



News from Provident Organic Farm



www.providentfarm.org

Season 2, Week 23

"dedicated to a safe, just and sustainable food system"

Sept. 15th, 2003

NOTES FROM THE FIELD #23...

Fall is upon us! This is my favorite time of year. I remember when I spent a couple of years in Nova Scotia that fall felt like a frantic effort to prepare for the long winters. I will never forget having to cover the window openings of the house we were building with every blanket we could find to keep out the first snowfall of the season. That was on October 23rd. That year we cut, hauled, and split 12 cords of firewood by hand to heat and cook with.

Here on Delmarva we are blessed with a comparatively long fall season. In vegetable farming the frantic season is late summer; when along with tending and harvesting the summer crops, the deadline for planting the fall crops rapidly approaches. The intense heat and humidity of late summer makes it especially difficult. Had it not been for the member-volunteers helping with the transplanting, I would have had to hire help to get the crops in. Many thanks to all of you that helped with the planting, especially Maggi and David. They purchased a non-working share, but for some very bizarre reason, unknown to me, decided to spend their Labor Day morning with me transplanting about 1700 broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower transplants.

I have been able to keep up with most of the planting schedule, but some of the intended crops will not get planted. I was unable to get some of the ground prepared because it was too wet to work. Fall is also a time for review and reflection. As I begin to reflect on the season, it is obvious that many of my problems are a result of the excessive rainfall this year, but not all. Farming can become an emergency every minute when the windows of opportunity close so quickly and frequently, as they did this year. As a one-man show, my inability to respond quickly to these emergencies resulted in lost or unplanted crops. Because I don't own a tractor large enough to do the primary tillage and have to depend on another farmer to perform those tasks for me, ground that should have been prepared for some of the crops never got worked up. Last year this was not a problem, but this year Gerry was too busy responding to his emergencies to be able to respond to mine. I intend to remedy that by purchasing a tractor this winter. It will be a major, but necessary expense. Another problem is the low level of organic matter in the field soil. Low organic matter results in low yields in some of our crops, much lower than average. Two years of adding compost has raised the percentage from 1% to 3.5%. Impressive, but still insufficient. I had hoped to compensate for this by side-dressing the crops with an organic granular fertilizer. Timing is critical with these applications. Again, my inability to respond to this emergency because of wet conditions was a problem.

Many years ago, my good friend and mentor, Bill Overholt, (aka Tomato Willie) taught me an unforgettable lesson. I had lost about 8,000 tomato transplants in the greenhouse to a propane leak in the fuel line one night. Willie happened by the morning after to look at the plants with me, as he so often loved to do. He said, "Jay, you've got to be like the prize fighter. When you get knocked down to the mat, you've got to come back up swinging". When he left, I started mixing the soil to replant them. Thanks Willie.

Failure isn't falling down, it's not getting up.

We are at a critical juncture in the life of our CSA. Decisions need to be made about how we proceed. I feel responsible for making on-farm decisions pertaining to crop plans, etc., but other matters require your input. If you are able, please plan to attend the Steering Wheels (core group) meeting at the downtown Salisbury Farmer's Market this Saturday at 10 o'clock.

Onward,
Jay

"To be revolutionary is to be original, to know where we came from, to validate what is ours and to help it flourish, the best of what is ours, of our beginnings, our principles, and to leave behind what no longer serves us."

Ines Hernandez, US Chicana political activist



In your share... definitely mizuna, peppers, and winter squash. And if Mother Nature is kind we'll see tomatoes, eggplant, lima beans and/or purple string beans.

Cool recipes for those lingering hot summer nights...

Szechuan Green Beans & Soba Noodles

12 oz.	soba noodles (substitute your favorite long noodle if desired)
1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp.	sesame oil
2 tsp.	canola or corn oil
1 pound	green beans, trimmed & cut into bite-sized pieces
4 cloves	garlic, minced
1/2 tsp	red pepper flakes
3-4 Tbsp.	tamari, plus more for serving (see note)



Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook the soba until al dente, about 5 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water, and drain again. Set noodles in a large bowl and set aside. Heat both oils in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the green beans and saute, stirring occasionally for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes more. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes more. Immediately pour the green bean mixture over the soba noodles, scraping the skillet well to get all the oil into the bowl. Toss the soba and the green bean mixture until the beans are evenly distributed and the soba is coated with oil. Add the tamari and toss again. Serve hot, cold, or warm - with extra tamari on the side.

NOTE: Tamari is similar to soy sauce in that it is made out of soybeans, but it is thicker with a more mellow flavor. Both it and hoisin sauce (a good substitute) are available in Salisbury, but in a pinch try sprinkling 2-3 Tbsp. of plain old soy sauce over the soba in the last step. - from Three Bowls, by Seppo Ed Farrey

Food for Thought, Thought for Food

Research funded by the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology revealed some interesting facts. For years researchers and farmland advocates have thought that areas needed a "critical mass" of farmland for agriculture to survive in a region. Preserving farmland, forests and open space were key goals of the Chesapeake 2000 agreement. The theory was that once farmland fell below a certain level, critical support services began to leave, and farmers---faced with increased costs and complaints from new suburban neighbors---are more willing to grow houses than crops. The study found that farmers are highly adaptive and can survive in metropolitan counties. The findings of the study indicate that the key to protecting farms and stemming sprawl may be less dependent on the amount of farmland in a region than it is on maintaining the income of farming households. It also found that farmers are more likely to stay in farming in metropolitan areas with healthy economies than in rural areas with poor economies.

More information on this research is available at <http://www.bayjournal.com>



COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your comments and contributions, including recipes! Please send to ubuubok@dmv.com or Provident Organic Farm CSA, PO Box 62, Bivalve, MD 21814.

Good Stuff, Cool Stuff

October Festival! If you have ideas or suggestions please contact Lori Lilly (lilly@ezy.net) or 410-572-2785 - with either - especially if you want to HELP!

Steering Wheels: the next S.W. meeting is at the farmer's mkt. on the 20th of Sept. at 10 AM. Everyone is welcome!



THE LEADER IN ORGANIC-BASED LAWN CARE

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