

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

We are happy to say we will not be irrigating for the rest of the year! It has been a challenge to keep up with this summer. Luckily the week before the wedding it rained almost 4 inches (about 10 cm)...

Though the soil has since started to dry out, there is plenty of residual moisture to supply our plants for the rest of the season, so we can start the work of putting away the irrigation system for next year.

The rain also bodes well for our fall cover crops. We were nervous about planting about \$625 worth of oat and pea seed, as our first cover crop this summer, buckwheat, had fairly poor germination due to dry weather. As it stands now, we hope to seed the oats and peas by the end of the week, so we can still get a good

stand before regular hard frosts set in.

Unfortunately, the large amount of rain we received in a short period of time combined with the cool damp conditions that followed have ushered in some bacterial and fungal disease pressure. Powdery and downy mildew have taken a strong hold in our cucurbits and so we will not be giving many more melons, cucumbers or zucchini. It is also likely that our squash are now as big as the will get.

The crop worst hit by the change in conditions and resulting disease is our celery. The tips of all the stems at the centre of the plants has started to rot to the point were the whole patch is a complete write-off.

Many of you will have noticed the cooler days

and nights that have just started. This change in the weather mirrors our transition to fall vegetables. We will be giving celeriac, leeks and potatoes next week, and the raspberries have just begun this week. In a couple of weeks we will be giving squash and fall greens like spinach and cabbage. It is at this point we start to look forward to the first frosts as they make all of those fall vegetables sweeter and more earthy.

Thanks to everyone who gave us congratulations for the wedding. It was warming to receive these from you, our community. It helps us realize the Community we have in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), though truly we feel you support us in more than just agriculture!

Harvesting

- **Beets**
- **Carrots**
- **Celeriac**
- **Cucumber**
- **Eggplant**
- **Garlic**
- **Herbs**
- **Kale and Chard**
- **Leeks**
- **Lettuce**
- **Onions**
- **Peppers**
- **Potatoes**
- **Raspberries**
- **Tomatoes**

Celeriac, Warts and All

Celeriac, or celery root, is part of Apiaceae or Umbelliferae, commonly know as the carrot, celery or parsley family. In addition to those mentioned, this family includes parsnips, cilantro, dill and all of their wild relatives.

As the name implies, celeriac has a rich celery flavour, with an extra sweetness and earthiness that come from it being a root vegetable. While parsley has been bred for its leaves and celery for its stems, celeriac has been bred to form a large root (or root stem) that

grows over the summer and is harvested late summer through early fall.

Celeriac can be used to add a similar flavour to celery, to soups, stews and other pot dishes. It is also wonderful raw julienned in salads and



roasted by itself or with a root vegetable medley.

We hope you will enjoy it, warts and all!

Fair Fields Honey Harvest

We have done our second honey harvest of the season and our first harvest of Fair Fields honey is bottled and available for sale. We are selling it in two sizes -- 500 mg for \$8 and 1 kg for \$15.

The first honey harvest is different this year. It is lighter in colour. In previous years it has been a deep golden colour. Now it almost qualifies as "white" honey.

This first extraction of honey is also crystallizing very quickly, turning from a liquid to a semi-solid state. In fact, we have covered buckets of honey sitting out in the sun as I write, trying to liquify it gently so it is easier to pour into jars. We don't want to heat it to a high temperature so that it stays liquid for a long time because high heat destroys many of the enzymes and vitamins that occur naturally in honey. Crystallized honey is not a bad thing. It makes it easier to spread on toast, for example. The honey is not spoiled.

This summer's drought is a major factor in these differences from previous years. Drought reduces the nectar available to bees as plants fail to flower or simply reduce nectar output to conserve water. This year our bees foraged extensively on tree and dandelion pollens and nectars before the drought set in. Dandelion honey crystallizes very quickly and it can crystallize in the hive before it can be extracted. (Thankfully, that didn't happen to us.) This year our bees also foraged heavily on alfalfa (in the hay fields), clover, wild mustard, all of which contribute to fairly rapid crystallization. The drought reduced the availability of nectar from plants with higher levels of fructose, which slows crystallization.

So the honey that you see in our jars will be lighter in colour, cloudy and turning into a semi-solid state. It still tastes delicious. If you buy this honey and want to

liquify it, you should use a hot water bath. Heat a saucepan of water to 35 - 40°C (95-104 °F), then remove it from the heat. Take the lid off of the honey jar and immerse the jar in the water. Let it stand for about 20-30 minutes. The heat will slowly dissolve the crystals and become liquid again. Stir occasionally and replace the hot water if needed. Remove the jar of honey from the water bath when honey becomes liquid again.

The honey from the second harvest should remain liquid for much longer and is just as sweet!



NFU Associate Memberships

This past year I have become a member of the National Farmers Union (NFU). This is a national and provincial level farm organization that stands for everything our CSA is about. They are the only voluntary national level organization committed to:

- Ensuring family farms are the primary unit of food production
- Promoting environmentally-safe farming practices
- Giving farm women equal voice in shaping farm policy

- Working for fair food prices both for farmers and consumers
- Involving educating and empowering farmers and consumers
- Building healthy vibrant communities; insuring an adequate supply of safe, nutritious food for Canadians

Progressive farm organizations, like the NFU, have been critical in fighting for social and environmental justice. This includes issues not directly related to agriculture, like fighting for

Medicare (publicly funded healthcare) in Saskatchewan and eventually the rest of the country. The NFU was also crucial in helping to keep bovine growth hormone out of Canadian dairies.

With the decline in the overall farming population most farm organizations have seen a corresponding decline in membership numbers. The NFU is working to try to keep up membership and support for sustainable food production in a variety of ways. One strategy is to recruit associate members,

who may not farm, but are committed to sustainable agriculture and social and environmental justice.

All of you already support these values through your membership in our CSA, and we thank you for it! If you are looking to further support this movement and would like to become an associate member of the NFU, you can do so at:

<http://www.nfu.ca/about/associate-membership>

A people united can never be defeated!