

VistaVeg - Spring Newsletter 2011



News from the fields ...

The recent fine weather has helped us with preparing the fields for sowing & transplanting. We've been busy ploughing, rotovating and creating "stiches" for those crops which will grow on ridges. Courgettes & squashes are coming along in the greenhouse ready to transplant when we are absolutely certain that there won't be any more frosts. Even last year we were caught out in mid May with a hard frost which knocked back some of the courgettes already out. We've trawled the seed catalogues this year looking for hardier varieties that will better suit our harsher growing conditions, so you should end up sampling some slightly different flavours this season. We're sure that you, like us, are really keen to see the back of all those winter root vegetables and looking forward to salad leaves, sugar snap peas, broad beans & new season spuds, carrots & onions!

We will shortly be emerging from the period of the UK growing season known as the "hungry gap"; this is the period between March and June when the range of produce available can be very limited. Some box schemes deal with this time by not delivering during these months. We made a decision at the beginning of the season to go right through the year, and we have achieved this by supplementing our own veg with bought-in produce sourced as locally as possible. We may review this for future years and it would be helpful to have your thoughts about this as box scheme members.

Whilst we are growing a few extras things this year in response to your requests, we have decided not to grow pumpkins. As a rambling crop they take up a lot of space in the field which could be used for other, more popular veg, & many of you opt out of receiving them in your veg bags, even at Halloween. We harvested lots of pumpkin seeds last year ready for this season's crop so we are passing on the seeds to you so that you can grow-you-own pumpkins at home! Let us know how you get on.

We've got some lovely rhubarb now, so if you want to swap any of your weekly veg for rhubarb (or order it as an extra) please let us know. We will put a reminder about this on the weekly availability list which is emailed round every week.



We've got lots of things to transplant out into the fields over the next few weeks, so we may ask for some help with this via the weekly emails. If you can spare a couple of hours one evening or daytime to help us transplant leeks, courgettes, celeriac, etc in exchange for a free veg bag we'd be really pleased to hear from you. Just wait for the plea by email with dates/times or, if you don't have email, ring & let us know if you'd be interested.

Sizzling Ideas!

A couple of box scheme members have sent us simple ideas for cooking their weekly veg as accompaniments to meat & fish. If you're stumped for what to serve up sometimes, try these:-

- Leeks chopped & fried in butter with grated celeriac
- Kale, mashed potatoes & spring onions
- Bubble & squeak (50% potatoes & 50% sprouts/carrots/onions)

- Roasted butternut squash with olive oil & mixed herbs
- Spring greens finely chopped & stir-fried with garlic & butter

Veg Bag Costs for 2011/12

We would really like to retain our veg bag price of £10 for the 2011/12 season, but the recent & continued increase in fuel costs is a real concern for us. If we are to retain this price then we must increase the number of box scheme members we currently have in order to make the figures stack up for the forthcoming season. Obviously if we are delivering to you, we could also be delivering to a friend or neighbour in the same village or town for no extra fuel cost. So, in order to help us keep the veg bag price at its current rate for the fourth season running, please help us by recruiting another box scheme member who lives near you. We have attached a flyer to this newsletter so you can pass it on. If you currently receive a veg bag fortnightly and would like to receive one weekly now that we are moving towards the summer season of delicious salads then this would also help.

Deliveries

Just so you know who is delivering your veg, we have Peter Dicken (a box scheme member from Shap) who takes the van out every Thursday morning & does the “south” round. Lynn Barnes (VistaVeg Ltd) does the “north” round on a Thursday afternoon. Martin Gill (a box scheme member from Maulds Meaburn) and daughter Imogen deliver all the veg bags to Maulds Meaburn members by bike – truly environmentally friendly! And Antoinette Taylor (a box scheme member from Shap) steps into the breach when Lynn or Peter are unable to do their usual rounds. We’re all very approachable so do let us know if there is anything wrong or if we could do anything better. Please also mention if you’ve received any sub-standard veg; whilst we try to ensure everything we harvest & send out is of a good quality we sometimes miss things because they are not always evident. We will replace anything you are unhappy with on your next delivery.

Occasionally we have a bag crisis ... because you have kept hold of rather too many bags for rather too many weeks! If you wash them, we will forgive you (wash turned inside out at 70 degrees). But please do try & leave out your empties. Thank you!



Payments by Cheque

We have recently been notified by our bank, Natwest, that its Cheque Card Guarantee Scheme will close on 30th June. This will mean that cheques will not be guaranteed beyond this date. VistaVeg Ltd will consequently not accept payment by cheque from 1st July onwards. You can pay your VistaVeg monthly invoice by electronic transfer (where payment goes directly from your account to ours), by setting up a standing order (for regular payments) or by cash. If you would like to talk to someone about how you make your veg bag payments in future, please ring Lynn on 07584 251352.