



News from Provident Organic Farm



www.providentfarm.org

Season 3, Week 16

“dedicated to a safe, just, and sustainable food system”

July 25th-31st, 2004

Notes from the Field, v. 3, #16

Enough rain already! Last week we had 3” between Saturday and Sunday and this week we had 2” from Thursday night to Friday morning and another 1.7” on Saturday. Last year, as most of you know, we had too many rain events like the past week and lost a lot of our crops. This year we have not had any excessive rain events until this week and the crops are faring well. The rainfall over the past 8 days will prevent me from being able to work any ground for the fall crops for a while, but has not caused any severe damage to the present crops, except possibly the watermelons and remaining cantaloupes. I am a bit concerned about the winter squash and the heirloom tomatoes. They are both susceptible to mildew and blight, respectively, and conditions are “ripe” with the rains and overcast skies. I use a biofungicide called Surround. Its mode of action is surrounding the foliage with a light coating of clay. The spores land on the foliage but are unable to grow and multiply. A good farmer and very good friend of mine, Eric Rice of Middletown, Md., did some of the initial field trials in his apple orchard many moons ago.

Numerous scientific studies have been done regarding the ability of crops grown organically to withstand extreme weather events better than their conventional counterparts. Having managed the leased field organically for three years now, I have seen much improvement. According to my most recent soil test, the level of organic matter in the soil has increased from under 1% to 3.5%. I have not kept as accurate yield data as I wish I had, but I remember in our first year our

best picking from a 200 ft. row of string beans was 35 lbs. This year we are averaging above 80 lbs. per row, which is considered average. I have also noticed a reduction in insect and disease pressure. Every year is different, and the last 3 have been a real roller coaster ride, but over time trends are revealed.

Conventional farmers will never reap the benefits of improved soil quality. Their operating costs will never go down. Unfortunately, this is designed into the system in which they function. It is not in the best interests of their suppliers to help them improve their soil. Sales persons for agri-chemical companies function, unwittingly perhaps, in the same fashion as illegal drug dealers and tobacco companies.

If you extrapolate this fundamental difference between organic farmers and conventional farmers you will arrive at a point in time when organic food will be less expensive than conventional food. If you consider the externalized costs of the environmental damage caused by conventional/corporate farming and the cost of subsidizing the system, organic food already is less expensive. In an interview with Maria Rodale, granddaughter of J. I. Rodale, that I read a few years ago, she said that organic agriculture reflects the **true** cost of growing food. I like to express that sentiment as organic food is **honest** with the consumer in every way. Before I ride this train of thought into a real rant, I will close.

Onward,
Jay



Food for Thought, Thought for Food

I read an essay by Sister Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm in Blairstown, NJ in EARTHLIGHT titled “Food as Sacrament”. Sister Miriam would be my choice for Secretary of Agriculture. Genesis Farm operates a very successful CSA and is a “learning center for re-inhabiting the Earth” where the farmers practice what they call “sacred agriculture” In the article she discusses our disconnection with the spiritual aspect of growing and harvesting food as being the root cause (no pun intended) of our agricultural and ecological woes.

She writes, “From early times Western culture has carried the burden of guilt for the existence of chaos in the Universe. Only now are we realizing that the Universe was divinely organized from the beginning with chaos as an integral dimension. Our earlier perceptions have cast a shadow over the attitude with which Western peoples have “discovered” and evolved “agriculture”. Feeling doomed to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow explains part of the deep, hidden rage against the natural world described by Thomas Berry.” She goes on to say, (this is my favorite part) “If we were to accept the Earth on the terms and under the exquisite conditions in which it continues to evolve, the role of the farmer would be raised to a most honorable and sacred profession.” Right on, Sister Miriam.

You can access EARTHLIGHT at www.earthlight.org.

“To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, destructively, it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness and others to want.”

Wendell Berry

Grilled and Roasted Vegetables

4	peppers
2	squash or zucchini
2	eggplant
2	garlic cloves, finely chopped
3 tbsp	fresh basil leaves
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar
8 tbsp	olive oil
--	salt and black pepper

Broil the peppers on all sides until the skin is totally black. Put into a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and leave to cool. Peel off the skin, remove seeds and stalks and divide peppers into eighths.

Cut the eggplant and squash into 1/2-inch slices lengthways and broil until crisp outside and soft inside, about 5 minutes. Let cool and cut into 2-inch pieces.

Put all the broiled vegetables into a large bowl. Mix the garlic with the oil and vinegar in a cup. Add garlic dressing and basil to the vegetables, season and toss together.

Serves 6.

Adapted from *River Café Cook Book Green*, Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers, 2000.

Prep Tips: Use white wine or balsamic vinegar instead of red wine vinegar.

In your share this week:

Tomatoes
Peppers
Eggplant
Carrots
Leeks
Watermelons
Cantaloupes
Italian flat beans

Roast Squash with Salsa Verde

1 1/2 lbs	squash, trimmed but kept whole
2	garlic cloves, chopped
1 tbsp	Dijon mustard
1 large handful	fresh flat-leaved parsley or basil
1 small handful	fresh mint
3 tbsp	olive oil
--	salt
--	juice of 1/2 lemon

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Cover a baking sheet with foil, oil it lightly and arrange the squash on it. Brush their tops with a little oil and roast for 50 minutes.

Take the squash out of the oven and, when they are a little cooler, slice them across into 2-inch long pieces. Then cut each piece lengthwise to produce thin batons. Place the pieces in a large bowl.

While the squash are cooling, make the salsa: place all the ingredients, apart from the olive oil, in a food processor with salt to taste and work into a smooth paste. With the machine still running, slowly add in the olive oil and blend until well emulsified to a thick pesto-like sauce.

Shortly before the salad is to be served, add the sauce to the squash and toss gently to coat them.

Serves 4-6.

Adapted from *Healthy Mediterranean Cooking*, Rena Salaman, 1996.



Good Stuff, Cool Stuff

Don't forget that the Farmer's Market has moved! It is now at the corner of Rt. 50 and Rt. 13 in the District Court parking lot on Saturdays 8am to 1pm and Wednesdays 12 noon to 5pm.

We need plastic grocery bags, but please don't send us bags that have had contact with meat products. We also can't use small bags such as newspaper bags, English muffin bags, etc.



THE LEADER IN ORGANIC-BASED LAWN CARE

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Comments & Contributions

We welcome your comments and contributions, including recipes! Please send to ubuubok@dmv.com or Provident Organic Farm CSA, PO Box 62, Bivalve, MD 21814.