



# RUNAMUK ACRES

CSA Week 1; May 23, 2012

## Sam's Garden Update

With the upper garden planted with all of our cool-weather crops the garden is well under way here at Runamuk. I've been going back through over the last few days to plant the seeds of each crops' beneficial companions, as well as managing the flea beetle and slug populations in the garden.

We've installed eight new raised beds so far, with five to go and tilling still to do. Now that the threat of frost is past there will be a flurry of planting over the next month. I'll be busy planting beans, potatoes, celery, tomatoes, herbs, and starting corn, cucumbers, squashes, and melon seeds and seedlings.

I'm going to end up having to buy celery, since I never managed to get the Tendercrip to sprout, only the Zwolsche Krul. And I'll buy a few tomato and pepper seedlings, since the tragedy that befell my first crop (see my blog-post "When Disaster Strikes" for more info) means that my second planting will delay our harvest by a couple of weeks.

We still have some construction projects to work on—Keith is making some more bee boxes for our new hives, and I have trellises to make for the peas, as well as some new compost bins, potato towers, and a sand-box for the kids.

It's going to be a busy month! 

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## Produce Calendar – **May**

Spinach	Lettuce
Rhubarb	Chives

## Featured Vegetable: RHUBARB

### History

Rhubarb has been used for medicinal purposes by the Chinese for thousands of years and appears in "The Divine Farmer's Herb-Root Classic", which legend attributes to the mythical Shen Nung, the Yan Emperor, but is thought to have been compiled about 2700 years ago. Through Dioscurides' description, a root brought to Greece from beyond the Bosphorus may have included rhubarb, the commerce did not become securely established until Islamic times, when it was imported along the Silk Road reaching Europe from the 14th century through the ports of Aleppo and Smyrna, and becoming known as "Turkish rhubarb". Later when the usual route lay through Russia, "Russian rhubarb" became the familiar term.

For centuries the plant has grown wild along the banks of the River Volga. The expense of transportation across Asia caused rhubarb to be highly expensive in medieval Europe where it was several times the price of other valuable herbs and spices such as cinnamon, opium, and saffron. The merchant explorer Marco Polo was therefore much interested to find the plant being grown and harvested in the mountains of the Tangut province.

The term *rhubarb* is a combination of the Ancient Greek *rha* and *barbarum*; *rha* is a term that refers both to the plant and to the River Volga. Rhubarb first came to the United States in the 1820s, entering the country in Maine and Massachusetts and moving westwards with the European American settlers.

### Nutrition

Rhubarb supplies your body with calcium, lutein (good for your skin and eyes, even helping to neutralize free radicals in your body, which are dangerous compounds that can lead to cancer), vitamin K, and antioxidants--the same compounds that give rhubarb a vibrant red color are powerful antioxidants that promote good health and prevent disease.

## Basic Rhubarb Compote

### Ingredients

3 cups fresh chopped rhubarb, washed

1/4 cup orange juice

1/4 cup brown sugar

### Directions

\*Combine all ingredients in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan.

\*Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and simmer gently for about five minutes. Rhubarb will begin to soften.

\*Uncover and continue to cook another five minutes.

\*Remove from heat, cool.

Makes about one and a half cups. Just enough for a couple or small family to have on ice cream or yogurt.

\*If you want to double the recipe—let me know and I can get you some more rhubarb.

## Storage Tips

Cut all of the leaf away from the Rhubarb petiole and the petioles will keep well in the refrigerator for two to three weeks in sealed plastic bags.

Do not store in water!

## Up-Coming Events: **End of Summer Bar-B-Que**

Celebrate the season's harvest and share in the bounty of the Runamuk gardens.

Date still to be decided, but definitely near the end of August or early part of September.

RSVP will be appreciated so we know how much food to prepare.

More information will be available as the summer progresses.

## Burns Family Recommendations:

Try rhubarb compote over vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt—serve it while the compote is still warm for a yummy contrast of temperatures.

For breakfast, try plain yogurt layered with the rhubarb compote and topped with granola, or spoon it over baked oatmeal, even waffles!

Rhubarb compote is great on cake—try a rhubarb shortcake for dessert!

If you're feeling really ambitious—ask for my recipe for Rhubarb Cobbler and serve it a-la-mode!