CLASS OUTLINES

January

January 11, 2013 – PARSNIP

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. Additional information given: how do Americans eat this crop (given so that farmers have an idea of how to talk to customers about crop). Additional goal – help farmers begin to memorize which plants are in the Apiaceae family.

Slide 1 – what the word and the plant look like

Slide 2 - what is in the same family: they all have umbel shaped flowers

Slide 3 – what is in the same family: swallow tail caterpillar likes to eat their greens

Slide 4- what is in the same family: some of them have similar looking seeds

Slide 5 - what is in the same family: their leaves look similar

Slide 6 – parsnips and carrots are so obviously related that some people think they are white carrots

Slide 7 - what do parsnips taste like: potato/carrot/turnip/dirt; hard flavor to describe to someone

Slide 8 - how do Americans eat parsnips: hardy meals – thick soup, mashed, roasted

Slide 9 - when are parsnips ready to harvest and sell in Maine: October through April – unless you are attending a winter market or have winter wholesale, there is a very limited time frame for selling them. For us, basically just last two weeks of CSA and market.

Slide 10 – from seed to harvest in 120 days or 4 months – this is a very long time to care for this crop. It has the same weeding needs as carrots but for twice as long.

Slide 11 – In Maine, can plant parsnips from April through July

Slide 12 – harvest August through May, but they don’t taste good until after frost. Talk about what happens to the flavor (changing sugars) with frost. By the time May arrives, parsnips are old and getting nasty.

Slide 13 - math practice – if you plant on April 1st, when can you harvest? 120 days

Slide 14 – math practice – how do you figure out when you will harvest. From an April 1st planting, count forward 4 months to August 1st. Does it make sense to plant April 1st considering what you just learned about flavor and frost?

Slide 15 - math practice – how do you figure out when you will harvest. From a June 1st planting, count forward 4 months to October 1st. Does it make sense to plant June 1st considering what you just learned about flavor and frost?

Slide 16 – parsnips taste better in the spring – but we don’t have a spring market. Lots of demand for parsnips in late fall.

Slide 17 – cool old picture of Americans harvesting parsnips in the frozen winter. Talk about parsnips being a very old vegetable that fell out of favor with Americans, now it is coming back in popularity.

Slide 18 – parsnips just don’t have much flavor in the summer, so don’t plan to harvest any then.

Slide 19 – for NASAP farmers with our current markets, October is the only good time to harvest

Slide 20 – perfect for last two weeks of CSA and farmers markets. Why? Because it is finally cold!

Slide 21 – very similar to growing carrots but takes much longer! Your customers will love parsnips, but you have to decide if it makes sense to you to spend 4 months taking care of this crop.

Slide 22 – make a bed with two or three rows – just like carrots

Slide 23 - very different from carrots – you HAVE to thin them so that there is 2 or 3 inches between each parsnip or they will be thin and ugly like a pencil and you will have wasted 4 months weeding an unsalable crop

Slide 24 – weed parsnips for a very long time. They are in the ground for 4 months, but the last month is September and part of October. How much weeding needs to happen in those months?

Slide 25 – Don’t plant in wet soil or they will rot, disease, small, taste bad. If you decide to plant parsnips, do it in your dry field. If you only have very wet fields, it is probably not a good crop for you to grow.

Slide 26 - pests – wire worms – what other crops are effected by wire worms? What promotes large populations of wire worms (very weedy/grassy fields; fields recently turned from pasture to tilled)

Slide 27 – diseases – parsnip rust; usually a problem only in wet soil, make worse by inadequate thinning

Slide 28 – Sell by the pound at market – price depends on market. Usually between $2 and $3 per pound

Slide 29 – See is pretty inexpensive and there are not many varieties to pick from. If you want to try it, order 200 feet of seed for $2.20