



Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members

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THIS WEEK'S BOX

SALAD MIX
BROCCOLI
RED CURRANTS
SUMMER SQUASH
BUNCHED RED BEETS
GARLIC SCAPE
**SNAP PEAS - SNAP, STRING,
EAT WHOLE!**



CHOICE BOX:
SAUTE MIX

COMING SOON:
**CARROTS AND CIPPOLINI
ONIONS**

From one extreme . . .

Seems a distant memory -- all that rain that produced the weeds we wrote about last week and stymied our efforts to transplant, cultivate and seed crops on time. Now we have a mini-drought (well, ok, a dry spell.) Richard, Michael, Adrian and Scott spent many hours getting our substitute for mother nature's rain up and running. We have two irrigation systems, both consisting of a pump driven off a tractor engine, flexible mainline hose, and hundreds of movable aluminum pipe in 30 foot sections with sprinklers. The water comes from the Bad Axe River and the Spring Creek. We haven't used the systems since last fall, so there were lots of things to do to get them ready.

Norm mowed the tall grass at the pump stations so we could work safely alongside the stream. Then the pump is eased carefully into place, close enough to the water to allow the intake hose to reach into a deep pool. Pipe by pipe, Michael and Adrian carry the 30 foot sections across the rows until they are just the right distance from the edge, (we don't need to water the road!) They lay the pipes end for end, pushing the tapered end of one into the gasketed end of another, then lock them together with the latch. Finally when all are in place their sprinklers standing erect on their 3 foot risers so they can spray over even a relatively tall crop, it's time to connect the mainline from the pipe to the pump. The blue hose snakes down the slope toward the creek and the waiting pump. Time to test and clean the system.

As you can imagine, the aluminum pipes make great shelters for all sorts of critters while idle during the rainy season. Before the end plug is put in place the lines are flushed out, carrying with it old bunny and mouse nests, wasp nests and countless other pieces of debris. The pump is started and idling, the water is bucketed up and poured in to prime it, then the true test comes. Will the prime take? Will the water run? In a perfect world the pump's valve is opened and the mainline swells like an over-grown python. The crackle over the radio from Michael at the end of the line says the water is gushing out the end of the line, carrying the trash, cleaning the system. A-Okay!

In a real world the prime doesn't hold until the 4th try and all arms are tired by the time they are rewarded with the crackle of the radio. But worst of all to place the end plug the system must be without pressure, so it has to be shut down. Keep the fingers crossed that the prime holds!!

Then when Michael gives the ok, the pump goes again and this time the sprinklers will be on line. They begin to spit, then sputter and then the sharp snap, snap, snap of the metal paddles against the stream of water can be heard progressing down the line. Invariably the first time the line is used for the season a sprinkler or two is plugged. (Mud daubers are the main culprits, or debris that didn't clear the line in the flushing.) All hands are at the ready with a wrench just the right size and a cleaning wire. Down the line the crew walks looking for sprinklers that aren't working quite right. It's not usually hard to clean them and get

them going, but it takes time. If you are real lucky you'll only have to clean a few. If Murphy's Law rules you may have to clean every one and some twice! In the end, there's nothing more rewarding than seeing all the arcs of water twirling and the crops underneath glistening in the evening sun.

It's not a substitute for the real thing, rain! And I don't want to figure out how many days it would take to water the whole farm, which rain does very nicely, thank you! But, we don't try to water the whole farm, we prioritize, focusing on the crops in the most critical stages! The garlic is just finishing its final bulb making, it really needed water to maximize bulb size. The onion crop, the most beautiful we've had in years, is also in a state of important growth. It seems to have doubled its bulb sizes overnight after being irrigated. If we don't get rain by Monday we'll give the heading cauliflower a good drink!

Ge, too wet, too dry, that's farming! Wonder what weather is in store for us next! -- Linda

ZUCCHINI-CURRANT PANCAKES

2 cups all purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups buttermilk
3/4 cup vegetable oil
3 large eggs
1 medium zucchini, grated, squeezed to remove excess moisture
1/2 cup fresh currants
Additional vegetable oil
Butter

Maple syrup (Or the currant syrup below)

Preheat oven to 200°F. Whisk first 7 ingredients in large bowl. Whisk buttermilk, 3/4 cup oil and eggs in medium bowl. Add to dry ingredients and mix just until blended but still lumpy. Fold in zucchini and currants.

Heat griddle or heavy large skillet over medium heat. Brush lightly with vegetable oil. Working in batches, pour batter by 1/3 cupfuls onto griddle, spacing apart. Cook until bottoms are golden, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook until second sides are golden and pancakes are cooked through, about 2 minutes. Transfer to baking sheet; keep warm in oven. Serve hot with butter and syrup.

Makes 12 pancakes

RED CURRANT SYRUP

This recipe comes from Jordan, last year's chef. This syrup can be used in vinaigrettes, with champagne (1 part syrup, 5 parts champagne) for Kirs, or as a glaze for pork, lamb, or duck. Put it over fruit or ice cream for a special treat.

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup water
1 pint currants

Bring water and sugar to a boil. Add currants. Simmer for a few minutes. smash the currents against the side of the pot with a spoon to break them up. Remove from heat, and let berries steep for 30 minutes. Strain the sauce into a jar or squeeze bottle, and refrigerate.

EASY CURRANT VINAIGRETTE

Put 1/4 cup syrup and 2 Tbsp. champagne vinegar, with a little salt and pepper, into a jar or blender, add 3/4 cup veg. oil and shake or blend well.

Sorrel, oxalic acid, and you.

Most recently we had some questions from CSA members about Sorrel, which appeared in the choice box last week, and a compound it contains called oxalic acid. Richard asked me to do a little research and see what I could turn up. This is what I found.

Oxalic acid is a colourless, crystalline, organic compound belonging to the family of carboxylic acids. Synthesized oxalic acid is widely used as an acid rinse in laundries, where it is effective in removing rust and ink stains because it converts most insoluble iron compounds into a soluble complex ion. It occurs as the free acid in beet leaves, rhubarb and its leaves, wood sorrel, and New Zealand spinach. This sounds bad, but actually is not. First of all, *New Zealand* spinach, and *Wood* sorrel are in completely different genres than their common counterpart; Sorrel and Spinach we grow here. Wood sorrel is in the genus *Oxalis*, a member of the shamrock family. True sorrel, or dock (genus *Rumex*), is a member of the buckwheat family. True sorrels get their sour taste from a large content of vitamin C and potassium oxalate, which has been found to aid in digestion, as well as many other "folk cures" including cancer treatment. It is found to protect against chromosome damage by bringing more oxygen to the blood stream. So celebrate and cook up a big pot of sorrel soup, or some creamed spinach with sorrel, it tastes great! (We do have one word of caution; some folks are allergic to beet leaf and it may be the concentration of oxalic acid that bothers them -- after all rhubarb leaves are so concentrated with it as to be considered inedible.) Happy Cooking! -If you have any other questions, or are just plain interested I would be happy to send you all of the information that I found on this subject. Harry

Featured Fruit



BASMATI RICE SALAD WITH CURRANTS AND NUTS

4 cups water
2 cups brown basmati rice
1 1/3 cups thinly sliced green onions
1 1/2 cups thinly sliced celery
3/4 cup minced fresh parsley
3/4 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup fresh currants
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
5 tablespoons olive oil
5 tablespoons lemon juice
3 tablespoons soy sauce
2 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin

Combine 4 cups water and rice in large saucepan. Bring to boil. Cover; reduce heat and simmer until tender, about 35 minutes. Drain if necessary. Transfer rice to large bowl. Fluff with fork. Cool. Mix in green onions, celery, parsley, pecans, currants and walnuts.

Whisk olive oil, lemon juice, soy sauce and cumin in small bowl to blend. Pour over rice salad; toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve.

Serves 6 to 8 as a side-dish or 4 as a main-course