Notes from the Field:
Woodchucks and Parasitic Wasps

It’s a shame that wasps don’t parasitize woodchucks—these days we have plenty of both. The wasps are being shipped to the farm on a weekly basis and the woodchucks are actively burrowing from the hedgerows into the fields.

The parasitic wasp deliveries are our first experiment in biological control as a pest management strategy. The Trichogramma wasp is considered to be an effective beneficial insect used to control the European corn borer. The small millimeter-sized wasp parasitizes the corn borer by laying its eggs within the egg masses of the corn borer. The wasp larvae will then feed within the corn borer eggs, destroying them as the wasp pupates. For the past several weeks we have been hanging small paper cartridges full of wasp eggs within our corn and pepper plantings. We hope to gradually build a viable wasp population, one that can begin to control corn borer outbreaks similar to those that have recently stalled our sweet pepper harvest.

Meanwhile, our resident woodchuck population has awakened to the sweet taste of heirloom melons and tomatoes. It appears that they have strategically timed their attack to coincide with the ripening of these delicious, century old varieties. We are mystified by each new burrow that we discover, dug hundreds of feet from the nearest forest fringe and surfacing just below our defenseless fruits. The woodchucks bring with them a voracious appetite and also a sampling of the sandy subsoil that lies beneath our plow layer. One nibble and they move on to the next plant. While we are fascinated by their invisible network of tunnels we are also extremely aggravated by these feeding habits. The lazy, snobby, or perhaps smartest of the woodchuck family simply wait until we complete the harvest, sort and wash the fruit, and pile it under the canopy behind the wash station.

Since the wasps don’t seem interested in changing hosts, we have stepped up our efforts to limit woodchuck damage. Our knowledge of the woodchuck life cycle continues to grow; we have recently learned that young woodchucks are most likely to disperse from their burrows during the months of July and August. We hope that our repeated efforts to destroy burrows will encourage them to move on . . . beyond the Lyman Estate.

Of course, our most steady defense continues to be the early morning walks of Dee Kricker and her dog Butch. For long term chuckie management, we’re counting on Devlin, Robert’s new young Westie, who must learn to fill the shoes of the great woodchuck hunting legend, MacGregor. The stories are still emerging.
**Garden Salsa**

Sent in by shareholder Chris Corvi, who says, “This recipe is more of a concept than something to be followed carefully—all things can be adjusted to taste. I have developed it over time and I prefer lots of hot pepper and cilantro while others may not. This week I was able to make it with all veggie ingredients from the CSA share.”

For about a quart of salsa:

- 3 small tomatoes
- 2 tomatillos
- 1 green pepper
- 1 spring onion
- ½ clove garlic (the garlic I got from the farm has huge cloves)
- Small amount of Cilantro
- Fresh hot pepper to taste
- Black pepper
- Sea salt
- Olive oil
- Pinch of sugar
- ½ pinch of cinnamon

Optional:
- Handful of diced pineapple or mango

Rough chop the tomato, tomatillo, and green pepper. Finely chop the onion, hot pepper, and cilantro. Combine all ingredients in a big ceramic bowl and mix. Add salt and black pepper to taste and olive oil for texture.

**Simplify Your Life!**

**Connect with your Environment!**

Are you concerned about quality of life, the environment, and the health of our community? Would you like to meet people in the community who also care about these issues?

Come to an **introductory presentation** to explore these ideas.

**Date:** Sunday, September 12  
**Time:** 6:30pm–8:00pm  
**Location:**  
Community Farms Outreach  
Waltham Fields Community Farm  
UMass Field Station (gray building)  
240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA

We will discuss how you can join an 8-session discussion group to explore issues of voluntary simplicity or deep ecology. Through readings and discussions, we will examine the connection between our own lifestyles and our environment, and consider what it would mean to live more sustainably and harmoniously with our environment.

Study guides for these two groups have been developed by the Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI). For more information about the discussion groups visit www.nwei.org or contact Gretta Anderson at GrettaAnderson@ISUAlum.com or Bridget Spann at (781) 259-4052, bspann@care2.com.

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**To reach us:**

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We welcome your recipes, farm experiences, ideas! Please send newsletter submissions to newsletter@communityfarms.org.

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Community Farms Outreach is a nonprofit organization dedicated to farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education.