CLASS OUTLINES

January

January 19, 2013 – TA session: ONIONS

Goal of lesson: Give as much information as necessary about crop for farmers to make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to try growing it this year. Specific goal: do you want to grow some, all, or none of your onions from seed.

Slide 1 – Why are we talking about onions – because there is always more to learn about a familiar crop!

Slide 2 – Can grow onions from seeds or sets. Talk about life cycle of an onion – biennial; last year many onions produced flowers; talk about why. Don’t have this problem when growing from seeds

Slide 3 – seeds are very, very cheap

Slide 4- what are the other costs associated with growing from seed?

Slide 5 – introduction to growing at home with a grow light

Slide 6 – growing from sets is much more expensive but very quick and easy. What is more important to you? Money or time?

Slide 7 – from sets – you don’t get much variety to choose from, the onions don’t get very big (wholesale wants BIG onions), and they don’t store very well in the winter (a lot of loss to rot)

Slide 8 – talk about benefits of growing from seed (lots of shapes, colors, flavors, and sizes)

Slide 9 – Here are Sarah’s favorite big onions – all good varieties for wholesale. Ailsa Craigs are huge but not good for storage. The others are very big and excellent for storage. They are very inexpensive.

Slide 10 – Sarah and Sarah’s favorite fancy onions – Rossa di Milano have an interesting shape, beautiful color, grow very large, taste like a shallot, are an excellent storage onion and the seeds are VERY cheap. Customers think that these onions are very special and fancy restaurants like to buy these onions for a lot of money. Cipollini onions also have a very interesting shape, have nice color, have a unique flavor that fancy restaurants and customers love to buy for a lot of money. Very easy to grow and seeds are very cheap. People think that these are very special onions.

Class discussion –

1. Is it worth the extra time and greenhouse space to grow fancy onions? To grow big onions that wholesale likes?
2. Do you still grow some onions from sets for bunching and for smaller onions?
3. Do you grow sets and big onions and fancy onions?
4. How many onions should you grow total? How many from sets? How many big onions? How many fancy onions?