



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

May 30-31, 2014

## Staying True to Your Roots

By Andrea Yoder & Richard de Wilde

The most recent issue of *Mother Earth News* featured an interesting article written by journalist Richard Manning. The title of his article was "Hidden Downsides of the Green Revolution." In this article, Manning links the impact industrial agriculture has had on the decline of human health and well-being around the world. With an increasing emphasis on increasing yields to "feed the world," perhaps we've forgotten some of the fundamental basics of what it means to "feed the world." Manning introduces his thoughts by telling the story of Indian rice farmers who help us understand "the root of the matter."

In rural India, many farmers have rejected the "new and improved" varieties of rice promoted by the government in favor of their local, traditional rice varieties. The prevailing mantra linked to these new varieties is that they produce higher yields and we need them to "feed the world." If these varieties can give farmers better yields, then why would they reject them? The new and old varieties are very different. The high-yielding new varieties have been developed to produce plants with short stature to support the extra weight of the seed heads. Unfortunately these plants also have a short root structure. They are highly dependent upon commercial fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation to produce a crop. In comparison, the old varieties produce taller plants with significantly longer roots that extend deep into the subsoil. While the traditional varieties may not yield as much per acre in an average year, they are much more resilient in periods of drought and are better suited for growth in unirrigated areas. They also taste better. Why is this? The deeper the roots go, the greater their access to moisture and also nutrients. The plant has access to rich sources of nutrients, including minerals and micronutrients in the subsoil which build the plant's nutrition and health as well as producing a crop that actually tastes better. The older rice varieties are more sustainable over time and a farmer can produce a crop in good years as well as in challenging times such as a drought. This is because the plant itself is more resilient and its roots have access to water. The short roots of the new varieties only go into the topsoil which is often depleted of nutrients, hence the dependence on fertilizers. Without access to minerals that are important for many important plant functions, the plant is weak and the nutrient value of the crop is less. Minerals contribute to the taste of food, so in this case, taste is directly linked to the absence of minerals. In periods of drought, lack of moisture in the soil cou-

## This Week's Box

**OVERWINTERED PARSNIPS OR ONIONS:** We have come to the end of our parsnip stores until the fall, and are just starting to harvest overwintered onions. More to come!  
**GREEN GARLIC:** Green garlic can be used in place of scallions or garlic cloves in any recipe. The entire plant is edible from the lower, white portion all the way to the ends of the green tops. Enjoy green garlic raw or cooked.  
**ARUGULA:** Arugula is a spicy salad green that can add a lot of flavor to your meal when used in spring salads. Arugula leaves are more delicate in comparison to spinach. It is best to dress arugula using a light vinaigrette just before serving.  
**SORREL:** Sorrel is a versatile spring green that can be enjoyed both raw or cooked. It has a bright citrus flavor that will get your attention. Try sorrel in your morning fruit smoothie and have an invigorating day!  
**SAUTÉ MIX OR BROCCOLI RAAB:** Both the baby greens mix and the broccoli raab are flavorful Asian greens that are delicious when simply wilted in a hot pan with oil and drizzled with sesame oil.  
**FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISHES:** These pretty little beauties will add crunch and color to your meals this week. Slice them thinly and add them to your salads, or just munch on them as a snack with a little bit of salt and butter.  
**ASPARGUS:** We've supplemented our asparagus crop this week with the help of Elmer Beechy and his family who raise certified organic asparagus. See the vegetable feature article on the back of the newsletter for more information on how to use asparagus.  
**RHUBARB:** Refer to last week's newsletter for more information about rhubarb & a few recipe ideas.

**\*\*HERB PACKS:** This week's herb packs are intended for Every-Other-Week "Brown" week members, Flex members who may not have picked up a share last week, and for sharing households who requested a second pack last week. If you have already received an herb pack this year, please do not take a second herb pack.

Rosemary	Thyme	Savory
Oregano	Sage	Italian Parsley
Basil	Basil	Curly Parsley

pled with an inability to provide adequate irrigation water can result in crop failures. Indian farmers prefer to plant a crop that will produce every year even if the yields are lower in a given year in comparison to the new varieties. From their point of view, sustainability is not all about yields, but the ability to survive from year to year both physically and economically. The high input costs of fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation often exceed the profit from a higher yielding crop and in some years when there's a crop failure the farmer may lose significantly and won't have food to feed his family.

A similar scenario exists in the Midwest when you look at different models for producing meat, specifically beef. Cattle that graze on nutrient rich pastures and have a diet based on deep-rooted grasses, produce meat and milk with a much different nutrient profile than animals that do not have access to these plants. The feed source for a grass-fed animal is by default, a rich source of minerals and trace elements drawn up from the subsoil by the deep roots of the grasses they are eating. Manning includes the experiences of a Midwestern veteri-

narian who has noticed a difference between the health of animals produced in an industrial feedlot system versus those that are rotationally grazed. Any nutrient benefit animals raised on pasture grasses have is then passed on to the people who eat this meat.

The developments of modern agriculture have focused on a preoccupation with increasing yields and focused primarily on a few plants including corn, wheat and rice. A large majority of human nutrition is being derived from these three plants and the picture of malnutrition no longer is based on solely calorie deficit. In Manning's words, "The consequences of depriving us of variety, as industrial agriculture has done, are enormous." "... the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will now tell you that a third of humanity suffers from what the organization calls 'hidden hunger,' which is defined as a diet ample in calories but insufficient in nutrients and micronutrients."

Manning points out that instead of focusing so much on what we are eating, we forget what we are not eating, which brings us back to the roots. "Our brains

and bodies, more so than any other species, are exceedingly complex, and this complexity requires complicated cellular networks, all of which are supported by intricate biochemistry that fuels itself on a vast array of proteins, fats and minerals, the raw materials of our form. Humans require variety to achieve their full potential—especially brain potential—and evolution gave us preferences that make us seek out variety: our sense of taste.”

So you see, it’s not just “feeding” the world with pure calories measured on a per bushel per person basis. “Humans are more than simply a caloric equation to

solve.” In order for us to achieve our full potential, all the pieces of the puzzle are important. Nutrient quality, variety and biodiversity are important for both plant and human survival. The old saying “You are what you eat” has truth to it. “Our bodies and minds only attain their potential by maintaining a web of ties to the forces of life: deep roots, many branches, flora and fauna, micro and otherwise. Biodiversity. Roots are our thoughts, too. Literally so.”

It’s important to approach agriculture and food production with a big picture view that goes beyond only yields and

goes back to the root of why we eat in the first place....to care for and sustain our bodies. How will we feed the world going forward? This isn’t a question that will be easily answered and this is a topic that will continue to be debated and discussed. The closing statement to Manning’s article is as follows: “The truth is, it is not clear whether we can feed the planet’s 7.2 billion with sustainable agriculture, but it is abundantly clear that we cannot sustain our thoughts and our humanity without it.”

## Join Us for Strawberry Day at Harmony Valley Farm!

Sunday, June 22 is our annual Harmony Valley Farm Strawberry Day. Come visit the farm for a chance to experience all things Strawberry: from growing, to picking and, of course, eating our fresh and certified organic strawberries right from our own fields!

12-1pm - Potluck  
1:15-3pm - Wagon Tours  
3pm-6pm - Pick Strawberries  
and eat Strawberry Ice Cream!

## 10 Simple Ways to Enjoy Asparagus

1. Cream of Asparagus Soup
2. Asparagus Stir-Fry with Spicy Hoisin Sauce
3. Roasted asparagus spears dipped in sunny-side up eggs
4. Pancetta-wrapped roasted asparagus spears
5. Shaved asparagus salad with lemon-honey vinaigrette
6. Asparagus gratin
7. Sautéed asparagus with green garlic & toasted sesame oil
8. Grilled asparagus topped with shredded sharp cheddar cheese
9. Spring pasta primavera
10. Eggs Benedict with steamed asparagus

## Vegetable Feature: Asparagus

by Andrea Yoder

As with ramps, asparagus is a spring vegetable that many look forward to with much anticipation. Asparagus is a perennial crop that is originally planted from a crown of long, fleshy roots. It takes several years to establish a crop of asparagus. During the first and second years it is important for the crown & roots to grow and build up energy stores. We don’t harvest any asparagus during the first and second year and no more than just a few spears in the third year. This allows all the energy the asparagus is capturing from the sunlight to be shunted back to develop the root system and crown. In the fourth year we start to do more substantial harvests. One of the challenges of raising asparagus is controlling weeds. Once a field is established, we like to keep it for many years. That means we have to keep the weeds out and that means a lot of hand weeding!

Asparagus has a distinct flavor of its own. It’s very “green” and earthy and is one of nature’s truly fast foods. You can snap and saute a pound of asparagus in less than 15 minutes. While asparagus is most often eaten cooked, you can also eat it raw. You can use nearly all the asparagus spear except for the lower most portion that is more fibrous. Snap or cut off the lower portion and reserve it for use in soups or stocks. The more tender portion of the spear can be roasted, boiled, grilled, steamed or lightly sautéed.

Asparagus pairs well with cream, milk, cheese, butter and eggs. It is often incorporated into quiche and custard, omelets, spring vegetable gratins, or topped with a creamy cheese sauce or Hollandaise. It also pairs well with other spring vegetables including ramps, green garlic, scallions, sugar snap peas and mushrooms. It is often garnished or paired with hard-cooked eggs, lemon, parsley, chives and tarragon as well as prosciutto, pancetta and bacon.

Store asparagus in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it. To keep it fresh, store it upright with the base of the spears in a shallow glass of water until you are ready to use it.

## Roasted Asparagus with Bread Crumbs & Herbs

Recipe borrowed from Sara Forte’s book *The Sprouted Kitchen*

Serves 3-4

¾ cup bread crumbs made from day-old bread  
1 ½ tsp Dijon mustard  
½ tsp whole grain mustard  
1 tsp fresh thyme leaves or ½ tsp dried thyme  
1 Tbsp olive oil or sunflower oil  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Grated zest of 1 lemon  
¾ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped  
¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
3 pieces green garlic, thinly sliced or minced  
1-2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled  
1 pound asparagus, lower portion removed  
1 tsp lemon pepper seasoning

1. Position a rack in the upper third of your oven and preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. In a bowl, stir together the bread crumbs, mustards, thyme, and half the olive or sunflower oil, and a big pinch of salt and pepper. Spread on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until toasted, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a mixing bowl and cool completely.
3. When the bread crumbs are cool, add the lemon zest, parsley, Parmesan and green garlic. Dice the eggs and add to the bread crumb mixture. Set aside.
4. Turn the oven up to 425°F. On a baking sheet, toss the asparagus with the remaining oil and lemon pepper seasoning. Roast in the oven until the asparagus just starts to blister, about 10 minutes. Cooking time may vary depending on the thickness of the stalks.
5. Transfer the asparagus to a serving platter and spoon the bread crumb mixture across the center. Serve warm.