

Pinehold Gardens Field Notes

Vol. 17 No. 5, Week 2

July 20, 2011

In This Box

- Romaine lettuce
- Green cabbage
- Zephr summer squash
- Chrysalis Red garlic
- Tasty Jade cucumber
- Cilantro
- Bright Lights Swiss Chard

Next Week?

- Leaf head lettuce
- Red Gold potatoes
- Summer squash
- Toscano kale
- Fennel?
- Cucumbers?

A DAY IN THE LIFE

July, by far, is our busiest farming month. CSA deliveries start, the fall planting of thousands of plants and thousands of row feet of seeds begins on the 15th. Weeds grow like crazy in the warm weather. Our 11,000 heads of garlic need to be harvested, bunched and hung to dry. As more crops mature the time spent picking for restaurants and farmers markets increases. And to this season add constant irrigation. Soon we will have to find time to erect a second greenhouse to cover our winter harvested crops.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

We are calling this bit of conventional wisdom death as a symptom. The following is from The New York Times, Friday July 15, 2011 by Jim Robbins.

A recently approved herbicide called Imprelis, widely used by landscapers because it was thought to be environmentally friendly,

has emerged as the leading suspect in the deaths of thousands of Norway spruces, eastern white pines and other trees on lawns and golf courses around the country.

“We are investigating the reports of these unfavorable tree symptoms,” said Kate Childress, a spokeswoman for DuPont.

FIELD NOTES

I don't need to say the obvious, but I will anyway. We really need some rain. Not a lot, just an inch or two would do. This Friday is the one year anniversary of the storm that flooded Shorewood. Seven inches fell here and wreaked havoc in our fields. David has said many times, you can always add water, but you can't take away water. Just the same, a little rain would help everybody and everything.

Considering the cold spring and the sudden switch to heat and drought, things are looking good and it seems like we just need to get through the next two days and at least cooler temperatures will prevail.

Every day we make the decision as to which plants get water that day and it's never enough water. Now is a critical time for watering as the tomatoes, melons, beans, cucumbers, squash and potatoes are all forming fruit.

One great thing about the lack of rain is that weed growth and germination has slowed down.

BOX NOTES

Although we have many requests for green zucchini, the only summer squash we

grow is Zephr, a green tipped yellow variety. At our farm they have been the most disease and pest resistant and are proven prolific producers. We also feel their taste is nuttier and the texture more solid. The larger ones can be grated and used in baking as you would zucchini. The smaller ones are great for shish kabobs or cubed into stews, curries or pasta dishes. Make a veggie slider by sautéing thin slices along with some onions and garlic and serve it on a toasted cheese sandwich.

The garlic was dug yesterday so it is not cured and the wrappers around the head and each clove are soft and waxy instead of papery. You can hang it up to cure or use it now. Fresh garlic is juicy and tasty.

The romaine lettuce heads have very thick outer leaves and a blanched inner heart. We think the outer leaves would be great wilted. The heads somehow withstood the heat, although they did suffer some tip burn.

Space in the box and the uncertainty of whether the chard would hold up in the heat lead us to the decision to deliver a chard sampler bunch. A larger bunch will be in your box in a couple of weeks

BOX DECISIONS

How do we decide what goes in the box each week?

It's a combination of what is mature and ready to be picked, what would make nice meal combinations and what will make a nice variety from week to week.

A fellow farmer once told us that CSA farming is

graduate-level farming. A CSA farmer needs to grow a wide variety of crops and succession plant most of them. But the timing of those succession plantings don't always work out as planned. The heat is causing lettuce and bean plantings that were planted weeks apart to mature all at once. The outdoor cucumbers are almost ready to be picked while the greenhouse cucumbers are still producing. Often we have the opposite problem and the sun doesn't shine and things mature weeks later than planned.

To make sure we have enough of everything for 160 boxes, we plant 60 to 100 percent more than we think we will need. If we do not have a lot of disease, insect or deer problems we have extras to fill the boxes and sell at the market. Some crops, such as arugula, have a limited fan club and are only grown for restaurant and market sales. We also trial new varieties and sell them at the market.

FARM PICK UPS

If your pickup is at the farm, you may pick up your box through Saturday without making prior arrangements.

The boxes are ready after 3 p.m. on Wednesday. We do go to bed early so picking up before 8:30 p.m. is appreciated.

Cilantro Pesto

2 c. packed cilantro leaves
2 cloves garlic

1/3 c. extra virgin olive oil
1/8 t. salt, or to taste

Place the cilantro and garlic in a food processor. Cover and process until finely chopped. Add the oil and salt to the processor. Cover and process until fairly smooth. Alternatively mince everything by hand for a coarser pesto. Makes 2/3 cup. Try using rice instead of pasta. Great garnish for soup or tacos.

Swiss Chard Egg Salad Lettuce Wraps

10 hard-cooked eggs
1/2 c. cooked swiss chard, drained
(ideally this would be steamed), chopped
1/3 c. mayonnaise
3 T. plain yogurt
2 t. prepared mustard

1/4 t. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 t. salt, to taste
ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 cucumber, sliced thinly
Large head of lettuce, largest leaves reserved

In a medium bowl, chop the eggs. In a small bowl stir together the chard, mayonnaise, yogurt, mustard, Worcestershire, and salt. Add to chopped eggs and stir until combined. Lay out each lettuce leaf and carefully remove the bulk of the vein without cutting into the leaf. This will help you to roll them more easily. Spread egg salad on each lettuce leaf (you may need to double up smaller leaves), top with thinly sliced cukes, roll up tightly and hold seam-side down with a toothpick. Repeat with remaining lettuce leaves. Eat immediately. Serves 6-8

Swiss Chard Brown Rice

2 T. pine nuts
1 t. grapeseed oil
1/4 c. finely chopped garlic scapes

1 c. vegetable stock
1/2 c. brown rice
several leaves of swiss chard, chopped coarsely

In a 1 1/2-quart saucepan, toast the pine nuts over medium heat until browned; remove from pan and set aside. Add the oil to saucepan and heat. Add the scapes; cook, stirring, until softened about 2 min. Add the stock; bring to a boil. Add the brown rice; return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, 30 min. Stir in the swiss chard. Simmer 10-15 min. longer or until the liquid has been absorbed. Stir in the pine nuts. Serves 3-4

Cabbage with Summer Squash

1 small to medium head cabbage, chopped
3 c. sliced summer squash
3 T. onion powder

2 T. minced garlic scapes
1 T. salt
1 t. ground black pepper

Heat a skillet over medium heat. Add about half the cabbage and summer squash and all of the scapes and season with half the seasoning, stir. Add the remaining cabbage and summer squash, and seasonings, stirring really well. Cover and simmer on low flame until cabbage is soft (about 30-60 min.) The vegetables need no oil or water as they will naturally release a lot of moisture. Also, the cabbage will reduce by half as it softens. Serves 6-8

Pickled Garlic Scapes

From Tart and Sweet by Kelly Geary and Jessie Knadler

3/4 c. apple cider vinegar
1/4 c. water
1 1/2 t. kosher salt
1 lb. garlic scapes, cut ends trimmed
1 T. minced onion (can use green onion)

1 bay leaf
2 t. brown mustard seed
1 t. yellow mustard seed
1 t. black peppercorns

Bring the vinegar, water, and salt to a boil. Dissolve salt. Place minced onion, bay leaf, mustard seeds, and peppercorns in a hot canning jar. Pack scapes tightly into the jar. Pour boiling brine over the scapes, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Make sure the scapes are covered in liquid. Check for air bubbles, wipe the rims and place sterilized lids/rings on jars. Process for 10 min. in a hot water bath canner. Alternatively you can pack the brine and scapes into the jar and just refrigerate Yields: 1 pt.