

THE WSU ORGANIC STANDARD

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PLANT EARLY, BUT NOT TOO EARLY

We have once again had an exciting winter and spring with almost as much abnormal weather as last year. In my short time here on the Palouse, I'm no closer to predicting what's to come each spring for our planting season. Farming is largely a gamble in many respects, but we've come to develop techniques and systems to temper the variables in order to have more consistent results. With the use of our heated greenhouse rooms on campus we've been able to get our early transplants ready for field planting much earlier. The trick now seems to be not to start too early. These last two years have provided limited windows of opportunity to get those early plants in the ground.

And actually this year has been the latest I've done our first direct seeding.

The good news is it's been fairly mild and very wet; a great combination for growing wonderful spring crops. The wet weather makes it difficult to get everything done but we haven't had to do much irrigation this spring. We have been busy with other projects though.

Grant Morton, a student from last season, has come back to help us with our new construction projects. Grant and I have had a lot of fun designing and starting a new hoophouse, a new tool shed, and a new irrigation system. The hoophouse should be operational by the time you read this letter, I

hope. It will be our third and largest yet, measuring 26-feet wide by 96-feet long. This season the new structure will house our indoor tomatoes, a greater number of sweet peppers, more cucumbers, and possibly basil and early beans. This third hoophouse will help us to have a more diversified crop rotation between the three structures. The oldest house will come out of production this spring as the plastic is ready to be replaced. We'll leave that plastic off for the entire year and give the ground underneath a rest, but also renewed fertility from summer grown Sudan grass.

—Brad Jaeckel

WELCOME JUSTIN HOUGHAM TO THE FARM CREW

Our newest addition to the farm crew is a former student, Justin Hougham. You might begin to notice a pattern: all our paid employees and many of our volunteers were once students. Justin will be running our markets this year including the Wednesday Pullman Fresh Farm Market, the Friday CSA Farm pickup, and the on-campus market when school starts back up in the fall. Although I understand it's great for you to see Jewlee and me at these times, we are excited to get a break from the extra long harvest days. I'm confident Justin will serve you well and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions that can't be answered at your pickup site.

Pick-up days and times

- **Wednesdays** 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. at the Pullman Fresh Farm Market in the Old Post Office parking lot in downtown Pullman
- **Fridays** 3 - 6 p.m. at the WSU Organic Farm

Leave an Item, Take an Item

I'd like to remind everyone again about the change in the trade policy this season. We will no longer be accepting trades for items on the table. There will be a box set aside at each pickup that you can "leave an item and take an item." Each week you can trade one item from your box for something left in the box. Also, please remember to bring your own bags to repack your share. And, we'd be happy to reuse any returned twist-ties, ziplock bags, and berry containers that you may receive from us. Enjoy your first box!



I love rhubarb. Rhubarb crisp, raspberry-rhubarb pie, rhubarb sauce over vanilla ice cream—there are dozens of ways to use rhubarb. It is a good thing this vegetable (yes, it's a vegetable) is so versatile. Growing up with rhubarb plants in the backyard and now having one of my own, it often seems like one rhubarb plant can produce much more than a family can eat alone—unless you get creative. We did, and here are just two of the many recipes our family enjoys each spring.

— Marcia Gossard

RHUBARB NUT BREAD

A delicious, moist bread my mom always made, but my guess is that this family recipe originally came from *Gourmet Magazine*. Makes 2 loaves.

1 1/2 cups firmly packed light brown sugar	2 1/2 cups flour
2/3 cup vegetable oil	1 1/2 cups diced raw rhubarb
1 egg	1/2 cup chopped pecans
1 cup buttermilk or soured milk	
1 teaspoon baking soda	TOPPING
1 teaspoon salt	1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla	1 tablespoon butter

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

In a bowl combine brown sugar, oil, and egg. In another bowl, combine buttermilk, baking soda, salt, and vanilla. Add the milk mixture to the sugar mixture alternately with the flour, beating well after each addition. Fold in rhubarb and pecans. Turn into 2 lightly buttered and floured loaf pans (8 x 4 x 3 inch pans). For the topping mix 1/3 cup sugar with 1 tablespoon butter until crumbles. Sprinkle on top of the loaves. Bake for 45 minutes or until tester comes clean. Turn out on wire rack to cool.

SIMPLE RHUBARB SAUCE

This sauce is good over vanilla ice cream, pancakes, or waffles. With less sugar it pairs well with pork. It also freezes nicely so you can enjoy it all year long.

Cut rhubarb into one inch pieces
Use 1 cup sugar for 4 cups rhubarb

Place cut rhubarb and sugar in a large sauce pan. Add enough water until it comes up 1/2 inch from the bottom of the pan. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until very soft. Adjust sweetness to taste.