



## Rare Earth News

Winter Edition

At this time of year it's hard to say exactly where much of our food is coming from. Our meals become a true global banquet. The grand selection of food choices available to us are virtually coming from everywhere on earth. It's unimaginable to think what our diet would consist of if all's we had were what we managed to squirrel away from our own local summer harvest. Our typical Wisconsin weather during the summer provides good growing conditions for a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. During the winter months though it's a whole different story. There's not much of anything that's able to grow around this neck of the woods in winter. One vegetable greatly missed by me during the winter months is lettuce. We're able to grow and store



Rare Earth Farm covered in a blanket of snow.

many of our Wisconsin grown vegetables for winter use, but lettuce once harvested has very little capacity for long term storage. When purchasing lettuce from an unknown and distant source a big question arises at least in my mind to its condition and quality.

We've been making attempts over the last couple years to use our greenhouses for winter greens production. There seems to be no real practical and risk-free solution for growing leafy greens during the winter. The biggest difficulty with winter vegetable production in Wisconsin is the unpredictable nature of temperature extremes. Bitter cold and extended periods of no sunny days require supplemental heat that drive the cost to a point of little, or no return. With that it's easy to understand why ninety percent of the lettuces we eat at this time of the year are coming from a region in southern California, Arizona, and Mexico. Yuma county in Arizona and the Imperial valley in California is the heart of this area. Like everyone else if we want to have a salad of mixed greens in winter we're dependant on farms located in the deep south to produce for us.



The statistics from the area in the photo (right) is staggering. Over seven hundred thousand acres of farm land and its divided up between only about a thousand farms. Not all the land is planted to lettuce but this crop is considered the crown jewel of all crops grown there during the winter. The Yuma area including the imperial valley produces ninety percent of all leafy greens grown in the United States from November to March. With lettuces requiring a lot of water at all its growth stages, the average rainfall in this area is just a little over three inches annually. Ironically where its warm enough to grow produce there's very little rainfall making these winter crops entirely dependant on irrigation. Much of the areas irrigation water comes from the Colorado river. However, with the river suffering from a long time drought period, ground water pumping is being used to make up for the shortage of surface water. In spite of the challenges with food production in water deprived areas we're still able to secure our supply of winter greens. When summer returns let us be your summer supplier for your greens. It won't be long and once again we'll be eating our Wisconsin grown lettuce again. Hang in there everyone. Summers coming!

### **Eat a Little, and Pack a Little Away for the Winter.**

Karen and Kevin Fraley sent pictures of what they preserved from last summers harvest. Lot of great ways to take advantage of what you get from the farm during the summer. However, it does require a little extra work and the utility of a working freezer.



Get a jump on the season and sign up for a CSA vegetable share today. Payment options available. Click on "Sign me up for 2019" and you'll be redirected to our online sign-up page.

**Note:** For renewals click on the "returning member" link in the green box at the top of the web page.

**[Sign me up for 2019!](#)**