Sarah Bostick
NASAP
Cultivating Community
*This institution is an equal opportunity provider*



CLASS OUTLINES

March

March 19, 2013 –“Growing Okra and reading seed catalogues”

Goal: The goal of this class to take an in depth look into the cultivation of okra in our cool, short-season climate in such a way that the information gained in this class can be used as a rule of thumb for growing other heat-loving crops in Maine. This class will also use okra as a case study for reading seed catalogue and gleaning the needed information from the sometimes cryptic descriptions given by seed companies.

* Okra is from Africa and the West Indies – it is not well adapted to growing in Maine.
	+ Important to adjust expectations drastically for this crop.
	+ Show pictures of what okra looks like grown in warmer climates – it does not grow this well in Maine!
	+ Most farmers who grow okra in our climate do so with black plastic to create a warmer microclimate
	+ Case study of farmer in mountains of Idaho
		- Show the process of how Jason grows his okra
			* Seedlings
			* Black plastic
			* Row cover with hoops
	+ Case study of farmer in Alaska
		- Seedlings
		- Greenhouse production
			* Talk about high tunnels and low hoop houses as a low-cost way to produce warm-weather crops
	+ Starting seedlings with heating pad and grow lights
* Some varieties produce very poorly in Maine.
	+ How do you pick a good variety? Learn how to read and interpret seed catalogues
		- We will go line by line through all of the growing information of okra in the **Johnny’s** catalogue and discuss how every bit of information can be used to make a decision.
		- We will go line by line through all of the growing information of okra in the **Fedco’s** catalogue and discuss how every bit of information can be used to make a decision.
		- We will go line by line through all of the growing information of okra in the **Kitazawa’s** catalogue and discuss how every bit of information can be used to make a decision.
		- As a class, we will pick a second vegetable, and if there is enough time, a third vegetable to look into in depth in three different seed catalogues.
		- I will also have Burpee’s seeds from Walmart (where the head Congolese farmer bought all of his seeds last year) to compare and contrast with the seed catalogue descriptions.
		- Also talk about doing research online to find out what the best varieties are.
			* Example: customer feedback on many websites makes me think that a variety called Annie Oakley II is the best variety for high yields in Maine.