



# News from Provident Organic Farm



www.providentfarm.org

Season 3, Week 20

“dedicated to a safe, just, and sustainable food system”

August 22<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 2004

## “Steering Wheels” meeting

We need direction! **Everyone** is invited to attend a CSA meeting on **Saturday, August 28 at 10am**. Rain or shine – we will meet under the pavilion at the old farmers’ market on Market Street and Poplar Hill (one block west of route 13).

### Notes from the Field, v. 3, #20

**Weed:** A plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome, especially one growing where it is not wanted.

While all of the above is true, the definition could be expanded to include: soil condition indicators, soil builders, food, medicine and insect attractants. It is only our egotistical point of view that allows us to define weeds as WEEDS. There is much a farmer can learn from the “family” of weeds that flourish in his fields. I must admit I have not studied this particular subject very thoroughly. If I happen to notice a weed I don’t recognize, I try to find out what it is and what it indicates is happening with my soil.

When I first started tending the leased field, I was surprised at the lack of weeds. I had applied over 20 tons per acre of horse manure the previous fall and was sure I would be overrun with weeds. When they didn’t materialize, I realized that many years of herbicide application had significantly reduced the seed bank of the weeds that had thrived there in its pre-Round-Up days and that the soil fertility was so low even the weeds could not grow well.

Last year we were overrun with morning glory, red rooted pigweed, chickweed and sorrel. Morning glory does well in poorly drained soils and told me I had to break up the hardpan caused by many years of heavy traffic. The sorrel told me the soil was slightly acid and needed an additional application of lime. The pigweed and chickweed, which do well in fertile soils, told me the humus content in the soil was increasing.

This year, in addition to the above, I have noticed an increase of dandelions and clovers. Both of these “weeds” indicate increased fertility in the soil. Dandelions, with taproots as long as 3 feet, act as natural crowbars, breaking up the hardpan and allowing for better air and water penetration. I have noticed less water standing in the field after heavy rains this year than last year. Clovers are in the Leguminous family and have the ability to take nitrogen from the air and “fix” it in their roots as food for themselves and subsequent crops. When used as cover crops, legumes can add up to 140 lbs. of nitrogen per acre.

I have also noticed an increase in Jimson weed, a member of the nightshade family along with tomato, eggplant and potato. I do not know what the presence of Jimson weed indicates about soil conditions, but I did notice that the Colorado Potato Beetles showed a preference for Jimson weed over the tomatoes that were very close by. Why on Earth would a farmer eliminate a weed that attracts a voracious eater like CPB away from the desired nightshades? Dandelions are said to attract ladybugs, which can eat many times their weight in aphids daily. The leaf crops we are planting now for fall harvest are very attractive to aphids. As I cultivate the leaf crops, I will try to leave some of the dandelions to see if there is any benefit.

I have not done a formal cost analysis of weed control for the farm, but if I had to guess I would say weed control accounts for at least 25% of labor cost and about the same percentage of fuel costs. Allowing the growth of at least some weeds not only can reduce costs but can also be a helpful learning experience.

Onward,  
Jay



*“Can mankind regulate its affairs so that its chief possession – the fertility of the soil – is preserved?”*

*On the answer to this question the future of civilization lies.”*

Sir Albert Howard, author of "An Agricultural Testament" published originally in 1943. He is considered by some as the first pioneer of the organic method. He shunned the conventional methods of research where teams of specialists each worked on a fragment of the whole and contributed a splinter of knowledge. He farmed 75 acres for over 25 years in India, observing the parts and the whole which became the foundation of organic agriculture.

## Tomato Bread Pudding

3 lg	tomatoes, peeled, about 2 1/2 - 3 lbs
10 slices	coarse, rustic bread, toasted
4 tbsp	olive oil
3/4 tsp	salt
1 tbsp	chopped fresh parsley
1/2 tsp	dried tarragon
1/2 tsp	sugar
-	black pepper
1/3 c	freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2	English muffins, split and toasted

Generously butter an 8 inch soufflé or deep casserole dish.

Cut top and bottom from tomatoes and cut into 2 to 3 thick even slices (all slices should be about the same thickness). Line the bottom of the dish with half the bread, patching spaces with torn pieces of bread. Layer half the tomatoes over top. Drizzle with half the olive oil, then sprinkle with half the salt, parsley, tarragon and sugar. Add a good grind of pepper. Repeat layers and sprinkle top with Parmesan cheese.

Process the muffins into large crumbs in a food processor and sprinkle over cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes. Cover with foil and bake another 30 minutes until the tomatoes are soft and the bread has a pudding-like texture.

Serves 6-8.

**Prep Tips:** Any type of hearty bread will work – French, peasant, good wheat – but regular sandwich bread is too flimsy to work in this dish. Delicious as a meal with a salad and some good cheese.

## Peach Tomato Salsa

This unique salsa is good with toasted pita chips or plain tortilla chips. Look in the share bin for the jalapenos...!

2 c	diced tomatoes
1/2 c	diced yellow bell pepper
1 1/2 c	diced, peeled peaches
3 tbsp	seeded and minced jalapenos
1/2 c	finely chopped onion
3 tbsp	chopped cilantro
1 tsp	salt
3 tbsp	red wine vinegar

Mix all ingredients and refrigerate, covered, for at least an hour. Bring back to room temperature to serve. Makes about 3 cups.

**Prep Tips:** Any sweet pepper may be substituted for the yellow pepper.


Both recipes adapted from *Lee Bailey's Tomatoes*, Lee Bailey, Clarkson/Potter Publ., 1992

## Good Stuff, Cool Stuff

Don't forget that the Farmer's Market has moved! It is now at the corner of Rt. 50 and Rt. 13 in the District Court parking lot on Saturdays 8am to 1pm and Wednesdays 12 noon to 5pm.

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We **desperately** need plastic grocery bags, but please don't send us bags that have had contact with meat products. We also can't use small bags such as newspaper bags, English muffin bags, etc.



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## Comments & Contributions

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