

Pinehold Gardens *Field Notes*

Vol. 22 Week 7

August 17, 2016

In This Box

- Caraflex cabbage
- Ace sweet peppers
- Jerida & Nelson carrots
- Peter Wilcox potatoes
- Jade green beans
- Simon's Gardens Carole melon
- Red & orange tomatoes
- Zoey onion

Next Week?

- Potatoes
- Red radishes
- Parsley
- Beets
- Garlic
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon?

A DAY IN THE LIFE

There are many kinds of relationships that are built into our lives by farming: our CSA members, employees and worker shares, farm stand customers, chefs and fellow farmers. I went to a conference 23 years ago where I happened to learn about CSAs and met some wonderful people who happened to be organic farmers. I came home and told everyone that I finally felt that I belonged somewhere.

Then a dozen years later I met a 7 year old boy at the Racine County fair where I had entered our garlic. Jordan was too young to be in 4H so he had entered his vegetables in the Open Class. We would occasionally run into him or his father Chris at the fair or a market. A couple of years ago Jordan came back to the family farm as the fourth generation and we got back in touch at some organic conferences.

The farmers we have met along the way are some of the most helpful and supportive people we know, sharing all knowledge without a hint of competition and now we have generations of knowledge not only a text or phone call away, but close by.

FIELD NOTES

We are well into our fourth week of almost no rain. We've had dry years before but I don't remember these weekly barrages of baking 90-plus-degree days. We are also into our fourth week of irrigating 24/7. While we are fairly confident that our well will not run dry,



We, of course, do our best to grow tasty and healthy produce for you and deliver it to you each week. But all that would be for naught were you not to turn that produce into beautiful and delicious meals as we often here you do. Here members Joan and Don Wick turned our bag of chilies, onion and tomatoes into a bowl of salsa. Thank you Joan and Don and all of you who do wonderful things with your food.

our electric bill is going to take a bite out of our budget. We have two solar panel systems that in a normal year produce 85 percent, and in some weeks 100 percent, of our electrical needs. And for the past 10 years, We Energies supported solar energy by paying us as a power producer. Our contract ended last month and our monthly bill will increase by \$100 to \$200 a month, depending upon how much we produce plus the cost of the additional electricity we are using. Ouch.

We continue to plant crops for a fall harvest. Pests, especially the flea beetle, which are usually only a problem in spring, continue to thrive. We had to lay protective row cover over all the Asian greens, kales, broccoli raab and turnips we planted today or they would be eaten as soon as they germinated.

The next page highlights some of the less obvious side effects of the stress of the heat and lack of a deep soaking rain.

BOX NOTES

The Jade variety of bean is our favorite bean. It can only be planted in summer as it is a white seeded bean which are notorious for being fussy germinators, especially in cool soil. It is less "beany" tasting and very tender.

While we have canteloupe planted, it is not yet ripe and the fruit set does not look plentiful. Chris Simon told me this week that stress causes plants such as melons and

cucumbers, plants that have male and female blossoms, to produce mainly male blossoms as the plant wants to produce the healthiest, not the most fruit, during a stressful year to guarantee good genetics for future generations. The Simons have acres of melons planted. We only have hundreds of row feet planted and we estimated that the yield might not be enough for all of the CSA boxes. Simon's Gardens had extras on hand as their market sales are always slow during State Fair week so it worked out for both of us.

The pointed object in your box is a cabbage. It is a variety that we started growing last year as it is dependable, early and sweet, and perfect for coleslaw.

Also perfect for coleslaw is the addition of green peppers. All green peppers will eventually turn red. They key word is eventually, which usually means September around here. Since peppers take so long to mature and can be affected by many pests, they are on the Environmental Working Group's list of the Toxic Twelve meaning that it is a vegetable that you should try to buy only organically produced ones.

Another favorite variety in this box is a potato we started growing last year, Peter Wilcox, a purple skinned, yellow fleshed all purpose potato.

How does a drought affect your produce?

While we have always maintained that we can add water to our fields but we can't take it out so in that sense a drought is preferable to a flood, there are still consequences of hot, dry weather that even with irrigation affect the quantity and quality of the produce. The carrots in today's box are a case in point. While we had good germination, therefore quantity, the carrots look terrible, and many split due the sporadic watering we were able to do. On top of that the ground was dry and hard, a difficult environment for a root crop.

Still there are other issues as shown by these photos. The heat can cause female blossoms to abort leaving only large male ones on squash (top, right), lessening the quantity of fruit. The lack of water or uneven watering can cause small and misshapen cucumbers (center, right) and blossom end rot in tomatoes. Already stressed plants can fall easy prey to voracious and destructive insects such as these flea beetles on young broccoli plants (below, right). And if plants are cheated out of some of water supplied by irrigation, they fall well behind in development such as these beet plants (below).



Sweet and Hot Peppers



Peppers are native to Mexico and Central America. Sweet or Bell Peppers are usually recognized as green peppers but actually green peppers are unripe peppers and will turn red, yellow or orange when they are ripe. Hot peppers or chilies originated in the same region. Individual varieties of hot peppers can vary in their heat — ancho and jalapeno among the milder peppers. But careful preparation of the chilies can also help vary their intensity. For instance, using only the outside flesh of the chili and carefully cutting or scraping away the seeds and ribbing on the inside will spare you of much of the capsaicin, the heat compound in the pepper.

Preparing: Cut the stem off and remove the seeds and ribbing of the sweet peppers. Use as much of the seeds and ribbing of the chili or none. **Use:** Sweet and hot peppers can be used in soups and chilies and both can be stuffed. **Store:** In a plastic bag in the refrigerator or freeze chopped and placed in a freezer bag.

Slow Cook Garlic Parmesan Chicken from member Amy Whalen and *delish.com*

1/3 cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil	5 cloves garlic, chopped
2 lb. bone-in chicken thighs	2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme
Kosher salt	Parmesan, grated for serving
Freshly ground black pepper	Parsley, chopped for serving
1 lb. potatoes, quartered	



In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Add chicken, season with salt and pepper, and sear until golden, 3 to 4 minutes, then flip and sear 3 minutes more.

Meanwhile, in a 6-quart slow-cooker, toss potatoes with olive oil, garlic, and thyme. Season generously with salt and pepper.

Add chicken to slow cooker and toss gently, then cover and cook on high for 4 hours or low for 8 hours, until potatoes are tender and chicken is fully cooked.

Garnish with Parmesan and parsley and serve.

Sandy's Favorite Cole Slaw From *Gourmet Mustards*

1 cabbage, shredded	1 carrot, grated
1 red onion, diced	1/4 cup sugar
1 bell pepper, diced	
Dressing	1 tsp. salt
1/2 cup white wine vinegar	1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
1/4 olive oil	1 tsp. pepper

Mix all the vegetables with the sugar in a bowl and cover. Boil all the ingredients in the dressing in a saucepan for about 3 minutes. Stir well. Add to the vegetable slaw mixture, stir. Place in the refrigerator to cool.