

Fair Fields News

Volume 4, Issue 4. July 15, 2015

On the Farm

We have continued to experience regular moisture, lower overall temperatures and cool nights. This hasn't prevented our hot crops from putting on some good vegetative growth, however, for the fruit to come we would like some heat! This weekend looks like it will be a warm one and August holds potential for some heat waves, so keep your fingers crossed.

We have not had a lot of pest pressure on certain fronts because our operation is so new and fairly small. We have been rotating our crops, however with the small size of the field we have been putting into garden, some pest have started to build up. The Colorado potato beetle (CPB) is one of

them...

CPB, as the name would suggest, is native to the southwestern region of North America. It has spread, with cultivated potatoes, around the world and is the worst pest of that crop. Many different pesticides have been used over time to try and deal with the CPB, but it has slowly built a resistance to almost all of them. Spirosad is to my knowledge the only remaining pesticide allowed under organic certification that can be effective against them and it is toxic and highly controlled.

The CPB have been heavy in both our potatoes and eggplants,

which are closely related plants. We have been using the manual method of control, i.e. picking them off and squishing them. I can tell you from experience, you don't want their juice spraying you in the eye!

In the coming months we will be preparing for our next venture into livestock, laying hens. We are getting six pullets, hens that are ready to lay. These hens will provide enough eggs for the house and help us decide if we wish to get enough hens to produce eggs for the CSA.

You will be excited to know we will be starting to harvest fresh garlic as early as next week!

Harvesting

- **Beets**
- **Cabbage**
- **Carrots**
- **Cauliflower**
- **Cucumbers**
- **Fava Beans**
- **Fennel**
- **Green Onions**
- **Head Lettuce**
- **Herbs**
- **New Potatoes**
- **Radicchio**
- **Salad Mix**

Spraying on Organic Farms?

From a young age I have had a somewhat negative image of spraying. Both of my parents were very aware of the human health and environmental impacts of pesticides, my father actually working with farmer health and safety around toxic pesticide use.

Through continuing to learn about various types of spraying used in ecological farming I am slowly coming around to the potential benefits. It

just depends what you are spraying...!

This year at Fair Fields we have begun spraying for both nutrition and pest control. For nutrition, we are spraying liquid fish fertilizer, liquid kelp extract and molasses. These together provide a package of macro and micronutrients in various forms, enzymes and fatty acids, and carbohydrates. I think these will provide a boost in the orchard and greenhouse, however I will still

rely on less water soluble and more stable fertility in the soil for feeding the bulk of my crops.

For pest control we have been using neem oil and Bt. Neither of these are toxic to humans or broad spectrum (they affect a narrow range of insects). Neem oil acts as a physical deterrent for a variety of pests. It also affects the life cycle of some pests like the plum curculio.

Bt, stands for *Bacillus Thuringiensis*, and is a

type of bacterium. Various subspecies of Bt produce proteins toxic in higher concentrations against specific families of insects. The Bt we use is specific to caterpillars and we mostly use it to control the cabbage looper and cabbage moth.

Many other pesticides are allowed under organic certification, but many are broad spectrum and more toxic and so I will avoid using them unless an extreme situation arises.

Cooking with Fennel

We often get questions about cooking ideas for fennel.

Here are some quick suggestions:

Fennel has a taste and smell somewhere between licorice and dill. It also has a firm texture and a sweetness, brought out through cooking.

The fronds are great for flavouring poached or roasted **fish**.

The bulb is wonderful in **pureed soups** with apples, pears, just about any root vegetable and any of the alliums (garlic, onion, leek, etc.).

Roasting, grilling and braising all bring out fennel's sweetness. We like to cut the bulb lengthwise into quarters or eighths, parboil or steam them and then throw them on the BBQ. We always roast and freeze some for throwing into soups, stews, pastas and pizzas in the winter.

The sweet crunch of fennel is great in **salads**. I try to slice it thin across the grain to make it easier to eat. We like to throw it in with pomme fruit and root vegetables, with citrus and cucumber, or simply add it to our garden salad. It goes well with both creamy dressings and vinaigrettes.

One of my favourite ways to eat fennel is simply with a little olive oil (or other aromatic oil) and salt. It is great after a meal for cleansing the

palate and aiding with digestion.

This is also true of the seeds. We don't grow fennel out for seed, however, these are also a very important ingredient in cooking, both sweet and savoury, in many parts of the world.

What are some of your favourite ways to use fennel?

Let us know and we will pass them along in the next newsletter.



Farm Open House

This year instead of a pot luck with activities before hand, we will be doing a more casual open house.

We are planning it for **Saturday August 15th**, from **2—7 pm**.

We will be throwing some food on the **BBQ** during that time and enjoying it with some **salads** and my **homemade beer**.

We are welcoming our members, friends and family and encourage you to bring yours as well and enjoy a **tour of the farm** and some food and beverages with us.

Please **RSVP** if you think you will come so we can get a sense of numbers.

Hope to see you there!

Devan, Nicole, Lilly and Kassia