



News from Provident Organic Farm



www.providentfarm.org

Season 4, Week 1

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

May 23th – 29th, 2005

Notes from the Field, v. 4, #1

Welcome to our fourth season. We are off to a good start, having achieved our goal of 140 members and with strong farmers' market sales, thus far. We have been able to get most of the crops planted in a timely fashion, except the watermelons and cantaloupes. Irrigation demands on the crops already planted in the field and lack of rainfall for the past 5 weeks has prevented us from getting the transplants set out. They are to be planted where I had plowed down a cover crop of rye and vetch. The lack of soil moisture slows the decomposition process and the soil can't be worked up well when it is so dry. The 1.8 inches of rain on Friday will allow us to plant them on Monday, I hope.

The sugar snap peas will be ready to pick soon and it looks like a good crop. The snow peas germinated poorly and had to be re-planted, so they will be late.

When the seed potatoes came, the red variety (Cherry Red) had very few eyes. We spread them out on benches in the greenhouse to warm them up so they would pre-sprout before we planted them. I have not had good yields with Yukon Gold and decided to replace them with German Butterball at Shane's suggestion. They had a good number of eyes when we received them and we were able to plant them within a week after their arrival. The Cherry Reds were planted about 3 weeks later. We have an excellent stand of each.

The first 2 plantings of summer squash and string beans are doing well. We covered the zucchini with row covers to protect them from wind and cold and to advance the crop. They are blossoming now so we should be able to pick them soon. I like to plant squash and beans together because they seem to like each other's company and their cultural requirements are similar.

I cut back on our spring leek and onion plantings because they require so much attention. They are a weed control nightmare and seem to be a magnet for thrips, a very difficult insect to detect and control. Paul has told me about an easy, inexpensive, and effective trap that he has seen used in Ecuador for thrips control. We will construct it this week.

Eric Nordell, a farmer in Pennsylvania, has been working on a no-till system for onions. He plants into a cover crop that acts as a “living mulch” and smothers out the weeds.

The first tomatoes look very good. We plant them into “super holes” made with a post hole digger (the resident PhD) and filled with compost to give them a good start. Armando, my farmer friend, came yesterday afternoon with a helper and staked, pruned and tied them for me. I do not have a highly developed appreciation of ballet, but I think watching Armando and his helper work could be the farmers equivalent of watching a fine ballet performance. There is not a wasted motion in their effort.

We have had very little insect damage so far, but the cooler than average spring has probably slowed their appearance on the stage. We have seen quite a few Colorado Potato Beetle eggs on the undersides of the tomato leaves, but very few adults. This tells me there is a predator helping us by feeding on the immature adults, that do the most damage, (like teenagers in your refrigerator) but I have not identified it yet. They are voracious feeders and can wipe out a crop in a short time if not successfully dealt with quickly. The imported cabbage worm has done a little damage to the cabbage, kale and collards, but is easily controlled with a bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis*, kurstaki strain (BtK). There are other strains of Bt that are effective in controlling a wide range of insect pests. The Bt's have been used by organic gardeners and farmers for many years with very little resistance build-up. Unfortunately, this is at risk now, with the advent of genetically engineered crops. Our concern is that the wide spread use of genetically engineered crops will hasten the resistance of the target pest to Bt's and render our limited use ineffective. Before I get myself worked up into a rant about GMO's, I will close.

Thank you all for your faith, I hope our efforts live up to your expectations.

Onward,
Jay

In Your Share: lettuce, salad turnips, radishes, arugula, mixed greens, collards or kale, spinach, strawberries

Welcome – and Welcome Back – to the wonderful world of extraordinary, fresh, organic produce on Delmarva! This week we have strawberries for an oh-too-short time, and, as Jay said, “They all know what to do with strawberries.” Here are some recipes for that tender spinach in your share.

Stir-Fried Spinach - Serves 4

1 1/2 lb fresh spinach
1 tsp salt

1 tbsp peanut oil
1 clove garlic, mashed slightly

1 tsp roasted sesame seeds

Wash spinach and remove any tough stems. Drain and spin-dry or pat between two kitchen towels to remove as much moisture as possible.

Place a wok or large sauté pan over high heat until it smokes, about 2-3 minutes. Add the oil, then the salt and garlic. Turn heat to low to allow the salt to dissolve and the garlic to brown lightly, about a minute or two.

Add spinach and stir-fry until wilted, about 2 minutes. Arrange spinach on a platter and sprinkle with pepper and roasted sesame seeds.

Notes A great basic recipe for spinach. Jay’s spinach is so tender that there really aren’t many stems to remove. Remember that fresh spinach **does not** like high heat.

Chickpeas and Spinach - Serves 4 as a side

1 – 1 1/2 lb fresh spinach
2-3 tsp minced garlic
1 tbsp olive oil
1 c chopped scallion, white and green part
1 1/2 c chickpeas, canned or cooked
1 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
2 tsp lemon juice


Steam until leaves are wilted, about 1-2 minutes. Drain well, pressing out as much moisture as possible.

In a heavy saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté lightly for about 2 minutes. Add scallions and sauté one minute more.

Add spinach, chickpeas, cumin, salt and pepper; stir. Cover and cook over low heat until the spinach and chickpeas are heated through, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with lemon juice and stir again. Taste and add more salt and pepper, if needed.

More recipes from the first three years of Provident Organic Farm CSA may be found on our website: www.providentfarm.org Recipes are indexed by individual vegetable.

In the interest of providing more product to our members, Jay thought fresh flowers would be appreciated by our members. So, he talked a few of us into growing some cut flowers on Sandra’s property this year. By the end of this week, we will have planted all 25 varieties of flowers. Thanks to everyone who has helped build the beds and get the flowers planted - Sandra, Stevik, and Jack. Special thanks to Jay and Kelly who made sure that they got from seed to sprout. Now we’ll see if we can produce some beautiful flowers to take home. We’ve planted delphiniums, gomphrena, celosia, calendula, sunflowers, zinnias, bee balm, lavender, cosmos, and quite a few others. I’ve heard from a number of our CSA members, telling me that they are interested in receiving a weekly bunch of flowers (picked up from Jay when you pick up your share). We hope that the flowers will start coming in by mid-June. If you are interested in buying a weekly \$5 bunch of flowers, please e-mail me at: mphendrickson@mchsi.com. Also, if you have buckets that you don’t need, please get them to Jay for me. They can be drywall, cat litter, anything buckets. See you at the market – Pat Hendrickson



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Comments & 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.