



Notes from the Field by Ted Wycall, Green Branch Farm

Did you ever wish the weather would just pick a season to be, and stay there for a while?

Spring can be a really challenging time to farm. Nighttime low temperatures for Monday and Tuesday night are going to break records set in 2002. Monday night's forecast is predicting a 33 degree low, almost a frost. Needless to say, a frost would be devastating this late in the year since most farmers have already completed first and second plantings of warm season crops. Last week was our "window" here at Greenbranch Farm where nature presented us with an opportunity to get a lot of planting done. We had 5 days where the soil was dry enough to be worked and soil temperatures were high enough to get good germination rates (we hope!) on most direct seeded crops.

Things to be planted included watermelons, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, cantaloupes, cucumbers, zucchini, squash, Swiss chard, beets, beans, potatoes and corn. Some of these varieties we put in as transplants, which are young plants that begin life in a greenhouse and are eventually planted out in the field. Generally these plants will survive colder soil conditions than if they were direct seeded so transplanting is a very good strategy to have success with early plantings of warm season crops. However, transplanting isn't feasible for some crops like sweet corn where population densities are extremely high. Therefore, early sweet corn provides a unique challenge this time of year.

Corn requires soil temperatures around 60 degrees in order for most seeds to germinate. If soil temperatures are lower and the soil is wet, most organic corn seed (without fungicidal treatment) will rot before it gets the chance to grow. Our first planting of sweet corn went in on April 26th. This seemed like a good time to get the corn out because the 26th was to be the first day of a three day stretch of beautiful summer like weather with highs in the 80's and lows in the 60's, which means a fairly rapid increase in soil temperatures. We did a double planting using two different varieties. The hope is that by planting twice as much as needed, you'll still be OK if only half comes up. Three days later, as

spring would have it; the temperatures plummeted with nighttime lows in the low 40's. Only one variety of corn germinated fast enough to beat the cold weather, the other was lost forever. I feel that we got lucky with early sweet corn and next year we know exactly what variety to plant for these unpredictable spring conditions. Now, with soggy soil and the temperatures dropping again, let's hope for the survival of the latest planting.

The rest of the story with corn is fairly straightforward. In its first month of life we will fertilize it twice, cultivate (de-weed) it twice, and make sure it gets plenty of water. In mid-July when the corn is mature we will have a little over a week to pick the entire patch or else it will over ripen. Gauging maturity is a skill learned by experience. First, watch the silk. When it turns brown and starts to dry up it's getting close. Then watch the girth of the ears. When they get fairly large, select a few of the largest ones and peel the husk away to check ripeness. If they're not ripe wait two days and check again. If they are ripe, go through the patch and pull every ear that matches that size, nothing smaller. Pick every other day for up to ten days.

Ted

E-Mailing Newsletters Saves Human Race from Extinction!

Well, that might be stretching things a bit. But, on the theory that every little bit helps, we can at least save paper and ink, which, you must admit, cost more resources than those little recyclable electrons that make up your email. We have been collecting email addresses from members at distribution points in order to complete our mailing list for the season. If you didn't give us your email address, or you did give it to us and didn't receive a copy electronically, please email me at sheltonlankford@me.com and I will make sure you are added. the email version has the added benefit of not getting soggy and hard to read in the bottom of your bag of veggies.

Thanks, --SFL

In Your Share* This Week

Asparagus
Bok Choy
Salad Turnips
Leeks
Strawberries ?
Lettuce ?

*Share makeup is best estimate at publication time.

Note: For preservation tips and additional recipes, visit the CSA website at <http://www.providentorganicfarm.com/>

How to Store Leeks

1. Do not cut or wash leeks until ready for use.
2. **Refrigerate** in a loosely wrapped plastic bag. You can keep leeks for as long as two weeks with no reduction in quality or taste.
3. **To freeze:** (1) Wash leeks thoroughly and slice (either crosswise or lengthwise depending on future use); (2) Blanch (*plunge into boiling water*) for two minutes and chill quickly in ice cold water; (3) Drain off excess moisture, package in airtight containers or freezer bags and freeze immediately. (*Do not freeze raw leeks, as they tend to soften and lose their texture and turn bitter.*)

Leeks are more delicate and milder in flavor than onions and contain the same health benefits.

7-Minute Sautéed Leeks - *Cooking tip:* To prevent overcooking Leeks, using a timer is recommended.

1 lb. medium size leeks (approximately 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter)
3 tbsp low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth (for recipe Step 2.)
2 tbsp low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth (for recipe Step 3.)
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp lemon juice
Sea salt and pepper to taste



1. Clean and slice Leeks very thin (1/8-inch), (you can use the green part of the leek if desired).
2. Heat 3 tbsp broth over medium heat until it begins to steam.
3. Add Leeks, **cover**, and sauté for 4 minutes. Add 2 tbsp broth, reduce heat to medium low and sauté for 3 minutes, **uncovered**, while stirring frequently. They are done when tender (timer preferred method vs. tasting)
4. Transfer to a bowl. For more flavor, toss Leeks with the remaining ingredients while they are still hot.

Serves 2

Flavor Tips: Try these 5 great serving suggestions with the recipe above.

1. Top with grated Parmesan cheese.
2. Top with balsamic vinegar or your favorite vinaigrette.
3. Sprinkle with fresh grated ginger.
4. Dill and chives complement the flavor of leeks.
5. **Quick Creamy Leek and Potato Soup:** In a blender, combine the 7-Minute Sautéed Leeks recipe and 1 cup steamed potatoes with 1 cup warm low-fat milk, 2 tbsp Parmesan cheese and 1/2 tsp dill weed. Blend for 1 minute.

How to Prepare Leeks

1. Cut off the fibrous root
2. If the dark-green outer leaves are very tough and/or spotty, remove them
3. Trim the ends of the remaining leaves
4. Cut the leek in half length-wise, then slice or chop
5. Place in a bowl of warm water and swirl around to help the dirt fall to the bottom
6. Take the leeks out, place in a colander, and rinse again. Don't just pour them into the colander as the dirt at the bottom of the bowl might get trapped in the leaves again.