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Cycle Farm CSA Newsletter

Week 8- August 9, 2012

This week's share

- 1 summer squash (Costata romanesco)
- 1/2 lb leaf lettuce (Crispmint, Carmona, Grandpa admire's)
- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 bunch parsley (Darki)
- 1 bunch baby celery
- 1 bunch chard (Fordhook giant, Rainbow)
- 1/4 lb bush beans (Red swan, Marvel of Venice, Provider, Rattlesnake, Empress)
- 2 cucumbers (Mideast peace, Marketmore 76)
- 2 onions (Ailsa Craig)
- 2 tomatoes (Aurora, Uralskiy Ranniy)



Hello CSA Members!

Happy Rally Week! Hope you are all getting into the spirit of things these days. Two wheels good, four wheels bad. Ride your bicycle! Here's an update on Cycle Farm happenings this week.

We started in on laying out roofing on the greenhouse, with good intentions. But work on the greenhouse has taken a back seat for the week. Too many things to do.

We planted covercrops in where the garlic bed had been. The south area is buckwheat, the north section is in field peas. And planted starts for our fall crops, mainly greens.

Our deer deterrent fence around the squash needs work. We lost a blue hubbard to a browsing deer and are now working through the seven stages of grief. We're approaching the upward turn, but it's been hard. Will be setting up a more robust fence soon.

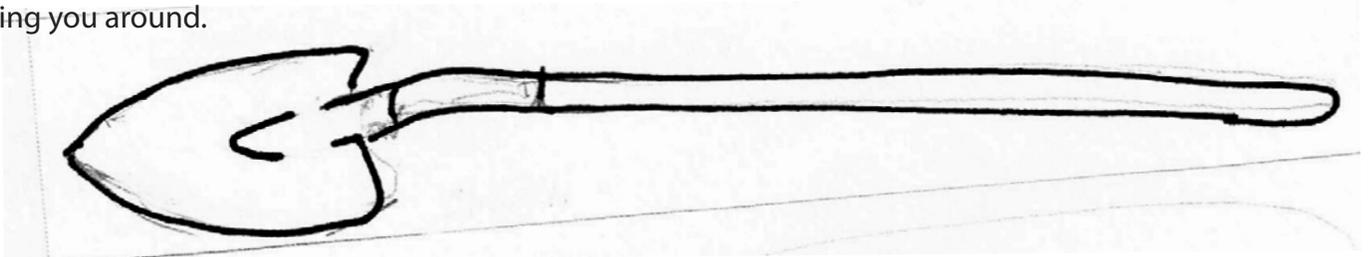
We headed out to Vale this weekend, and got to see a different scale of agriculture. We visited with the Stollers' who have Sturgis Honey, a commercial honey operation. Their facility is truly awesome, a magical place where happiness is made. Beekeeping must be *absolutely* the most merry profession.

We also had a chance to visit with neighbors over on Upper Valley who have been organic gardening for years and years. Their garden is glorious and inspiring - we're gleaned as many good ideas as we can.

We attended a meeting regarding the proposed annexation of the valley area. This is something we are especially concerned with as re-zoning poses a large risk to the preservation of ag-land.

As per usual, lots of weeding.

And sadly, our dear neighborhood black cat passed away this weekend. He seemed to have a pretty fine life, dozing in the sun and hunting little critters. He's chasing baby rabbits in the sky now. Happy journey, Hogan. We'll miss seeing you around.



Growing organically, consciously uncertified

We have been getting questions regarding our growing methods and whether our produce is organic. This is exciting because it means people care about how their food is grown, how the land is managed, and about their farmers' labor conditions (thanks guys!). However, this also means that we are not doing a very good job marketing or sharing our methodologies. So here we are.

We operate a small-scale, direct-to-consumer farm; growing diverse fruits and vegetables without chemical fertilizers or pesticides. We grow vegetables from seed, sourcing organic, heirloom, and open-pollinated varieties. We are passionate about improving land health and farming sustainably. We build soil health and fertility through cover crops, crop rotations, chicken tractors, worm castings, and compost teas. We employ techniques, such as no-till farming and planting insectaries, to encourage soil biota and local pollinators. We work the land by hand. We deliver produce to the weekly market by bicycle. (These are pretty dense topics; we'd like to expand on some of these in newsletters as the season progresses, or if you'd really like to get us talking just ask us about some specifics).

Growing without the use of chemicals was never a question for us. However, we have deliberated over certification. We may, in the future, opt to be Certified Naturally Grown, a grassroots alternative to the USDA Organic Certification. Because we are growing food for our neighbors in Spearfish Valley, we are fortunate enough to have an immediate connection with our consumers. We believe that transparency, honesty, and open communication are better than any promise a certificate implies. So certification may happen someday, but it's not a high priority right now.

By using natural methods, we are afforded all sorts of perks. It is sustainable. We can continue growing vegetables, without worrying about the rising price of fertilizers, availability of GMO seed, or insect resistance to pesticides. Our land is healthier; our biodiversity is outstanding and will only improve. Our produce is free of chemicals. We can munch on things straight off the plant, out of the ground. We can feel good about feeding our neighbors the food we grow.

In growing this way some things have been more challenging than expected. For instance, sourcing organic potting soil took a fair amount of effort. We're not interested in the Miracle Grow Organic soil, which is commonly carried by our local nurseries. Miracle Grow's product line is full of chemicals and synthetics, their parent company, Scott's, is arm-in-arm with Monsanto. They offer an Organic product, but buying it is supporting a company we don't agree with. We were ultimately able to find soil we're happier with buying and using and we're very grateful.

If you have questions about any of our methods, please come visit the farm and see our production methods first hand.

Trish and I were hot and tired earlier this week after weeding in the field and needed something cool to drink, this did the trick. It's a modified recipe from Deborah Madison's cookbook "Local Flavors" about eating seasonally from farmer's markets.



Cucumber fresca

2 medium cucumbers, peeled
a scant 1/4 cup honey
1 cup water

Optional ingredients:

Cantaloupe or other fruit, sparkling water, lime, garnish (mint leaves, lemon zest)

In a saucepan over low heat combine the honey and water stir until fully dissolved (other sweeteners would work here as well). Cool.

Take the peeled cucumbers and cut them into large chunks. Puree them in a blender or food processor until they are finely chopped but not foamy.

Add the simple syrup to the cucumbers to taste. Stir well. Chill and serve.

Happy eating!

Your farmers,
Trish and Jeremy

Sorry no photos this week, afraid the camera may be off to hunt rabbits in the sky too.