Notes from the Field

The ‘light drizzle’ forecast for August 14 and 15 turned into a downpour that mercifully preceded a cool front. We had been experiencing a pretty significant hot and dry spell throughout July and early August, which, combined with our light soils and the intense transpiration (the plant equivalent of breathing) that all the biomass of our crops and weeds have been doing lately meant more time spent irrigating (and less spent doing other things, like weeding) and very tough conditions at our non-irrigated fields at the Lyman Estate.

The rainy day on Monday, August 15, was the first that we had had in a long time, and gave us a chance to seed our last round of lettuce in the greenhouse while being grateful that our crops in the field were finally getting some water that it did not take farm staff to deliver. We are picking tomatoes like crazy (1000 pounds on Sunday—the harvest crew finally had to stop when they ran out of time), peppers and eggplants are sizing up, and we’ve had the beginnings of the melon harvest in the past week.

We had to bring in close to half of our pumpkins last week—about a month earlier than we’d like to—after we discovered that woodchucks were gnawing on the ripest fruits. All the pumpkins we’re growing are edible varieties, good for pies, soup, roasting, or autumn risotto dishes, which means that they have a relatively high concentration of sugars and are very tasty to our woodchuck neighbors. Last season we suffered great winter squash losses to woodchucks, so when we saw the chewing begin this year, we decided that harvesting the crop early—and possibly saving a good deal of it—was the best option that we had. The pumpkins have cured for a week in the greenhouse and will go up to our root cellar until the season is more conducive to cooking them!

Our fall crops are growing beautifully. Transplanted cabbage, celeriac, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, bok choi, escarole, beets, endive, radicchio, fennel, winter squash and Swiss chard, as well as direct seeded arugula, turnips, radishes, mixed braising greens, carrots and spinach, look great in the field, and we’re hoping that our autumn distributions will be diverse and bountiful.

Over the past two weeks we’ve said goodbye to one of our staff members for the season and hello to a new one. Aviva Gerber, our education intern this season, is going back to school at Brandeis. We will miss Aviva’s integrity, honesty, beautiful beginner’s mind, deep compassion and fierce courage. She squashed many more than her share of potato beetles this season, and pulled more than her share of giant weeds. We wish her luck and are grateful that she’ll be around the area to drop in from time to time. Trina Smith joined us from Maine as an additional assistant grower for the fall months. Trina’s experience and energy are a breath of fresh air to all of our tired crew members. We welcome her to our staff and look forward to all that she has to bring to our farm and community. Please welcome her and introduce yourself if you get a chance. Hope you’re all well and enjoying the last month of summer!

—Amanda, for the farm crew
Hi, all—

Although we are in the midst of Heat and Tomatoes, try to imagine next spring. By then, Amanda and her crew (and the earth!) will be rest up, the greenhouse will be full of seedlings, and there will be crops growing in the fields. In April, we'll throw a big celebration for members and friends called the Spring Fling and Silent Auction.

The 'Spring Fling' helps support our nonprofit mission—especially to help feed needy families. Last summer I helped drive bulging boxes of our produce to relief agencies in Waltham. It was needed—and loved! The Salvation Army incorporated it into daily meals for 50–75 families. The Red Cross gave it out weekly to a couple hundred of their thousands of client families. Our produce was more than calories. It said, simply and clearly: good, healthy food shouldn't be a “luxury” for anyone.

I’m writing to you now to invite your help to plan this very important annual fundraising event. People have come to expect delicious food, fine acoustic music, and usually some family-friendly dancing. Last year we had hundreds of auction items—from gardening gloves to weekend escapes—to match every budget. This year we are aiming for at least 100 people and $10,000 income. You can help!

You could become part of the 'core group' or lend a hand on a short-term project. I'd be happy to discuss the options, including publicity, communications, auction, decorations, music, food, etc. We value and respect your time—and your time constraints. If we start soon we can spread out the work.

If you want to get to know an interesting group of people . . . and give back to the farm that has given so much to so many, please call me at home: 617-576-2352, or email me: laurierothstein@yahoo.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Laurie Rothstein

PS: Even if you are really busy—but want to help—give me a call!

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Green Bean Pesto Salad
Submitted by shareholder Lorraine Burke, owner of Beets Cookin’ Personal Chef Service (617-460-2966)
Adapted from Moosewood Restaurant Cooks at Home

Pesto:
- 2 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1/3 cup loosely packed fresh parsley leaves
- 3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1/3 cup pine nuts
- 2 cups fresh green beans, stemmed (about 3/4 pound)
- 8 small potatoes (Red Bliss or Yukon gold), quartered
- 2 tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1/2 cup red onion, thinly sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a saucepan, bring 2 quarts of salted water to a boil. Meantime, puree pesto ingredients in a food processor. Add green beans to the boiling water and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Remove beans from the boiling water with a slotted spoon, and ease the potatoes into the boiling water. Cook potatoes until they are easily pierced with a knife. Drain. Arrange ingredients individually on a platter, or toss together. Serve warm or refrigerate for later.

Marinated Tomato-Basil Salad
Submitted by shareholder Susan Wernimont

3 pints cherry tomatoes (halved) or 8 large tomatoes (sliced ½ inch thick)
- 3-4 small red onions, chopped (or 1 large red onion, sliced into rings)
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil
- ½ cup rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt

Place tomatoes and onions in a large bowl (if using cherry tomatoes) or arrange in a 13 x 9-inch dish (if using slices). Combine basil and remaining four ingredients, stirring well with a whisk. Pour over tomatoes and onions. Cover and chill at least 2 hours.