



## News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

*Week #11! We continue forward and are very relieved that the rain has left us alone for the time being. After last Friday's 3" beating, we'll happily take some respite. We are finally and most definitely seeing the effects in the fields from 10 weeks of rain in the form of low yields, disease and even missing crops. We try to focus on what does look good and keep things positive all around. We are hoping for sun sun and more sun to see us into the fall (is it that time already??? I'm afraid so...)...*

### You Eat, We Learn

**A**s we round the half way point of the CSA season, we force ourselves to take pause from our busy days to evaluate the season thus far. By doing this, we are able to take note of any and all valuable lessons that we have learned thus far, so that we can apply them to next year's growing season. In this manner, we can continue down the path of improvement, which is and has always been at the core of our mission statement: to become better farmers.

We've got a long row to hoe, so to speak, to become the kind of the farm that we want to be. I will be the first to admit - we are most certainly still novices when it

comes to medium scale vegetable farming. And all it takes is a rainy, wet year like this one to remind us of how our ignorance and perhaps arrogance can make us so completely vulnerable to things like crop diseases and poor soil conditions.

Don't get me wrong - we have a fair amount of experience behind us. We've done our homework, that much is true. (Josh and Noah grew up farming after all.) In addition, Noah spent his post-high school years learning how to farm from world class vegetable farmers Martin and Atina Diffley (of Gardens of Eagan). Plus, Mike and Noah both worked under the tutelage of Richard de Wilde and Linda Halley of Harmony Valley Farm - one of the biggest and best CSA farms in the Midwest. These two farms represent all that is great about vegetable farming and our experiences there have taught us countless lessons that we use each and every day.

In addition to all of this, all 3 of us (and even a few of the Driftless crew) attend classes, workshops and demonstrations to keep abreast to new developments in the vegetable farming scene.

Where we learn the most though

## THIS WEEK'S BOX:

- Banana Peppers
- Bell Peppers
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cucumbers
- Edamame
- Garlic
- Lacinato Kale
- Pimiento Peppers
- Red Shallots
- Sweet Corn
- Sweet Mini Peppers
- Watermelon

is from the land (of course). It is those giant subtleties, like how a field reacts to 3" of rain, that no other farmer or workshop can teach us. And this year, every single one of our 46 fields has taught us something: Field 14 (the tomato field) taught us how dangerously destructive late blight can be (see below). Field 24 has taught us that if you take care of a field, it will take care of you. This is a field that we have pampered for all of the years we have farmed it by rotating crops, giving it a rest, cover cropping and feeding the heck out of it. Field 24 is where a lot of your food has come from this year and we're thankful for its bounty.

There are countless other lessons that we have the opportunity to learn each and every day, if we keep our eyes and minds open to them. Taking note on and making changes and improvements is what keeps farming so fun and new each passing year. As we grow, we learn, and as we learn, we hopefully grow better.

-- Mike

### A TALE OF TERRIBLE TOMATOES

For those of you who were with us last year, this is going to sound vaguely and somewhat nauseatingly (at least to us) familiar. Tomato blight. What we know is that we have it. Bad. What we don't know is why or how we can prevent it. Don't get me wrong: we've taken a number of precautions including moving the tomato field 5 miles up from where it was last year, sterilizing tomato stakes, choosing resistant varieties, trellising the plants, planting them on plastic mulch, and so on. All of this, from what we have been taught, is supposed to keep fungal diseases out of the tomatoes.

So, this is the heartbreaking tale of watching an acre patch of the most beautiful looking tomato plants you have ever seen turn into an ugly dead pile diseased nastiness in a matter of weeks.

This is characteristic of late blight, which has been an expanding problem for many growers in Wisconsin for the last two years. Late blight also affects potatoes, and is the fungal disease responsible for the infamous Irish potato famine of the 1850s. Rainy years like this one, where rain and mud are constantly splashing up on the plants, are very conducive for spreading the fungus.

My intent today is not to garner sympathy, just to let you know why the heck there are no tomatoes in the box at the height of the summer! Believe me, it is killing us not having tomatoes right now, not just because of all of the hard work we all put into growing the patch, but also because a CSA box in August just is not complete without a big 'ol bag of the delicious fruit.

Is there any good news here? Well, we do have a second patch of tomatoes that is just starting to show some ripening fruit. Let's hope the blight spares this crop!

## THIS WEEK'S BOX by Dani Lind

**Banana Peppers** – There will be 2 of these long-ish yellow peppers in your box this week. There are of medium heat and go well with fajitas.

**Bell Pepper** – red, yellow, &/or green. Store in the crisper drawer of your fridge & use within a week. To freeze, simply dice or slice & place in zip-lock bags with the air squeezed out.

**Broccoli** – the last of it for a little while. Store in plastic in the fridge & use up within 5 days or so. To utilize more of the stem (just as tasty & nutritious as the florets!), cut florets into long, thin pieces far down into the stem or cut it off & grate it into coleslaws or salads.

**Carrots** – store in plastic in the fridge.

**Cucumbers** – try them in the Cucumber Arame Salad recipe. This may be the last of them for the year, as heavy rain last week wiped out most of the plantings.

**Garlic** – cured German Red - has cloves that are relatively small but full of flavor & bite. Store in a dark, dry, cool place.

**Edamame** – our favorite August treat! Japan's healthy alternative to peanuts as a bar snack. To cook, simply throw the beans in their shells into boiling, salted water. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, drain, run under cold water until cooled, sprinkle generously with sea salt, & serve. Use your teeth to pull the beans out of their pods, getting a nice tasting of salt while you do. Store in plastic in the fridge.

**Lacinato Kale** – my favorite kale variety - sweet, tender, dark green leaves full of nutrients. Steam them or toss them into soups, stir-fries, or sauces right at the end of cooking. Store in plastic in the fridge & use within 5 days or so.

**Red Beets** – are so pretty in salads, whether raw, boiled, steamed, or roasted. Store in plastic in the fridge for many weeks.

**Red Shallots** – are somewhere between an onion & garlic with something subtle added in. Delicious raw shaved thinly onto salads or sandwiches or blended into dressings. Or saute with mushrooms & minced red peppers & toss into pasta with fresh basil.

**Sweet Corn** – Sadly, the last of it for the season! It's not too late to try Mike & I's favorite way: Mexican "elote" style - rub the husked, cooked ears with fresh lime, then smear on some mayo, sprinkle with dried parmesan or romano (or dried queso blanco if you can find it) and chipotle powder. We can't get enough!!

**Sweet Mini Peppers** – these cute little multi-colored guys are popular because they have barely any seeds & are perfect for single servings (no rotting half-peppers in a plastic baggie lost in the back of the fridge!). There will either be an assortment of red, yellow and orange or all orange. Store in the fridge for up to a week.

**Watermelon** – I haven't tried it yet, but I recently saw a recipe for chopped watermelon in goblets with chilled champagne poured over them - yum! Enjoy these seeded treats outside where you can spit the seeds at random.

**BONUS ITEM: Basil** – keeps best with freshly snipped stems in a glass of water on the counter. Chop up & toss with pasta, add to salads, or use instead of lettuce on sandwiches.

### Cucumber Arame Salad with Edamame & Bell Pepper

1 oz. arame (a type of Japanese seaweed found at natural or Asian food stores)  
 2 cucumbers, thinly sliced  
 1 tsp sea salt  
 1 cup unshelled edamame  
 2 carrots, cut into thin matchsticks  
 1 bell pepper or 3 mini peppers, cut into thin 2" strips  
 1/4 c. rice vinegar  
 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil  
 1 tsp. sugar  
 freshly ground black pepper

Soak arame in warm water for 15 minutes. Drain & rinse. Meanwhile, sprinkle salt over sliced cucumbers in a bowl & set aside for 10 minutes. Drain & rinse. Boil unshelled edamame in salted water for about 4 minutes. In the last minute, add carrot matchsticks. Drain edamame & carrots into colander & rinse under cold water until cooled. Shell edamame. In a serving bowl, whisk vinegar, oil, sugar, & black pepper until sugar dissolves. Add seaweed & all vegetables & serve. Serves 4-6.

### Caramelized Shallots

3/4 tablespoon butter  
 2-3 shallots, peeled and roughly chopped  
 1/2 tablespoon sugar

Melt butter in small cast-iron skillet (or other heavy skillet) over medium heat. Add shallots; sauté 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low; sprinkle shallots with sugar. Cook until shallots are caramelized, about 10 minutes. Great as a pizza topping.

### Beet Chocolate Cake

from MACSAC's *Asparagus to Zucchini* Foodbook

2 cups sugar  
 2 cups flour  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 1 teaspoon baking soda  
 3-4 ounces unsweetened chocolate  
 4 eggs  
 1/4 cup oil  
 3 cups shredded beets

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Grease two 9-inch cake pans. Whisk dry ingredients with eggs and oil. Combine flour mixture with chocolate mixture, alternating with the beets. Pour into pans. Bake until fork can be removed from center cleanly, 40-50 minutes. Makes 10 servings.