

High Meadow Farm CSA

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Newsletter 6

July 19, 2010

This week's veggies:

Broccoli
Carrots
Cucumbers
Green beans

Lettuce mix
New potatoes
Summer squash

*This week's bread is: a fennel-onion-garlic boule
and a lemon scone*

News From the Farm

Although your farmers, Matt, Casey, Meg and Mike hold up fairly well in the heat, we have really been scrambling to keep things watered here for several weeks and now the high temps are stressing out all of the plants and the animals on the farm. Somehow, the rain keeps missing us every time it is in the area. We haven't had a good, measurable rainfall since June 28, and that was less than a ½ inch. We are constantly pulling out what equates to miles and miles of irrigation tape, and constantly running to water from one crop to the next. Our old pump has been a good one, but we worry about how much stress it can really take and the watering we do is never enough to give the deep watering that the plants need. (Somehow, the weeds seem to survive just fine though.)

I have mentioned before what the heat does to some veggies like lettuce and other greens; it can make a sweetie go bitter. We are hoping that this beautiful broccoli and lettuce has remained sweet for you, it has been through a tough season so far. I don't think that this lettuce has ever experienced a real rainfall.

So far, our squash and pumpkin crop looks fantastic with the exception of the early zucchini. We have covered every plant with fabric at planting time to keep them safe from the insects that devastated our crop last year, taking the covers off when the plants began flowering and were strong enough to ward off attacks. We monitor pests daily in the field. There have been few insects outside of the zucchini, but enough on them to carry a virus through that crop. Because of that, we have lost the majority of our early planting so there are not enough zucchini to distribute this week. The second planting is coming along nicely and we are hoping for the usual abundance of zucchini soon. Meanwhile, the Patty Pan Squash plants are robust, lush and prolific! We have decided that we absolutely LOVE this squash. It is a summer squash, as is the zucchini. It can be eaten raw, cooked, grilled or used to make the popular zucchini bread that you may be looking forward to!

Plants are not the only one that is affected by the heat. The chickens just stand in the shade most of the day panting, with their wings held out to keep cooler. As their pastures turn brown and crisp, they have dug holes all over the shady areas to keep cool with dust bathing. When a hen is stressed, her eggs can get smaller and fewer. So far, they are doing alright with eggs. We give them ice cold water in the

middle of the day and make sure they are all holding up at least as well as we are.

Our old horse is searching for cool spots and enjoys being sprayed with the hose during the day, but as her pasture is drying up, she is pondering the vegetable fields with a hungry eye. (She will be moved to a greener, shadier pasture later, after deliveries!)

Aside from the heat and the drought and the abundant weeds and malicious insects, we have another worry; the devastating late blight has been detected in Waukesha County and all vegetable farmers and home gardeners are being advised to protect their crops with a spray of copper sulfate, an organic-approved fungicide.

Tomato Late Blight is a horrible disease that spreads in damp, usually cool weather through the breezes that carry it (usually) westward. Two years ago, we lost our entire crop of beautiful tomato plants to the disease. It starts as a white, circular lesion on the plant and quickly covers the entire crop. It can also wipe out the potato crop and at times the eggplant and peppers that are in the same family. This is the same virus that caused the Irish potato famine years ago.

Once you see the lesions, it is probably too late and the entire crop needs to be destroyed immediately to prevent further spread.

Last year, we did spray the tomatoes with copper sulfate at about this time. Our crop was fine and the tomatoes were beautiful. The disease wasn't as widespread as it was in 2009 and they are saying it is because of growers protecting the crops and preventing the further spread. We are watching the reports carefully hoping that this dry weather will prevent its spread. Although the copper is basically harmless to us, it is a metal and it can affect the balance of the soil if not used properly and carefully.

For more information and photos of the disease, search online for "Tomato Late Blight".

The early corn is filling out and we expect to have it in your boxes next week! The tomatoes and peppers will not be far behind. The cucumbers are just getting started and should be in full production next week as well. Other things to look for next week are fresh cabbage and basil.

Stay cool out there! And please blow some rain clouds our way!

The New potatoes are here! These beauties are freshly dug and are going from our field to your table! They never need peeling, although the peels will easily fall off when they are cooked. These sweet spuds are often referred to as “salad potatoes” or “new” potatoes. I love them boiled or roasted. They will melt in your mouth!

Store these potatoes in a paper bag in your crisper drawer if possible, where it is cool and dark.

Green beans are bountiful this week. Next week they will be on the way out and the yellow beans or “Wax Beans” will be the star of the bean show.

To store them, keep them dry and in their bag in the crisper drawer of your fridge. If you can't use the beans up, just freeze them for future use; wash them and drop them in boiling water for 3 minutes. Drop them into ice cold water for about 3-5 minutes, then drain and dry them a bit and pack in to bags and into the freezer.

This recipe is a great side dish for meat or casserole:

Sweet and Spicy Green Beans

3/4 pound fresh green beans, trimmed
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon garlic chili sauce
1 teaspoon honey
2 teaspoons canola oil

Directions

1. Arrange a steamer basket in a pot over boiling water, and steam the green beans 3 to 4 minutes.
2. In a bowl, mix the soy sauce, garlic, garlic chili sauce, and honey.
3. Heat the canola oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the green beans, and fry for 3 to 5 minutes. Pour in the soy sauce mixture. Continue cooking and stirring 2 minutes, or until the liquid is nearly evaporated. Serve immediately.

We plant lettuce continually through the season. This planting was exceptionally beautiful in the garden. I hope that you find it tasty and a good bed for a mixture of your other fresh veggies this week! Store lettuce in its bag, loosely closed in your crisper drawer.

Patty Pan Squash (the oddly shaped, bright yellow veggie) is a summer squash of many names. It is also called scaloppini or Sunburst squash. We like to say “Patty Pan”. It is as delicious as it is beautiful. We always try to taste a veggie alone to see what its flavor is and what it would go best with and we have decided it is fantastic alone! Okay, maybe a little butter, onion and salt would be a perfect complement to sautéed Patty's. All you need to do is cut off the stem and slice vertically. You can cut the pieces smaller after that or leave large. This summer squash is good on a salad, stir-fried, or used in place of any summer squash or zucchini in a recipe. The texture is smoother than zucchini. A perfect substitute.

Sweet, crispy carrots are of course fantastic just to snack on raw. There is no need to peel these carrots. They are organic, fresh and tender. A commercial carrot peel can leave a bitter after-taste and the skin is where the pesticides are most concentrated. Organic carrots will make any recipe with carrots the best ever. This is definitely one veggie that you can taste the difference on!

This broccoli is a variety that we are usually very happy with. It is a cool-weather crop for sure, that has been put to the test with the weather. In my opinion, the stems are the best part of this veggie. If the skin on the stem seems woody or tough, simply peel it away to the tender stem. Chop and steam with the broccoli florets. If the stems are very large, they may take a bit longer or need to be chopped finer.

Store the broccoli in a loose plastic bag in your stuffed-full crisper drawer!

With this hot weather, sometimes a cold salad is more appealing than heating up the kitchen late in the day. If you have time to cook pasta in the morning or the night before, you can quickly make a nice, fresh veggie pasta salad with your veggies. The carrots can be chopped fine or grated, Cucumbers chopped, green beans lightly steamed and chopped, broccoli lightly steamed and the summer squash raw or steamed and then added to the cold pasta with whatever extra ingredients you choose as a dressing; mayonnaise, olive oil and balsamic vinegar, etc. As seasonings, salt and pepper, lemon juice, garlic, onion, thyme. Top with or toss in some feta or parmesan and make it a refreshing meal.

Reminder: The eggs are delivered every-other week. This week they will be distributed at the farm and in Watertown, next week, Lake Mills, Fort and Jefferson!