



Reprint from September 11, 2013 Newsletter

You are never too young to plant it forward

-Alice Savage

The grackles are cawing from their perch on the telephone wire. Below, Simon, Cam and I are shuffling through the dirt looking for rocks. We pick up a brown clod and hit it with a stone. If it breaks, it is clay. If it does not--if the clod has an almost metallic ring--it is a rock, and we throw it into the orange wheelbarrow. We soon discover that most of what looks like a rock is not, and my hand soon feels a little shattered from the constant banging.

"You know," observes Simon, "I think most of the rocks are white, and they are heavier."

So we adjust, looking for traces of white in the soil. We quickly learn to recognize a rock by sight and by feel, so we no longer have to pound the clods. This speeds up the work, which is good because at 8:30 a.m., the field stretches out for a long way under the power lines, the grackles and the loops of razor wire on the fence that borders the neighborhood beyond.

Ray, one of the directors, wanders past with three rakes.

My two sons and I started volunteering with Plant it Forward a year ago on a similarly hot August morning, and today we are back. Last August we shoveled soil to build the first beds. When winter came, we fertilized and weeded, and in the spring we planted tomatoes—learning to sprinkle nutrients in the hole and bury the stem deep in the soil.

The kids liked working side by side with the immigrants and hearing different languages drifting across the rows as they dug, hoed, and wiped sweat from their brows.

Today, it was not hard to get them to come because, I suspect, it is work worth doing.

Soon, a system emerges in which some of us gather rocks and move them to the edge, while others haul them away, and soon we have made it across the field, pleased that it is now ready for the plow.

On our way back home, we stop by the Eastside Farmer's market to pick up some Basil from the *Plant it Forward* booth. I know that my back is going to hurt tomorrow. It already feels a little tight on the left side, but that is okay; dinner will be delicious, and my heart feels good.

A version of this article first appeared in the blog, Wolfparents.com

Interested in volunteering with us? Visit our [volunteer page](#) for more information or contact our volunteer coordinator: cathy@plant-it-forward.org.

Farm News

We are having a contest to highlight the farmer who goes above and beyond for his/her Farm Share Members during the month of August. This is meant to be a fun way to reward a farmer for the outstanding job they are doing. We are depending on you, our Farm Share Customers, to provide feedback on your farm shares based on the following criteria:

1. Produce quality
2. Produce quantity
3. Produce variety
4. Timeliness of Farm Share Delivery
5. Clarity of cooler labelling

I will include a survey in the newsletter during the third week of August, in the meantime enjoy your veggies!

Farm Share Registration

It's that time again! The next 16-week Farm Share season will begin the week of September 8th. If you sign-up by July 31st you will get the early bird discount of 5% off! [Follow this link to register and you will have fresh, organic and local vegetables for the rest of the year!](#)

RECIPES

This week's bountiful vegetable is Malabar spinach! All recipes below are courtesy of Chef Nik Botello

Saag Paneer

¼ lbs. Saag paneer cheese – cut into cubes that are about ½ an inch
1 lb. Malabar spinach – ripped or roughly chopped
¼ lbs. Onion – medium sized diced
¾ cups Sour cream – The traditional preparation for this dish uses yogurt
1 ½ Tbs. ground Coriander – toasted in a non stick skillet
1 Tbs. ground Cumin – toasted in a non stick skillet
1 Tbs. granulated Garlic
1 ½ Tbs. yellow Curry
1 Tbs. ground Turmeric
¾ Tbs. Paprika
½ Tbs. Cayenne pepper
¾ Tbs. Salt
¾ Tbs. Peanut oil or Grape seed oil
Salt to taste

In a large non stick skillet heat a tablespoon of oil on medium high to high heat. Evenly distribute the cheese in the skillet **EXTREMELY CAREFULLY**. Do not overcrowd the pan with cheese. Overcrowding will steam the cheese rather than searing it.

After searing both sides of the cheese, sprinkle a small amount of your spice mixture to the cheese and toss it in the pan. Reserve the seared and seasoned cheese in a bowl left at room temperature.

Wipe the pan off with a dampened towel between the cheese searing

In an extra large cooking vessel, a roasting pan works well, sauté your onions on medium high heat.

Add the spice mixture to the onions before they become translucent.

Add the spinach to the pan as much as possibly while pressing down with a wooden spoon. Once it cooks down some add more spinach.

The spinach will release liquid while it is cooking. At this point add your cheese into the spinach. Reduce the temperature to medium low and add the sour cream as well.

Taste the mixture and adjust the seasoning with salt or more spice mixture. (It may require mixing another batch of spices)

*Fresh grated ginger at the end before it is served will really make this dish even **BETTER!!**

Malabar spinach and Fig smoothie

½ cup Spinach – ripped or roughly chopped
1 each Banana – ripe
2 cups Figs – ripe figs with the stems cut and then frozen
1 ½ cups – Almond Milk
1 Tbs. Honey
1 teas. Cinnamon

Be sure to use a powerful strong blender. I think the vita-mix blender is a really great tool but have heard good things about ninjas and the bullets. Blendtech is another high-end blender.

Substitute crushed ice instead of frozen figs if your blender cannot break them down fully.

Malabar Spinach Pudding

1 qt. Spinach – ripped or roughly chopped
1 cup minced Onion
¼ cup minced Garlic
¼ cup minced Chinese Chives
6-8 each Egg yolks - Use healthy very firm egg yolks. Runny or loose yolks will compromise the custard
1 ½ cups whole Milk
7-8 Tbs. Salt

Sautee your onion and garlic until they become soft. Add the spinach and chives. Cook for about 5 to 8 minutes on medium heat. Season with salt.

With a handheld blender, or stationary blender, blend the sautéed veggies into a liquid.

With a fine mesh sleeve strain the liquid and discard the solids.

Tempure the eggs into the warm spinach liquid along with the milk. Pour the mixture into ramekins of your choice. Smaller ones will cook faster and more evenly.

Place the ramekins in a casserole or hotel pan. Put the pan with the ramekins inside in a 325-degree pre heated oven. Pour water a little over half way up the side of the ramekins. Close the oven and cook for about 30 minutes.

To check to see if the puddings are cooked fully take a ramekin out of the oven and place it on a solid surface. Gently shake the ramekin. If it is still “watery” or loose continue to cook. It should not “giggle” at all when it is fully cooked. Cool them in the fridge out of the water bath they were cooked in.

Using a paring knife, run the knife on the inside of the ramekin. Flip onto a plate. You should have a “creamed spinach mold” in essence.

Check out our [Newsletter Archive](#) for additional recipes.