

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

We hope everyone had a great winter and share our excitement for the start of the 2016 CSA pickups. The CSA started a week later this year, so we can spend a little less time on early greens and a little more on fall vegetables. This also puts the last CSA pickup right around Thanksgiving, which we feel is fitting as the holiday celebrates the year's harvest.

It was fairly cold early this spring, making us a little nervous about keeping up with our field work. The hot weather we have had lately has allowed us to not only catch up, but to even get ahead of our spring schedule. We have never planted our onions or hot crops so early and it gives us great hope that these

will be bountiful this season.

There are many blossoms on the strawberries and they seem healthy. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the pest problems that developed last season are held at bay this year. Blossoms appeared early this year, with the heat, so we will likely be starting into strawberries in about 2-3 weeks time.

We have had less infrastructure projects this spring. Our irrigation system is largely complete and only needed small additions this year, including a pump house we hope to complete this month. We have started trying to capture rain water for irrigating in the greenhouse and hoop house. There has also finally been time to work on shelving and organiza-

tion in the driveshed, which will help us keep materials from getting lost or damaged and give us more space to work with. This fall we will be renovating the barn to get ready for horses, coming this winter...

Credit for our great start this season has to be shared with Rachael Mather and Ryan Hayhurst. Rachael is our intern this season and she has been a wonderful addition to the team and the household. She is also our first intern from abroad, hailing from near Brisbane, Australia. Ryan is an old friend who I first met when interning together at Everdale Organic Farm. With their help and some good weather it should be a great season!

Harvesting

- **Asparagus**
- **Head Lettuce**
- **Herbs**
- **Pak Choy**
- **Rhubarb**
- **Radishes**
- **Soup parsnips**
- **Spinach**
- **Tatsoi**



Asian Greens—Pak Choy and Tatsoi

As we have many new members this year, we thought it would be a good idea to feature Asian greens.

Pak choy goes by the names pak choi, bok choy, and bok choy, depending on what part of the world you are from. Even the Chinese have a long list of names for it depending on the varie-

ty and part of the country. So don't worry, we are all confused!

Tatsoi has a similar taste and nutrient content as pak choy, though luckily only one name.

We grow these vegetables because they are cold tolerant, mature very quickly and are nutrient dense, especially vitamins A and

C, making them perfect for this time of year.

These greens are fairly susceptible to pest infestation. This year we were using row cover to act as a physical barrier between the plants and their worst pests, flea beetle and cabbage looper/moth. Unfortunately we created the ideal conditions for a lesser pest,

the common aphid.

You will notice that they are prolific and stick around. We find with a good wash before cooking most of the aphids will come off, so don't be alarmed by their numbers!

Please see recipe ideas on the next page.

Recipe Ideas

Bok Choy or Tatsoi with Cashews

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup chopped green onions, including green ends
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 lb baby bok choy
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil
- 1/2 cup chopped, roasted cashews or slivered almonds
- Salt

Preparation: Heat olive oil

in a large pan on medium high heat. Add onions, then garlic, then bok choy. Sprinkle with sesame oil and salt. Cover, and let the baby bok choy cook for approximately 3 minutes. Remove cover, set to low heat, stir and let cook until the bok choy is just cooked. Gently mix in cashews or almonds.

Ontario Asparagus and Bok-Choy Frittata

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp cooking oil

- 3 scallions including green tops, sliced
- 1 tsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 small head bok choy cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 lb asparagus, spears cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 9 eggs, beaten to mix
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp sesame oil

Preparation: Heat oven to 325°. In a medium frying pan, heat the cooking oil over moderate heat. add the scallions,

ginger, and garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the bok choy and cook, stirring, until the leaves wilt. Add the asparagus and 1/2 tsp of the salt and continue to cook, until the vegetables are almost tender. Evenly distribute the vegetables in the pan and add the eggs, pepper, and the remaining 1/4 tsp of salt. Cook the frittata, without stirring, until the edges start to set, about 2 minutes. put the frittata in the oven and bake until firm, about 25 minutes. drizzle the sesame oil over the top.

Aphids

This is the first year we have had a problem with aphids. There are over 4000 types of aphids worldwide and about 250 that affect agricultural crops (Wikipedia).

Aphids feed on sap as opposed to the flesh of the plants. For this reason the damage they cause is less obvious to begin with. As they feed they release a sweet liquid called honeydew. This provides food for various diseases, for us sooty mold. By feeding on different plants the aphids also spread viruses and other pathogens from plant to plant. In these two ways the impact of aphids on a crop can be devastating.

Though a serious pest for some farmers, we have never worried about aphids because they have been kept under control on our farm by natural predators. This year, however, we had a population explosion in the hoop house. We had row cover, a netting that provides a physical barrier to pests, over our crops there. This created warm and humid conditions, ideal for aphids, but more importantly it kept out natural predators that would have controlled the population. It also kept the plants and the aphids out of site so we did not

see their numbers get out of hand until too late.

In our case the damage from the aphids is not killing the plants, it is however causing the lower leaves to develop some mold and is drying out affected leaves during the hot dry windy weather we have been having. They are also fairly numerous and therefore take several washes to remove before eating...

To control the aphids, we have started applying diatomaceous earth, a white powder made by grinding fossilized crustaceans, which has many sharp

edges that lacerate the skin of soft bodied pests. On the tomatoes and cucumbers we are using neem oil, a natural insecticide derived from an evergreen tree from the Indian subcontinent that has been in use for centuries. We have used neem in the orchard before but this is our first time needing for the vegetables.



Opportunities to Visit the Farm

There are plenty of opportunities for you to visit the farm this season. As with past years we welcome volunteers to come and work with us transplanting, weeding, harvesting and with other farm tasks. Please let us know if this interests you and we will try to figure out some good times to get you out to the farm.

As our strawberries, and later our raspberries, come into full production we will be in touch to offer free U-pick to CSA members. Last year our strawberries were not producing well enough for this, but we hope this year will be more normal again.

We will again host a CSA BBQ on the farm this August, the exact date still to be determined. Last year we had a great turn out and very good weather, which made for a wonderful time. We hope you can all join us this year and help make it even better! Finally, we welcome any-

one to visit the farm if they are in the area or passing through, just let us know ahead of time. If the timing is good we can go for a brief tour of the gardens and share a snack together.

We want people to feel connected to their food and where it is grown, so feel welcome!