/

Double-T Farm
Tom Kumpf
Garner, NC
919-239-2700

Double-T Farm has been farming on about 5 acres for over 7 years, offering fresh produce for 25 weeks in the summer and 12 weeks in the winter. For customers purchasing a share, they can pay their full share when they sign-up or use a payment plan. Share prices vary with size but Double-T Farms tries to offer their clients more of the most popular crops like onions, providing some each week, and more of popular seasonal favorites like strawberries.

They have central pick-up locations or customers can pay for home delivery. Owner Tom Kumph said that they hope to add a farm stand at their site next year. Tom also provides an email newsletter to help customers learn about new vegetables and how to use old vegetable in new ways. Their goal is to “teach the community that local, organic produce is a viable alternative to suburban sprawl, leading to healthier people and communities”. Visit this link for more information about Double-T Farm http://www.double-t-farm.com/

Blue Dragonfly Cut Flower Farm
Mickey & Gail Lee
Clayton, NC
919-553-5221

While Blue Dragonfly Cut Flower Farm isn’t a vegetable CSA they do produce lovely cut flowers that they sell from either their farm site or various farmers’ markets. In business since 1996, they farm on about 6 acres growing flowers like Ammi majus, dahlia, dianthus, gladioli, gomphrena, larkspur, lilies, rudbeckia, snapdragons, scabiosa, statice, sunflowers, tuberoses, yarrow and zinnias to name a few. For more information visit their website at http://www.bluedragonflyflowers.com/

So if you like your vegetables fresh and don't have time to grow them yourself, you might want to sign-up with one of these organic growers or visit the Growing Small Farms website which lists CSAs by county at: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/csafarms.html.

Other CSA's in Johnston County
Smiths Nursery – Benson
Phone: 919 934-1700
Website: http://www.smiths-nursery.com/Doorstep%20Market%20-%20Index.htm
FEATURE PLANT

Japanese Flowering Apricot
Prunus Mume

It’s cold, dreary and bare outside. Wait, I see pink. Is it, could it be, Spring? Nope, it’s Prunus mume to the rescue. Aaah, the beautiful Japanese flowering apricot, native to China and Korea, is a harbinger of spring with white, pink or red blooms in January and February. Just to show off the Prunus mume can also sport single or double flowers with a spicy fragrance. Hardy in zones 6-8, the Prunus mume reaches a height of 15 to 20 feet, growing best in full sun to part shade. Spring and summer it cools down with dark green foliage ideal for small gardens.

Prunus mume is somewhat drought tolerant and not too picky about soil except that it must be well drained and fertile, acidic would be nice. Most insects and diseases are not a problem. Pruning should be done after flowering. Blooms form on the previous year’s wood, so late season pruning will remove flower buds.

Some of the cultivars of Prunus mume are ‘Peggy Clarke’, a rose color double flowering, ‘Alba’ is a white and ‘W.B.Clarke’ is a graceful weeping form with double pink flowers. Prunus mume can be propagated from seed (when they are available) or softwood cuttings.

If you would like a jump-start into spring, Prunus mume may be the tree to do the trick.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Training January 28, 2012 - April 18, 2012
The training will be once a week on Wednesday night from 6pm - 8:45pm. If you are interested in becoming an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer call 989-5380 for more information and to get an application.

Fruit Tree Training & Pruning Demonstration January 28, 2012 - 10am - 12pm @ Central Crops Research Station in Clayton, NC. Dr. Mike Parker, Tree Fruit Specialist at NC State University, will teach us how to train fruit trees. He will then demonstrate how to prune trees to get the best production. Call 989-5380 for more information.

Events at Johnston Community College – These events have a fee and people interested in attending these events should pre-register on their website or by calling 919 209-2052.

Landscape with Herbs - Wednesday, January 11, 6:30 - 8:30pm. Learn how to incorporate herbs into landscape plantings.
**Cooking with Herbs** - Tuesday, January 17, 6:30 - 8:30pm. Learn how to use herbs in cooking appetizers, main dishes and deserts.

**Blueberry Production & Pruning Demonstration**
February 11, 2012 - 10am - 12pm @ JC Ag Bldg in Smithfield, NC. Dr. Bill Cline, Blueberry Specialist at NC State University, will share information on growing blueberries in eastern North Carolina. We will then travel a short distance to a blueberry batch and learn how to prune some blueberry bushes to promote the best production. Call 989-5380 for more information.

**Grape Production & Pruning Demonstration**
February 25, 2012 - 10am - 12pm Dr. Sara Spayd, Grape Production Specialist at NC State University, will give a presentation on grape production in North Carolina. We will then have a short pruning demonstration on muscadine grapevines. Call 989-5380 for more information. Location: TBA

**YARD VILLIAN**

**Cudweed**
by Shawn Banks

Evidently there are three different species of cudweed, all in the Aster Family of plants. They look very similar in appearance and are difficult to tell apart unless you are really good at plant identification. Each of these species starts off as a basil rosette of leaves, similar to what you see in dandelions before they flower. The leaves are all simple leaves with a smooth or entire leaf margin. Differences occur in the width of the leaves and the amount of hair or pubescence is on the leaf. Some only have pubescence on the lower side of the leaf while others have pubescence on both sides of the leaf.

The flower is born on a flowering stalk that emerges from the center of the basil rosette in the spring. Some species have a single flowering stalk while others have a flowering stalk that branches out to form many flowering stalks. Different species will also have different flower color or structure. While all species have a white fluff attached to the seeds to aid in distributing them on the wind.

To control this weed in turf areas maintain a dense, healthy turf through proper mowing and fertilization. In shrub and flowerbeds a fresh layer of mulch each year should keep the seed population from germinating. If chemical control is the preferred method this weed should be easy to control. It is easily controlled with products that contain 2,4-D, dicamba, glyphosate, or imazaquin as one of the active ingredients. When using chemicals for weed control, remember to follow the label directions for use and safety. The chemicals will work best on the weeds when they are actively growing, so when temperatures are above 50 degrees F is the best time to spray.

For more information visit: [http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/weeds/Cudweed.aspx](http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/weeds/Cudweed.aspx)
WHAT’S IN SEASON

Snap Peas
_Pisum sativum_
by Shawn Banks

Snap peas are one of the edible pod peas, closely related to garden peas. Here in North Carolina snap peas can be planted as early as February 15. To have a continued harvest plant more seeds every week or two until April 15. Snap peas are a cool season crop needing temperatures below 80 degrees F to grow and produce well.

Plant seeds one inch deep about two inches apart. Snap peas grow on vines, so they will need some type of trellis or fence to grow up. Depending on the variety grown the vines may reach four to six feet in height. From planting seed to harvest of pod it takes about 70 to 75 days. Snap peas should be picked from the vine when the seeds have swollen in the pod to the point where the pod looks like it is about ready to burst open. At this point the pod and pea inside are both edible. The pea can either be shelled out or eaten along with the pod in salads, stir-fries, or soup.

Some available varieties of snap pea include ‘Sugar Snap’, ‘Sugar Bon’, and ‘Sugar Ann’. ‘Sugar Snap’ is one of the most popular varieties, probably because it was the All-American Gold Award winner in 1979. It should be easy to find in seed catalogs or at garden centers.

There are few insects and diseases that cause problems with snap peas. Most notable are root rot and powdery mildew. Root rot will occur when the soil stays wet for extended periods of time. A well-drained soil is recommended for when growing snap peas. Powdery mildew appears as the temperatures warm up and the humidity increases. Most often the peas are toward the end of their life when powdery mildew appears and no action is needed unless there are other pea varieties growing in the area.

Recipe: Sugar snap peas with new potatoes

- 1 lb. sugar snap pea
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 lb. new potatoes
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. chives, chopped
- 2 tbsp. fresh mint, chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Remove strings from peas. Put peas in boiling water with 1 teaspoon salt for 3 minutes. Drain and plunge into ice water until cold. Drain again. Wash potatoes well and do not peel. If potatoes are larger than a golf ball, quarter or halve as necessary. Place potatoes in a steamer basket in a large pot and steam 15 to 20 minutes or until just tender. In a large skillet or wok, melt butter over low heat until it begins to brown and smells nutty. Add peas and potatoes. Raise heat to medium, and toss well. Add chives, mint, and salt and pepper to taste. Toss again until well coated.

JANUARY GARDEN TASKS

LANDSCAPE AREAS

- Plants less than one year old may need some supplemental water to get through the winter.
• Watering well just before a cold snap helps plants survive bitter temperatures.
• Plants with scale insects or spider mite infestations can be treated now with horticultural oil products.

• Some evergreen shrubs like boxwood, gardenia, and Nanina can be pruned now.
• To reduce camellia petal blight collect the fallen flower petals and put them in the compost pile.
• Perennials like daylily, Shasta daisy, and peony can be divided when the ground is dry enough to be worked.
• When searching through seed catalogs look for key phrases like “heat tolerant” and “tolerates humidity”.

EDIBLES

• Prepare the vegetable garden for planting in February by removing weeds and adding compost.
• Mulch strawberry beds with 2-3 inches of wheat straw for winter protection. Remove mulch in spring when blooms appear.
• Asparagus crowns can be planted though March. New plants should not be harvested for 2-3 years.
• Prune fruit trees now through March or when the buds begin to break.

HOUSEPLANTS

• Check holiday gift plants for insects before placing them near other plants.
• Let houseplants rest. Most houseplants are semi-dormant during short days. Save the fertilizer for when they begin to grow in spring.
• Inspect plants that were moved inside for the winter for insects that may have hitched a ride. Treat any found with insecticidal soap.

• Check any bulbs that were dug and stored for the winter for signs of soft rot. Discard any that have become soft and add fresh sawdust. Bulbs that are wrinkled may be too dry mist them with water to prevent dehydration.