



WEEKLY NOTE *Week of August 15, 2016*

Fresh from the Farm!

Last Wednesday the crew seeded our open fields (fields that have been open since spring peas, broccoli, onions, etc) to a cover crop. We were hoping to catch some rain and indeed Thursday and Friday came through in fine form. We had just under 1". How timely! The cover crop we use is a mix of oats, buckwheat, vetch, and field pea. Seeded here in mid August, these crops should fill those fields with green this fall, forming good root base and biomass. We expect frost to set in, killing it before it seeds out.



This will leave us with some nice ground cover for the winter. The remnants of these crops will be incorporated with spring tillage.

When we seed this late cover crop, I begin to feel the first nudge of the season's conclusion.. There seem to be layers of recognizing this shift; this is one of the first. I felt it when Tim and I rolled up and put away the last row cover for field crops on Saturday. I felt it when the heat and humidity of the past week relented to cooler temperatures. Signs of the season's transition extend beyond the farm. Sunday morning the fog breathed out from the woods across from



THIS WEEK

- Tomatoes
- Green pepper
- Summer squash/Zucchini
- Cucumbers
- Beans
- Parsley
- Basil

Items that are going only to sites with EOW pick up this week:

- Red Cabbage**
- Beets**

GO GOURMET

- Eggplant** (Asian & Globe varieties)
- Cherry tomatoes**
- Fennel**
- Pac Choi**

the farm, hugging the surface of the marsh as a flock of pelicans glided on the mirror surface. Tim counted 15 Great Blue Herons in the marsh that same morning - gathering up, hunting. We've seen robins flocking in the yard, small groupings of blackbirds, and yes, the sumac leaves are turning.

Oh, there's still plenty of the growing season to go and crops to fill out. Winter squash looks great, but has a ways to go. Becky and Christa B. cleared out one of our remaining weedy plots - young beets on Monday, the same time as Tim and I were moving the baby chicks to the field - five weeks to their butcher date. We have lettuce transplant and a final beet seeding on this week's schedule. Yes, hints of fall, but still plenty to keep us out of trouble.



Our PFI Field Day this past Sunday drew about 30 attendees. It was so great to see several of our farm members here! Tim talked about a



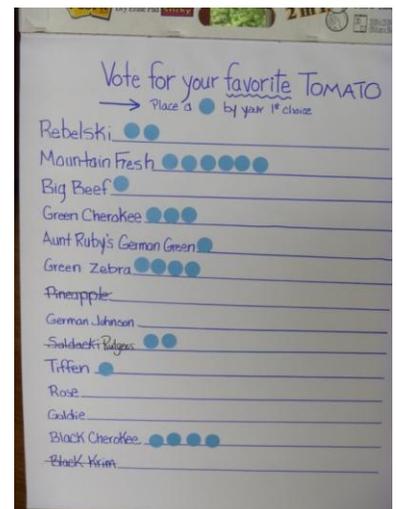
tomato variety trial he's capturing data for. I talked about the process of capturing data to develop an enterprise budget. Last year's data revealed our cost of production to be \$0.61/lb. Will be interesting to see if, after a second year of data tracking, the figure is any different. No two years are quite the same. This year's cucumbers are healthy, haven't been too weedy, and are really starting to produce.



After a short farm tour, participants returned to sample a our tomato varieties. voted on favorite tomatoes. Mountain Fresh - one of the varieties in Tim's study - took top place!

Vegetable in the Spotlight

Diversity in diet is something we strive for in raising such a range of vegetables. This time of year, however, we do have a distinctive dependence upon a narrower range of plant families - night shade plants



(tomato, peppers), cucurbit family (cucumber, zucchini). allium family (onion, garlic). Beets and beans - introduce two new families this week.

Beets have been evolved from the wild seaboot, which is native of coastlines from India to Britain. Over 2,000 years of cultivation have transformed a carrot shaped plant into the round root we know today. Beets - which come in red, pink, gold, and white, are rich in vitamin C, fiber, potassium, magnesium, manganese, and folic acid. We raise a traditional red beet as well as an Italian striped beet - Chioggia.

Green beans bring us back to that familiar pattern of crops that originated in Central and South America, returned with early explorers and cultivated in Europe, and have been incorporated into the U S diet.

Common, but intriguingly nutritious. They provide more than we might expect including carotenoids lutein, beta-carotene, violaxanthin, and neoxanthin. The only reason we don't see these carotenoids is because of the concentrated chlorophyll content of green beans and the amazing shades of green that it provides. The same report noted green beans as a good source of anti oxidants and absorbable mineral silicon - as important as calcium for bone healthy and healthy formation of connective tissue.

To retain the maximum number of health-promoting phytonutrients and vitamins and minerals found in green beans, we recommend Healthy Steaming them for just 5 minutes. This also brings out their peak flavor and provides the moisture necessary to make them tender, and retain their beautifully bright green color. It is best to cook green beans whole to ensure even cooking.

Cooking...Out of the Box

What's better than a cold, vegetable based soup on a hot day?! That was the situation last Wed. when all the good ingredients that were accumulating on our counter turned into lunch! Gazpacho with a dollop of homemade yogurt, red cabbage slaw, zucchini bread, sweet corn, and a slice of some delicious cantaloupe I picked up from the North Iowa Farmers Market Tuesday - yum!



Gazpacho

1 medium cucumber	1/2 t
1 medium onion	Worcestershire sauce
1 large tomato	1/2 t salt
8 c. tomato juice	dash of pepper
4 T wine vinegar or lemon juice or part of each	2 cloves garlic, <i>minced</i>
1 t sugar or honey	2 t parsley, <i>finely chopped</i>

Mix all ingredients together and chill before serving. Serve Gazpacho with a dollop of plain yogurt.

Soil & Soul - Partnerships & Pollinators

Partnerships and pollinators served as the theme of our field day. Here are a few of the points we made during our comments:

- the on-farm research project was our choice of focus because its organizing program - Practical Farmers of Iowa's (PFI) Cooperator program - is such a great example of how partnerships are cultivated through PFI.

- The annual cycle of the Cooperator's program begins with a December meeting. On- farm projects are reported on and we plot the next year's focus. All the while, producers are encouraged to design projects to answer questions they have about their farm, but...we don't ask those questions isolated from other farms.
- Farmer to farmer sharing and learning are core values of PFI and it has been these partnerships that have so informed and influenced our farm over the years. Here are just a few examples of the on-farm research projects we've been involved with and the impact they've had:
 - In 1999, we did an economic analysis of the farm. The results of that study gave us the courage to make the leap into farming full time together in 2002.
 - 2011 - 2012 - an energy study of our outside cooler helped us reduce its energy consumption.
 - 2015 pepper variety trial involving 6 different farms provided insight not only for our farm, but generated good data beneficial to producers across Iowa.

The partnership of pollinators in our food system was another focus of the field day. The 2008 Farm Bill made pollinators and their habitat a priority for USDA programs, and with that, a significant boost in pollinator conservation programming.

In recent years, the critical state of pollinator population has gained national attention. You may be familiar with the statistics of the impact of pollinators, but they warrant repeating:

- More than 30 percent of our food relies on insect pollination, which is overwhelmingly provided by bees.
- The ecological service pollinators provide is necessary for the reproduction of over 85% of the world's flowering plants, including more than two-thirds of the world's crop species.
- Honey bees are estimated to support \$15 billion in crop production
- wild native bees supply an estimated \$3 billion in pollination services.



This bumblebee was hard at work in our melon flowers Sunday and we could hear another in our bean flowers while harvesting on Monday.

About 10 years ago, as talk of the status of pollinators was beginning to gain ground, we started thinking more seriously about the impact on our farm. We had had honey bee hives located on our farm thanks to friends who managed the hives. When that situation changed and there were rumblings of declining pollinators, we wondered what our options were and what impact we might see on the crops we raised. Then we learned more about native pollinators such as bumblebees and squash bees. An opportunity for some pollinator study came our way and we learned we actually had quite a good population of both. The bumble bees are playing a significant role in pollination of our beans and our cucurbits (cucumbers, squash, and melons) and we want to continue to support them with quality habitat here on the farm.

Of the farm's 132 acres, we have 27 in Conservation Reserve Program. This past winter, we decided to enter another 4.5 acres, this time using the Pollinator Program. With this program, we receive payments for maintaining this planting and cost share toward the price of the seed. Pollinators need a good source of flowering plants all year long. The seed mixture came from a company in Des Moines and includes 8 different grasses and more than 30 different flower seeds. This will be our most diverse prairie planting yet. We will plant later fall/winter for a frost seeding. We are excited to watch this area develop over the coming years and

Weekly deliveries Mid May to early July and August to September

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