



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Bringing Back the Monarchs

By Andrea Yoder

Over the past few weeks we've been noticing a lot of activity in the air. The dragonflies are flitting around our farm again as are the Yellow Swallowtail butterflies and a whole host of butterflies, bees and other flying creatures. Yet, we still haven't spotted any monarch butterflies this year. Over the past 20 years the overwintering monarch populations have dropped by 90%, bringing a sense of urgency to the reality that this species may become extinct one day very soon if we do not rapidly change the course of events. *Common Sense Pest Control Quarterly* is a publication of The Bio-Integral Resource Center, a non-profit that provides practical information about the least toxic methods of pest management. In their May 2016 publication, William Quarles, Ph.D., provided us with some very interesting information about the monarch butterflies. We would like to share some of these facts with you that make this creature all that more amazing to us.

Monarch butterflies are actually a prehistoric creature thought to have evolved about 100 million years ago! They are thought to have become migratory creatures about one million years ago. There are now two populations of migrating monarchs, one population east of the Rocky Mountains and the other on the west side of the Rockies. In order to survive, monarchs need water, nectar, milkweed and trees on which to overwinter. The rapid decline in their populations is directly related to human behavior and specifically to the drastic increase in use of pesticides over the past two decades. In addition to causing death through direct contact with pesticides, the use of glyphosate and neonicotinoids has destroyed a significant amount of milkweed as well as causing death of monarch larvae and reductions in plants that provide nectar for the butterflies. Milkweed is an important plant for monarch survival and is one of the main reasons monarchs migrate to the north during the spring and summer from their southern overwintering site in Mexico. Milkweed contains steroids called cardenolides which monarchs ingest. This component of milkweed protects monarchs from predators by giving them a bad taste as well as being toxic to vertebrates. Milkweed is a food source for monarch caterpillars as well as serving as a nectar source for the adult monarch butterflies. Additionally, monarch females lay their eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves.

The migratory pattern of the monarch population east of the Rocky Mountains takes the monarchs to northern climates

This Week's Box

GARLIC SCAPES: For something a little different and fun, make pickled garlic scapes. You will find a recipe in the searchable recipe database on our website.

PURPLE SCALLIONS: Make your own scallion cream cheese by mincing the lower portion of the scallion and thinly slicing the green top. Stir both parts into softened cream cheese.

KOHLRABI: See this week's vegetable feature for more information.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS: The pods are edible too! Just remove the stem end and peel off the string on top.

RAINBOW CHARD: This vegetable doesn't just look beautiful, it tastes delicious as well! Use the stems and the leaves in the lentil recipe featured on the back.

SPINACH: Wash well in cold water and shake off excess water before using. Saute along with minced garlic scapes and thinly sliced scallions. Drizzle with a bit of toasted sesame oil and eat alongside steamed rice.

MINI GREEN ROMAINE LETTUCE: Dress with a light, creamy dressing. Garnish the salad with grated kohlrabi, thinly sliced purple scallions and broccoli florets for a simple salad option.

STRAWBERRIES: What a week for Strawberries! We did have some rain this week which may affect the berries shelf life. Keep them cold and eat them soon or pop them in the freezer.

BROCCOLI OR BABY KALE MIX: Add chopped broccoli to Sunday brunch by making a Broccoli Cheese quiche or frittata. Toss Baby Kale Mix with sesame vinaigrette and top with shredded kohlrabi.

in the spring and summer in search of milkweed. Monarch larvae development stops at 52-54°F. In addition to decreasing temperatures, their milkweed sources cease in the fall and winter thus they migrate to their overwintering site in Mexico to wait out the winter. They start to migrate south about mid-September and move at a rate of about 20-25 miles/day. During their migration they focus all of their energy on moving and stop mating and producing eggs. They feed aggressively to gain fuel for the flight as well as build up fat deposits for overwintering. Just where does a slim creature like a monarch deposit fat? When they reach their overwintering spot in Mexico, they'll huddle together in clusters in trees to stay warm until spring arrives. In the spring they start their vigorous mating ritual, then fly north into Texas and the southern parts of the U.S. to lay their eggs on milkweed. These eggs hatch a spring generation that then flies further north in order to get away from the heat of the southern summer. Once they arrive in the north they produce 2 or 3 summer generations, the last of which will migrate south in the fall. The generation that will overwinter has a lifespan of about 8-9 months while the spring and summer generations only last about 3-5 weeks.

So how can we help support the monarch populations and prevent further decline? One way is to provide more milkweed for the monarchs. One of the plants in our

pollinator packs was *Asclepias tuberosa*, a type of milkweed commonly known as butterfly weed. There are also efforts being made by various environmental groups to create Monarch Way Stations, plantings of milkweed in the migratory path of the monarchs. Additionally, planting flowering plants to provide a source of nectar will help provide them with the fuel they need for their flight. While these efforts are all positive, we must remember that their benefit is limited if there is still use of pesticides and herbicides on the plants or in their vicinity where they will be affected by drift. We have been planting native flowering plants and milkweed on our farm for many years. We're excited to see how many people chose to participate in planting the pollinator packs we delivered over the past several weeks. Now many of you are creating your own Monarch Way Stations in the Twin Cities, Madison and our local area. Please let us know how your gardens are growing and what critters they are attracting.

Dr. Quarles concludes his article with this statement: "Monarch butterflies survived the dinosaurs and have probably been migrating for a million years. We should not let pesticide pollution and human activity destroy them. Working together, we can bring back the monarchs." Let's all do our part.



Featured Vegetable of the Week: Kohlrabi

by Andrea Yoder

The name for kohlrabi is derived from “khol” meaning stem or cabbage and “rabi” meaning turnip. While it is in the cabbage family and resembles a turnip, it grows differently than both. Many people mistake kohlrabi for being a root vegetable that grows under the ground, but it is actually an enlarged stem that grows above the soil level. The stems and leaves shoot up from the bulbous part to give it, as many describe, an alien like appearance.

We grow both green and purple kohlrabi, which are no different from each other once they are peeled. The bulb and the leaves are both edible. The fibrous peel should be removed from the bulb prior to eating. You can do this easily by cutting the kohlrabi into quarters and then peeling away the outer skin with a paring knife. The flesh is crisp yet tender and sweet with a hint of a mild cabbage flavor. It can be prepared in many different ways, both raw and cooked. The simplest way to eat it is to peel it and munch on slices plain or with just a touch of salt. It can also be shredded and used in slaws with a variety of dressings or sliced and added to sandwiches or salads. Despite many years of growing and eating kohlrabi, Farmer Richard’s eyes still twinkle every year when he says... “Can we have creamy kohlrabi slaw?” It’s by far his favorite way to enjoy kohlrabi. The leaves are edible as well, so don’t just discard them. Cook them in any way you would cook kale or collard greens.

I always think of kohlrabi as an old-world European vegetable, which it is, but don’t forget that kohlrabi is also eaten in other parts of the world such as China and India. You can find some interesting ways to prepare kohlrabi in stir-fries and curries if you look to these parts of the world for recipe ideas.

To store kohlrabi, cut the stems and leaves off. Store both leaves and the bulbs in perforated plastic in the refrigerator. The leaves will keep for about 1 week, and the bulbs will last up to several weeks if stored properly.

Swiss Chard and Lentil Soup with Herbed Kohlrabi Yogurt

Yield: 6-8 servings

2 cups black beluga lentils (or green French lentils), picked over and rinsed
1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
3-5 scallions, lower portion minced and green tops sliced thinly (for garnish)
1 tsp salt, plus more to taste
1 tsp ground cumin
1—28 oz can crushed tomatoes
3 cups Swiss chard, leaves & stems sliced thinly
Herbed Kohlrabi Yogurt, see recipe below

1. Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add the lentils and cook for about 20 minutes, or until tender. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy soup pot over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the minced scallion, 1 tsp salt and ground cumin. Sauté a few minutes or until the onion is tender and fragrant. Stir in the tomatoes and simmer for about 8-10 minutes or until the tomato mixture has thickened a bit. Add the swiss chard to the pan, cover and continue to cook for 3-5 minutes or until the chard is just barely wilted.
3. Add the lentils to the tomato mixture and stir to combine. Bring the soup to a simmer and cook for just a few minutes longer. Adjust the consistency of the soup to your liking by adding additional water to make it more thin or simmering a bit longer to thicken the soup. Remove from the heat and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
4. Ladle the soup into bowls and serve garnished with the thinly sliced green onion tops and a dollop of the Herbed Kohlrabi Yogurt.

Variations:

- Serve it with a poached egg on top
- Serve it over steamed rice or millet
- Finish the soup with a few pinches of smoked paprika or red pepper flakes to add a little flare

NOTE: This recipe is based on Heidi Swanson’s “Lively Up Yourself Lentil Soup Recipe” featured on her blog, *101 Cookbooks*. She encourages her readers to put their own twist on the soup with a variety of suggestions for how to adapt the recipe to your liking. This is my version of her lentil soup recipe.—Chef Andrea Yoder

Herbed Kohlrabi Yogurt

Yield: 1 cup

1 cup Greek yogurt
½ cup finely grated kohlrabi
1 Tbsp lemon juice
Lemon zest from the rind of one lemon
1 garlic scape, minced
1 Tbsp fresh herbs, minced (parsley, savory, thyme, mint, etc)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. In a medium mixing bowl, combine yogurt, kohlrabi, lemon juice and zest, garlic scapes and fresh herbs of your choosing. Add salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste.
2. Refrigerate the yogurt for at least 30 minutes or overnight for the best flavor.

Serving suggestions: Use this herbed kohlrabi yogurt as a topping for falafel, lentil dishes, or alongside scrambled eggs, sautéed greens or steamed rice.