

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

The weather continues to be topsy turvy this spring and early summer. The early heat brought a lot of plants on early this spring, while the cool weather since then has slowed many down. After the initial dry spell in May, we have also had a lot of moderate to heavy rain events closely spaced. Some crops have loved this weather, including the Asian greens, turnips, kohlrabi, radishes and other early brassicas. Other crops could use a little more heat.

The constant moisture has made it a challenge to do all the field work that goes on this time of the season. A bulk of our work in June consists of weeding, seeding, transplanting and larger scale

field cultivation. We have had to pick and choose which of this tasks we wish to stay on top of this year as there simply haven't been enough dry windows to stay on top of all of it. On the upside, we are up to date with most of our maintenance, building and administration work, something that happens in the fall most years!

Now that we have many flowering crops in the field we are starting to see more honey bees around. All three hives seem healthy this year and my mother is getting ready to install honey supers (boxes where the bees store honey for harvest) on the new hives.

We have queens from

two different suppliers and are noticing a big difference between the behavior of their offspring. The hive that overwintered is much more aggressive, stinging my mother regularly, while the new hives are very gentle and relaxed. A reminder that bees are indeed a form of livestock that we have bred intensively for desired characteristics.

The peas are taking their sweet time getting going this year, but the zucchini seem precocious as ever! We expect you might be seeing the latter in your share before peas, a herald of early summer in my mind, finally get their act together... A little too much anarchy in the plant kingdom this year!

Harvesting

- **Broccoli?**
- **Fava Beans?**
- **Garlic Scapes**
- **Green Onions**
- **Head Lettuce**
- **Herbs**
- **Kohlrabi**
- **Radishes**
- **Salad Mix**
- **Spinach**
- **Strawberries**
- **Turnips**
- **Zucchini?**

Garlic Scapes and More to Come!

We will soon be giving garlic scapes and as they are a less usual item we thought they deserved some attention.

Garlic scapes are the flower stalks of the garlic plant. They emerge 3-4 weeks before the garlic bulbs are ready to be harvested. In garlic production the scapes are removed so the plant can focus its energy on

the bulb, the other form of reproduction.

At this time of year, most stored local garlic is becoming dried out, soft, spongy and sprouting. Fresh garlic is still a month off and so scapes provide a couple of weeks of garlicky treats to hold us over.

Garlic scapes have a milder flavour than the bulbs to come and can be

crunchy, even when cooked. We like to sauté them and throw them in with pastas, stir fries, soups, salads, pizza, etc. They can be used to make a zesty pesto, good with pasta, pizza and grilled cheese!

Scapes are also very good pickled. We like to use our favourite dill pickle recipe (minus the garlic of course!). The have a



great tangy garlic flavour and are an interesting addition to a pickle plate or charcuterie platter.

Strawberry Woes—Enter, Lygus Bugs...

We are having a much slower start to our strawberry season than initially anticipated. There have been several reasons for this, some of which we are only discovering recently. Frost was the first set back to occur. Frost affects developing flowers and fruits. This year, early heat brought on production in many parts of the province and this was followed by a series of frosts. We were able to cover the strawberries through the worst frosts, but were caught by surprise with light unpredicted frosts later in May.

Following the initial heat waves we have had unseasonally damp and cool weather. This has slowed growth in the strawberries and set the conditions for fungal and bacterial diseases. We haven't seen a lot of damage from these yet, but are concerned for later in the season. The slowed growth and maturity have also left the underdeveloped plants and fruits more susceptible to pest damage.

One of the worst pests of strawberries in Ontario and the bane of the our strawberries' existence this year, is the Lygus bug or tarnished plant bug. This bug affects a huge number of plants in various parts of the continent. We are used to seeing it in our leaf crops, particularly chard, Chinese cabbage and other large tender plants. We have never had problems this severe in our strawberries. Before this week I did not even realize it was a serious pest of strawberries in Ontario.



Lygus bugs overwinter in long grass, leaf litter and other debris, our mulched strawberry patch being the ideal location. They emerge and reproduce early in season (late April through early May). This year they came out very early with the heat waves in early May and then began feeding while the plants slowed production in response to cooler weather.

The perfect storm....

There are unfortunately no good biological controls yet available so we hope that better crop rotation and luck will prevent this outbreak in coming years.

Help Wanted



There has been some response to the call for help and we are very grateful. It has been great to have the help, the company and to introduce people more intimately to the farm and what goes on here.

We still have plenty of opportunities for those who want to come out and **help weeding, mulching, harvesting and rock picking**. We have the following set times for people to help out and would happily make arrangements for other times as people are available.

Tuesdays 6 - 8:30 pm

Fridays 6 - 8:30 pm

Wednesdays 9 - 11:30 am

Saturdays 9 - 11:30 am

Please let us know if you can make it out. If you have anymore questions about the **working share rebate**, please don't hesitate to ask.

Hope to see you soon,

Devan, Nicole, Lilly and Kassia