

The vegetable garden is green with rye ground cover now, although there are still a few crops to harvest. Runo sowed the rye by hand, broadcasting the seed as he walked the garden, sack at his side. The grain came up in a remarkably even pattern that made it obvious that he had done this a few times before. And, he was careful to sow with a bare head—no hat or cap. This old Norwegian tradition obligated the farmer himself to do the sowing. The bare head signified that sowing was a holy task. The farmer did his job; the rest was up to God the Father. Or, to rain and a little fall warmth.

In between the large areas of bright green are swaths of various hues. A lighter green of carrot tops, the nearly blue fall leeks, the purplish-red of cabbage heads. The Cylindra beets are still in the garden, their colorful leaves a bit subdued now. The rainbow chard, though, and the kale, look as fresh as ever. The short row of fall raspberries looks worn and weatherbeaten—as far as the foliage is concerned—but the brilliant red berries are like bright beads scattered among the briars.

So, there is still food for the table waiting there in the garden. Gradually, we will use or store most of it this fall. And that is always a bit of a dilemma, though a pleasant one. How much do we need of various vegetables? In our climate, if we want and need to provide for our own living, it helps to have a good idea how much we will use of the great variety we can keep for the winter.

Some people would say that it doesn't really matter. If we have way too many bags of frozen beans or broccoli, next summer's pigs will be the recipients of some good vegetables in their diets. But, everything that goes into the freezers, the root cellar, or the canning jars represents work—planting, weeding, mulching, harvesting, washing, preparing for storage, and taking up space during the winter. So, it is nice to have a pretty good idea what we will eat.

For us, it is important to have as great a variety as possible. In this country of too much food where people still go hungry, it seems shameful to put such store in "variety." But, we have found that we are not tempted to buy, out of boredom with meals, foods we do not need. Our meals are never boring, because we have such a large variety of products to choose from.

They are, though, sometimes "interesting" in a way that isn't particularly appealing. For the most part, we seem to have a fair amount of sense regarding taste and attractiveness in our meals. Once in a while, though, I miss the mark. The "apple butter cheesecake" made with homemade fromage blanc cheese was a recent example of this. The fromage blanc is delicious, and we eat it mixed with herbs as a dip or spread. The apple butter is good on our morning toast. But, as inviting as the author of the recipe made it sound, this combination was a bad idea. Still, Blue and Kate liked it just fine, so it was not wasted.

We think we have been quite careful with our estimates of our needs for the winter. And for sure, we have plenty of potatoes. If I were to have to live on just one food, it would definitely be potatoes. And, we won't run out this winter.