

THE TIPI TIMES

August 18, 2011, week 14 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Sweet corn, 7 or 8 ears
Orange watermelon
Cucumbers, about 4 or more
Italian OR green beans, 1 lb
Tomatoes, mixed slicing and plum, 3.3 lb
Red Italian frying peppers, 3
Yellow onions
Dill
Maybe a zucchini

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:

Summer veggies

HALFWAY POINT. This is our 14th box this season, which means that we are halfway through our 26-week season. It is an annual milestone for us and our workcrew.

FRESH EYES. I am back from vacation and ready to answer emails again. Thank you for your patience while I was gone. The children and I had a good time visiting grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. After nine days away, I feel that I can see the farm with fresh eyes. Here are some changes that I noticed.

Wow, the weeds have grown. Everything grew while we were gone, but some of the weeks really shot up. The ragweed is blooming and releasing clouds of pollen.

The Japanese beetles are abating. This has been a challenging year for Japanese beetles, certainly the worst year since they began moving into our region. Japanese beetles communicate via pheromones to congregate en masse. We found that the beetles clustered heavily on one of our four basil plantings. We've used this to our advantage by treating this field as sacrificial beetle bait. We stopped harvesting the field, but continued to spray it with a organic pesticide to kill the beetles. We considered using a product that would repel the beetles but decided it would be a mistake to disperse them over the farm. The strategy seems to be working. Now the beetles are disappearing as this generation declines.

The new raspberry field looks very productive. Our raspberry crop looked in peril when we left for vacation, with Japanese beetles feeding on the raspberry flowers. It's OK if the plants lose some leaves, but not OK if the flowers are eaten. By the time we returned, the beetles were gone. The flower clusters have expanded into handsome clusters of young fruit. We planted the raspberries last year and didn't expect them to be very productive this year, but they look great. The berries should begin ripening in a few weeks.

VEGGIE NOTES. A member wrote last week that the tomatoes in her box deteriorated quickly after she received them, rapidly developing sunken black spots. We found the same thing with tomatoes held here at the farm. If it happened for us and one member, then other members probably experienced the same thing. Let's explain what happened and what to expect with tomatoes in the coming weeks. The tomatoes we packed were all fresh, but came from a planting that is affected by a disease called anthracnose. The sunken spots are symptoms that do not appear until a day or two after harvest; the tomatoes look OK when picked. We re-grade the tomatoes as we prepare the CSA boxes, but must have missed some bad fruits. We shared the member's email message with our work crew and asked them to be more selective. It's not clear how persistent the anthracnose will be. It might be transient or it might persist. This week's tomatoes were harvested from the same field as last week, but look much better. We will see if they hold up. You will receive a bag of #1 grade tomatoes. If there's a loose tomato in your box, that's a #2 grade tomato. Use that one first. Veggies are alive, and keep changing after harvest. We appreciate that the member alerted us to a problem that we might have overlooked otherwise.

Our second cucumber planting is very productive right now, so everyone will receive four (or more) cucumbers. We are pleased to have dill ready to harvest at the same time as the cucumber burst. Enjoy them together as pickles or a cucumber-dill salad. Many of this week's cucumbers are a new variety we are testing called Sultan. Sultan is delicious, thin skinned, and productive, but attracts insects. Many of these cucumbers are scarred and need to be peeled. We debated what to do with them and decided to send them because they are tasty and we feel the damage is superficial.

Veggie Notes, continued

Sweet corn - This is the nicest corn of the season. It is our last sweet corn for this year.

Watermelon - Everyone will receive an orange 'New Orchid' watermelon this week. The color is lovely.

Tomatoes - You will receive a mixed bag of slicing tomatoes (about 2.25 lb.) and plum tomatoes (about 1 lb.)

Onions - We are now sending yellow storage onions. You will find that these onions are much more pungent than the sweet Walla Walla onions we've sent over the past weeks. Yellow storage onions are much better for cooking. Unlike Walla Wallas, yellow storage onions can be fried. Sweet onions are the first onions ready to harvest, but now their season is over.

Cucumbers - You will receive either the Sultan variety described above, or regular cucumbers.

Blender Gazpacho This recipe was contributed by a CSA member who writes "Here is a blender gazpacho recipes. Perfect for this time of the season. My own little garden is teeming with ingredients 1-3, so we've had this several times for 2 weeks."

4 medium tomatoes, quartered

1 medium seedless cucumber, peeled and roughly chopped (about 2 1/2 cups)

1 small red bell pepper, chopped (about 1 cup)

1 Tbs. sherry vinegar

2 cloves garlic, peeled

Olive oil

Throw everything in a blender or food processor and puree. Drizzle with olive oil before serving. Serves six.

The member offered these notes:

- Except for the vinegar and garlic, I didn't measure anything and it came out fine.
- I used zucchini (seeded and unpeeled) instead of cucumber and it was still great.
- I didn't have sherry vinegar, so I used red wine vinegar. Guess what ... still good.
- I also threw in the Walla Walla onions one time, and basil another time ... both excellent.
- This is a very forgiving recipe.

Tomato Corn Chowder

Adapted from the FOODjimoto.com website

Ingredients:

4 cups tomatoes, skins removed and chopped or crushed

2 slices bacon, chopped and fried until crisp

1/2 cup sweet onion, chopped

1 generous teaspoon brown sugar

1 large clove garlic, minced or 1 tablespoon crushed roasted garlic

1 or 2 ears of fresh corn, cut off the cob

Optional ingredients:

1 small potato, peeled and diced

chicken or vegetable broth

Remove the skin from the tomatoes, roughly chop or crush them and set aside.

Chop and fry the bacon until crisp. Drain the fat. Add the onion to the cooked bacon and saute until translucent. If using raw garlic, sauté with the onions. Add the optional diced potato and saute until translucent.

Add the crushed tomatoes, corn kernels and a generous teaspoon of brown sugar. If using roasted garlic, add it now. Bring the soup to a boil. Skim foam as necessary. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If the chowder is too strong, you can add a little chicken or vegetable broth.

Refrigerator Dill Pickles

From the Annie's Eats blog, <http://annies-eats.com/2008/08/20/dill-pickles/>

"These pickles are REALLY GOOD. As in, I probably won't ever want to eat a store-bought pickle again. I'm not even a serious pickle lover but I have had to exercise major restraint with these babies and even with that, I'm eating three or four a day. I love this recipe because it is super fast and easy, with no canning necessary."

For the brine:

3 cups water
6 tbsp. white vinegar
3 tbsp. kosher salt

minced garlic
fresh dill
cucumbers, cut into spears

Directions:

Combine all brine ingredients in a pitcher. Stir well to dissolve salt.

Put several sprigs of fresh dill in the bottom of each jar. Pack half full with cucumber spears. Layer with more sprigs of fresh dill. Finish filling the jar with cucumbers. Sprinkle some minced garlic on top. Pour brine into the jar until it is full and pickles are completely submerged. Put the lid on and allow to refrigerate at least 2 days before eating.