

Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm

Week 4

June 21, 2010

Farmer's Notebook

A few weeks ago we drove down to Pennsylvania for a family gathering, which provided an opportunity to visit my brothers' CSA in Willistown, PA. We always enjoy comparing notes, problem-solving and yes, showing off what's growing well. Even though our farms are different in many ways, the fundamental principles and practices of growing food are shared. I was reminded of a concept described by my brother Aaron that the farming season is divided into three basic cycles: planting, weeding, and harvesting. I like these divisions, especially because of the equal importance they place on weeding. Although most people think of farming as planting and harvesting, from the end of May to the beginning of August the majority of our time is spent on weed control.

In the early 1950s farmers began using herbicides to control weeds. One of the first pesticides used was 2-4D, developed during WWII to destroy enemy crops. More recently vegetable growers, both conventional and organic, started using plastic for weed control. For those not familiar with this practice, huge rolls of plastic, 6 feet wide by 500 feet long, are rolled out in the field in strips. Seedlings are then transplanted into the plastic rows. In line with our commitment to sustainable farming, we use neither of these methods. Herbicides are poisonous to ourselves and our environment. Plastic is unsustainable and pollutes the environment in both its manufacture and disposal.

So how do we control weeds? One strategy is to use hay for mulch around some crops. Unlike plastic, hay is sustainably produced in our own fields, is biodegradable, and adds nutrients and organic matter to the soil. We are increasingly utilizing tractor implements for weeding. Three years ago we began using a cultivator – basically a giant tractor-drawn hoe – and this year added a tine weeder. We are continually learning more about the best way to use these tools. In the end though, much of our weeding is still done by hoe and by hand. June and July are the months when we have the greatest need for extra hands. This is the perfect time to fulfill your CSA work commitment – so please come on down to lend a hand!

This Week's Harvest

Cauliflower - a member of the brassica (cabbage) family, cauliflower is made up of many clustered flowers that stop at the bud stage of formation. It is rich in vitamins and minerals, especially Vitamin C. Its mild flavor is enhanced with rich cream sauces and soups or Indian curries and Middle Eastern spices. Store in plastic bag in crisper drawer of fridge.

Cherry Belle Radishes - our third and final planting of radishes for this year. A traditional pretty red variety. Remove tops and store in bag in fridge.

Garlic Scapes - the flowering stalks of garlic plants, scapes are prized by fine chefs for stir fries. The scape contains the juice of the garlic, with a strong garlic taste. Scapes are most commonly chopped and sautéed, but can be eaten raw if diced very fine (recommended for true garlic lovers only!). Store in a bag in fridge.

Summer Savory - a lovely summer herb with an earthy aroma and flavor similar to thyme. Traditionally paired with fresh beans, this is also good in soups, salads, marinades or other dishes. Store as a bouquet on the counter in a jar of water. Dry any extra by hanging small bunches of stems in a dark, dry space.

Also...

**Lettuce ~ Scallions ~ Snow Peas ~
Spinach or Swiss Chard**

Fruit Shares: Double fruit share this week! More **strawberries** from our own fields. Plus **sweet cherries** from Cherry Ridge Farm, operated by the Brown Family in Hudson (Columbia County) for three generations. Store both in fridge. Wash cherries before eating. *Strawberries - no pesticides or chemical fertilizers. Cherries - conventionally grown.*

Members with smaller size shares may not receive all items or quantities described

Coming Attractions!

- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Carrots
- ◆ Summer Squash





Recipe of the Week: Catalan Style Greens

This recipe can be made with either spinach or Swiss chard, or a mix. This is a traditional Mediterranean preparation that is really tasty atop a chewy small-sized pasta, brown rice, or on bread as an alternative to tomato-based bruschetta topping. Adapted from Deborah Madison's Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone.

- 1 large bunch spinach or chard
- 2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large clove garlic, sliced (or try sliced garlic scapes instead!)
- 1/3 cup raisins (dark or golden)
- 1/3 cup pine nuts
- salt & freshly ground black pepper

Blanch greens. Coarsely chop cooked greens (*note*: original recipe says to remove chard stems, but I would chop them in the mix for more color and texture).

In a wide skillet, warm the oil and garlic over medium heat. Once the garlic turns golden, remove it from the pan. Add the raisins and pine nuts and cook until the pine nuts are golden brown and the raisins plump.

Add the greens and cook until heated through. Add back garlic, and season with salt & pepper to taste.

Another Recipe: Rosy Radishes

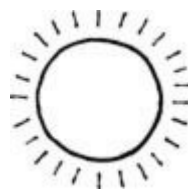


Something fun, adapted from a recipe found in Recipe's from America's Small Farms. You can slice radishes or leave them whole.

- 8-12 red radishes
- dash salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbs unsalted butter
- 2-3 scallions, or 1 small onion, diced
- 1 tbs flour
- 2 tsp chopped fresh herbs

In a medium saucepan, boil 1 cup water. Add radishes, salt and pepper. Simmer on low, covered, about 8-10 minutes until radishes are just tender. Drain, reserving the cooking liquid.

Melt butter in skillet over medium heat. Sauté onion until browned. Whisk in flour to coat. Add cooking liquid gradually, whisking to combine thoroughly. Simmer uncovered for 3-4 minutes until sauce thickens slightly. Add radishes and return to a boil. Season with salt and pepper to taste and fold in herbs.



Happy Summer!

June 21st marks the summer solstice – the official beginning of summer. Astronomically speaking, the solstice is the longest day and shortest night of the year in the northern hemisphere, when the north pole of the earth points toward the sun. The term “solstice” actually derives from Latin for “sun stands still” because for several days around the solstice, the noontime position of the sun does not appear to change.

Since ancient times, civilizations around the world have observed spiritual and religious celebrations around the summer solstice, most of which recognize the relationship between the sun, seasons, and growth of crops. The solstice is celebrated as a time to begin to enjoy the fruits of spring plantings and labor. It is also a traditional time for weddings -- the full moon of June is sometimes called the “honey moon” after the seasonal honey harvest and the drinking of honey mead at solstice weddings. In ancient Celtic tradition, bonfires were lit to encourage the sun to warm the earth. New couples would leap over the fires, with the height of their jump predicting the height crops would grow that season. (June 21st also happens to be our own wedding anniversary – #12 this year - but we will stick to the S'mores at next weekend's bonfire and leave the fire-leaping to ancient Celts).

For all of us, this is a time to savor and appreciate the warmth and promise of summer. Soon enough the days will begin to shorten toward fall, but for now we can enjoy the glorious weather and good food of the season.

HELP WANTED

There are no scheduled work days next weekend due to the Summer Solstice party.



We still need lots of help with weeding!

If you would like to come work on a weekday (morning, afternoon or evening) this week or next, please contact Eric to make arrangements. Come alone for some meditation weeding or recruit a crew and socialize while you work!

Remember to check the Member Work Page frequently for info on future scheduled work opportunities:
www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/WorkCalendar.html