CLASS OUTLINES

January

January 4, 2013 – Advanced Farmer Class: Crop Enterprise Budgets

1. Financial crop analysis of 10 crops
2. Introduction to growing fennel, parsnips, and celeriac
3. Create a crop $$ map based on the financial analysis
4. How to balance financial analysis with:
   1. What needs to be grown regardless for CSA
   2. Market limitations – just because it “can” make a lot of money doesn’t mean it will if you don’t have the markets to back it up.
5. Begin filling out “What I Grow” packet – farmer estimates how much he/she sells of each crop at market, CSA, wholesale, and to neighbors

Outline of Fennel Power Point

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 – what is in the same family: another example of similar looking leaves; these leaves look different than the previous slide – the way a plant looks is just one of the ways you can tell that plants are related and it isn’t always accurate.

Slide 7 - what does fennel taste like: licorice, sweet, fennel; not a flavor that many people like

Slide 8 - how do Americans eat fennel: raw on or as salad

Slide 9 – how do Americans eat fennel: and eaten as a meal or added to pasta

Slide 10 - how do Americans eat fennel: with chicken, other meat, fish, or other seafood

Slide 11 - when is fennel ready to harvest and sell in Maine: June through September

Slide 12 – from seed to harvest in 2 months – this is similar to other crops that you grow such as carrots, beets, and lettuce. Who can think of other crops with same growing time?

Slide 13 – you can harvest fennel at different sizes – baby fennel is ready to harvest in one month

Slide 14 – some customers like big fennel with no tops

Slide 15 - some customers like big fennel with tops – ask your customers what they like. When you start taking fennel to market, take fennel with and without tops; for CSA, I like to leave tops on because it is big and beautiful

Slide 16 - In Maine, you can start fennel in the greenhouse or direct seed it in the ground

Slide 17 – start fennel in greenhouse in April, May, June, and July. Just like beets and carrots, you can plant many successions of fennel in one season.

Slide 18 - transplant it outside 4-6 weeks later at one foot spacing for big fennel, 6 inch spacing for baby fennel. Fennel grows very wide, so only 2 rows/bed.

Slide 19 – Direct seed fennel in April, may, june, and july. One seed every 6 inches; cover lightly with soil

Slide 20 - you can harvest fennel in june, but our markets, CSA and wholesale don’t really get started until July. Plan to harvest from July – October

Slide 21 – the flavor of fennel is not negatively impacted by heat, cold, or drought. It tastes good (to some customers) all year.

Slide 22 – It bolts quickly in heat – just like broccoli. So, only plant as much as you think you can easily sell. Plant just a little bit each month

Slide 23 – fennel starting to bolt – begins to elongate into pyramid – probably not sellable at this point

Slide 24 – Then a flower stalk starts to shoot up out of the middle – it is not sellable at this point

Slide 25 - then the fennel produces flowers and seeds

Slide 26 - bolted fennel is tough and tastes bad. The inedible core becomes bigger and bigger and bigger

Slide 27 – Fennel is unfamiliar to many Americans. Some people love fennel; some people hate fennel. Give it to CSA one time each month or less.

Slide 28 – fennel and Chinese cabbage have some similarities – the are both easy to grow, easy to harvest and wash, look very nice in a CSA box or at the market….but they can be hard to sell if you don’t have the right customers. Example – customers in Portland love fennel, but it is very, very hard to sell in Lewiston.

Slide 29 – 1 foot spacing for big fennel

Slide 30 – two rows per bed because it grows very wide

Slide 31 – likes well drained, but not dry soil

Slide 32 - fennel doesn’t have a ton of pests – swallow tail caterpillar, deer, aphids, and cut worms. Hand pick caterpillars; scout for cutworm damage and dig out larvae; aphids are caused by too wet soil; deer are hard to control!

Slide 33 - fennel diseases – it doesn’t have a lot of disease problems in Maine!

Slide 34 – harvest with knife or strong clippers – I will demonstrate this summer

Slide 35 - easy to clean – either spray it with water or wash in wash tub

Slide 36 – baby fennel is usually sold as a bunch; big fennel is sold in two different ways: per pound or by the each. Price differs greatly among markets. I will help each of you assess appropriate price for your market this summer.

Slide 37- Sell with tops on or off

Slide 38 – fennel can be sold by the pound and are often sold for the same price as carrots

Slide 39 – very nice addition to CSA no more than 1/month in summer or fall

Slide 40 – not many varieties of fennel to pick from. Fedco you can buy 600 seeds for $3.00