

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

Last week finally brought the heat! Most of our field crops jumped and are starting to size up nicely. While not the easiest weather to work outdoors in, we were very happy to have some summer warmth after the unseasonably cool weather this spring.

The heat also produced some heavy storms. We were lucky to get a good amount of rain, without any highly destructive wind, lightning or hail. Stormy weather always makes me a little nervous as it can quickly and seriously damage barns, fields and, especially, greenhouses. For this reason, many insurers do not insure greenhouses, unless they meet very stringent specifications. This is only likely to get worse with climate change and the increase in extreme weather events.

We have started harvesting strawberries this week. They are not as

large as some berries we have grown, however, they seem healthy and taste delicious. We should have them for about 4 weeks, including this week, if growing goes according to plan. The patch this year is much smaller than in previous years so we may not be opening for U-pick. We were hoping to use the patch from last year for U-pick, but it has been completely overrun by weeds and looks like a hay field right now... If it seems as though we will open up for U-pick we will try to give you as much advanced warning as possible.

Other crops that have started up are chard and kohlrabi. Over the next couple of weeks we hope to see garlic scapes, broccoli, snow peas and maybe kale. I suspect we will have the earliest cucumbers we have ever had, as they are already large, with many flowers and small fruits already on the vine.

Another crop we were hoping to give soon was fennel. Unfortunately it has met its demise this spring. Of the roughly 150 transplants we put out there were about 15 damaged ones left at last count. We decided to cut our losses and plow them under last week to make room for salad mix. The lettuce has also seen some damage, though luckily not as much. At first we suspected it was deer, however we have also seen a lot of damage from ground hogs this year. Our garden is the furthest it has ever been from the house and is right next to a fence line, where we suspect many a groundhog has made its home. We will attempt to use row-cover, a translucent breathable plastic mesh, to keep the ground hogs from their favoured foods, but we do expect to see more damage over the rest of the season... The joys of sharing the planet with other species!

Harvesting

- Arugula
- Chard
- Head Lettuce
- Herbs
- Kohlrabi
- Pak Choy
- Rhubarb
- Radishes
- Salad Mix
- Scapes
- Spinach
- Strawberries

Kohlrabi

Kohlrabi, also known as cabbage turnip, is commonly eaten in Northern Europe and parts of South and Southeast Asia. It is from the cabbage family and the both the stem/bulb and leaves are edible. The flavour of kohlrabi is somewhere between cabbage and broccoli stems, though sweeter.

As with many brassica's (cabbage family), kohlrabi grows well in cool weather, so we do a planting in the spring and the fall. In summer months, or if harvested overly mature, it tends to get woody and lose flavour.

Like many spring vegetables, kohlrabi is fairly nutrient-dense and high in many vitamins, especially C and B6.

Kohlrabi can be eaten raw or cooked. It has a delightful crunch that holds up to light steaming and sautéing. It also develops a nice sweetness when roasted or grilled. Any way you prepare it needs to be peeled first as the skin is quite tough and stringy.

Our favourite ways to eat it are sliced into sticks (like



carrot sticks) with a little oil and salt for dipping, or sliced thinly in salads. It is also wonderful in stir fries or roasted with a little oil, salt and pepper. It pairs well with fruit, including strawberries, as well as savoury foods like mushrooms.

Recipe Ideas

Kohlrabi Slaw with Apple and Radishes

Ingredients:

- 1-2 Kohlrabi
- 1 Apple
- 4 Radishes
- 2-3 tbsp. light flavoured olive oil
- 1-2 tbsp. lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Peel the kohlrabi and apple (optional) and cut both into match sticks. Cut radishes in half and then slice thinly. Toss together with olive oil and lemon juice. Season to taste.

This recipe would also go well with a little chopped mint and a little sweetener like honey.

Roasted Kohlrabi

Ingredients:

- 2 Kohlrabi bulbs
- 1-2 tbsp. Oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 Fahrenheit. If cooking other things in the oven you can cook the kohlrabi at anywhere from 350

-425, but 375 is better if you have the option.

Peel the kohlrabi and cut the bulbs into wedges. This will allow some of the edges to crisp up and caramelize.

Toss the kohlrabi with oil, salt and pepper and roast until the edges start to brown, about 30 minutes.

Enjoy!

Colorado Potato Beetle

Whenever we have a mild winter, pest cycles start strong and early, and this season is no exception. We have seen early pressure from aphids (on tatsoi and pak choy), the flea beetle (on brassicas), the cucumber beetle and now the Colorado potato beetle (CPB). As the name implies, the CPB feeds on potato plants, though we also find them on our egg-

plant, a close relative of the potato. Luckily the CPB does not affect the other close relatives of the potato, our peppers and tomatoes.

The CPB is native to North and Central America, though it is now also found in much of Europe and Asia. It is a precocious and prolific pest, with females being able to lay up to 800 eggs in their lifetime (Wikipedia). The first generation of the beetle to emerge in the spring is unable to fly and so must walk to it's food source. Future generations can fly long distances. Adults themselves cause little damage, it is the larva that cause problems. If left unchecked these larvae can defoliate entire plants and cause complete crop failure.

In conventional agriculture, many highly toxic pesticides have been used to try and control this pest. This has met with mixed success as the CPB has been shown to develop pesticide resistance very quickly, even to the most toxic pesticides.

In organic agriculture there are a variety of control methods. The most effective method, is crop rotation. By rotating far enough away you can slow the arrival of the CPB, as the first generations cannot fly. Some strains of bacillus thuringiensis (BT), a bacteria that produces toxins for specific pests, can kill certain stages of the larvae,

but not all. Applications must be very frequent as there are eggs, larvae at 4 different stages and adults all living at the same time. There are some other products that can be used, including one derived from the neem plant, but these can affect the plant as well. Then there is manual control... or put another way, "bug squishing!" You can guess how much fun we have been having...

Gross!!!



Still Looking for Members

We are still looking for members for the 2017 season. We have had about 2 new members per week joining since pickups started in May. This has been wonderful and I know we have you to thank for continuing to spread the word and generating interest. If we can keep getting a couple of members per week we will reach our membership goals by mid-July.

For new members starting partway through the season, we offer prorated shares roughly proportional to the number of weeks left of pickups. Shares are weighted a little heavier towards the end of the season as the overall value of produce rises throughout the summer peaking in late August or early September.

There is space in all of our pickup locations, Guelph, Kitchener and at the farm, so if you think of anyone who may be interested, or can post on social media and distribution lists, please pass our information along. We did a little more marketing this year, however, our member's enthusiasm through word of mouth con-

tinues to be our best form of advertising.

Thanks again for your continued support. Without you this would not be possible and it would be a lot less fun!

Devan