



WEEKLY NOTE Week of August 22, 2016

Fresh from the Farm!



As you unpack your box of vegetables, be sure to thank the pollinators! When we continually turned up plants loaded with green beans Monday afternoon, we knew the bumblebees and other pollinators had been working here. They also are responsible for the cucumbers, the zucchini, green peppers, and the tomatoes.

We turned the tables on field days and attended one ourselves this past weekend. Continuing the pollinator theme from our own field day, this was a whole day, complete with inside morning presentation by Xerxes Society staff, Sarah Folz Jordan and visits to two farms. The first farm visit was to

Genuine Faux Farm, owned and managed by Rob & Tammy Faux. Rob, pictured center, highlighted the farm's use of interplanted flowers for pollinator food throughout the farm. Pictured below is interplanting of pollinator-attracting flowers - borage and zinnias- bordering melon/squash planting.



More on pollinators under Soil & Soul.



THIS WEEK

- Tomatoes
- Green pepper
- Summer squash/Zucchini
- Cucumbers
- Green & Yellow Beans
- Summer Savory

Beets - *delivered to Garner, Belmond, and Clarion this week*

GO GOURMET

- Eggplant** (Asian & Globe varieties)
- Cherry tomatoes**

Saturday after the field day, we transplanted lettuce and direct seeded some more lettuce along with beets, spinach, and mustard greens. This planting should provide the last crops we need and take us through our November delivery. The only planting we have left now is garlic and that won't take place until late Oct., early Nov. ! The season is moving along!



This is a banner week for tomatoes and green beans. Monday we harvested the biggest flush of tomatoes yet this season. We are delivering Kits this week - packages of tomatoes for canning, complete with the necessary onions, garlic, herbs, green or hot peppers. We expect next week to be another good supply also and then level off as we continue further in to September.

Vegetable in the Spotlight

Summer Savory herb - In August, we find them with pretty little white flowers appear. Bees love them. A versatile herb that can be used in soups, stews, and marinades, and with meats and vegetable, especially good with string beans, limas, navy beans, soybeans, and all types of broad bean, goes well with many other vegetables, such as cabbage, tomatoes, green peppers, asparagus, cauliflower, mixed greens, and rice. Also tasty in stuffings, sausages, and pork pie, and with chicken, fish, game meats, beef, lamb, and eggs (try it in scrambled eggs or omelets). Steeped in vinegar or salad dressing, it lends an aromatic flavor. Try some fresh. If you have more than you can use fresh, strip the leaves from the stem and freeze them for use this winter.

here's a new for zucchini: **Italian-flavored pickled zucchini**

NOTE: The boiling water method is necessary to tenderize these cold-pack pickles

Ingredients

4 pounds summer squash or zucchini - *trim ened from the squash and cut into spears 1 in. shorter than the pint jars. Toss spears and...*

1 large onion *with*

1/2 c. salt - *cover with cold water and set aside for 2 hours. Drain, rinse thoroughly and drain again. Pack the squash mixture into clean, hot pint jars and divide*

4 garlic cloves, halved - *among the jars. Bring...*

4 c. distilled white vinegar

1/2 c. sugar, 1 T dried oregano, 1 t black peppercorns, 1 t dried rosemary, 1 t. dried thyme

1 bay leaf...*to a boil in a nonreactive saucepan. Pour the hot brine over the vegetables to cover by 1/2 inch. Leave 1/2 in. of headspace between the top of the liquid and the lid.*

CAN: Use the boiling water method. Release trapped air. Wipe the rims clean; center lids on the jars and screw on jar bands. Process for 30 minutes. Turn off heat, remove canner lid and let jars rest in the water for 5 minutes. Remove jars and set aside for 24 hours. Check seals, then store in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year.

Cooking...Out of the Box

. I stopped at one friend's house and she was quick to share several new pickle recipes she had just canned. We stopped at another friend's house and they had just made beet jelly and were getting ready to can peach jam. It's definitely food preservation time

Sunday we chopped, roasted and pureed a large batch of tomatoes. The night got too late so the canning part will come in a few days, but it is time to put the bounty of summer away for winter!

While I presume a number of you are old hats at food preservation, it's probably just as fair to hedge that some of you are quite new and may be trying your hand for the first time this summer.

Here are some tips/resources that we highly recommend:

- Basic food preservation techniques include freezing, drying/dehydrating, cold storage of items such as potatoes and onions, and canning. Today's comments are focused on freezing and canning.
- **Freezing** preserves food by stopping the growth of microorganisms.
 - To obtain the best quality, it is important to package food in containers that are designed to keep moisture in and air out; rigid freezer containers and plastic freezer bags are two ideal examples. Maximize locking air in with food by filling rigid containers almost full, pressing air out of bags. When freezing foods that contain liquids, leave at least 1/2 inch of space at the top for expansion.
 - Blanching is necessary for all vegetables except peppers, tomatoes, cooked pumpkin or squash, onions, and herbs. Blanching stops enzymatic action and prevents off-flavors, discoloration, destruction of nutrients and toughness. Blanching involves heating the vegetable briefly in either boiling water or steam. Blanching times vary with size and kind of vegetable. In general, a vegetable has been blanched long enough when it brightens in color. Once blanching is complete, cool the vegetable immediately by placing them into tub of cold/ice water.
- **Canning** takes time in preparation, canning, and clean up, but is a great way to put food up that can be stored as shelf stable. While incorrectly canned products can harbor dangerous microorganisms or disease-causing spores, this should not be a problem if you always follow current and reliable guidelines. There are two different canning methods - water bathing and pressure canning:
 - water bath canning for high acid foods - used for most fruits, tomatoes, and salsa recipes. Water bath canning involves submerging canning jars in boiling water for specific amounts of time. You'll need a large pot (large enough so the level of boiling water can be 2 inches above the top of the canning jars) with a tight fitting lid to hold the jars and have a rack to prevent the jars from direct contact with the bottom of the pot. Alternatively, canning rings can be used to line the bottom of the pot. Additional equipment includes canning jars (new or used, but be sure they are free of cracks or nicks on the lip), lids (always use new - available commercially), rings that screw on and hold the lid in place, a jar lifter or tongs to remove the jars from the boiling water.
 - Pressure canning for low acid foods - The pressure of a pressure canner is needed to push the water temperature higher (240° F) than the boiling point of water (212° F) to make low-acid food safe. Botulinum bacteria spores (found in soil and the food grown in soil) are not destroyed in boiling temperatures. Pressure canning involves much of the same equipment as outlined above with the pressure canner replacing the large pot. Pressure canners can be purchased commercially and are available with either a dial or weighted gauge which indicate when the jars have reached the necessary pressure. Most Extension offices offer pressure canner testing.
- Iowa State University has a wealth of resources on food preservation
 - Visit this link: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/preserve-resources>



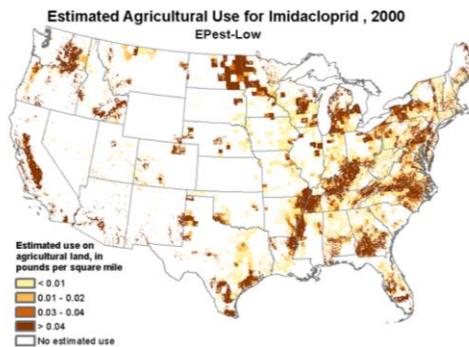
Soil & Soul - Patterns & Pollinators

Our morning session last Saturday shed light on some fascinating bee biology as well as insights regarding the impact of expanded use of insecticide known as neonicotinoids applied as seed coatings .

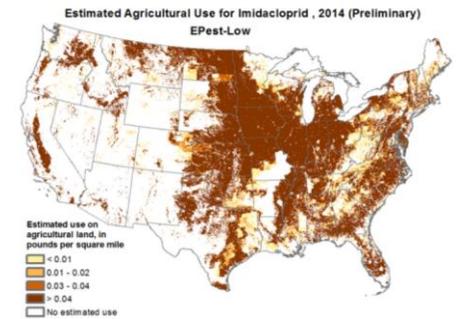
This series of three maps shows the expansion of Imidacloprid , the most widely used insecticide in the world as of 1999. As the maps¹ reflect, the expansion has been rapid and now is a common practice throughout the cornbelt. By 2011, at least a third of all soybean acres and at least 79 percent of all corn acres were planted with neonicotinoid-coated seed.



1994



2000



2014



Blue: Treated soy. Tan: untreated soy



Red: Treated corn. Yellow: untreated corn

These pesticides have been found to be mobile and very persistent, traveling into the plant, found in the pollen that the pollinators are eating, moving into the soil and being pulled up into wild flowers, again becoming a damaging food source for pollinators.²

Neonicotinoids are already known as a major cause of the decline of bees and other pollinators. These pesticides can be applied to the seeds of crops, and they remain in the plant as it grows, killing the insects which eat it. The quantities required to destroy insect life are astonishingly small: by volume these poisons are 10,000 times as powerful as DDT. When honeybees are exposed to just 5 nanogrammes of neonicotinoids, half of them will die².

The fact that the corporations which make these toxins claimed that they were harmless to species other than the pests they targeted is coupled with a serious shortfall in understanding of just how these chemicals function in the environment. The article I reference here states "*It's the new DDT: a class of poisons licensed for widespread use before they had been properly tested, which are now ripping the natural world apart.*"

But we don't have to close on that hopeless note. Alternative practices, including cover crops and pollinator habitat - have been proven to meet both pest defense AND pollinator promotion goals. We came away from the workshop with an arm load of fliers and a book "Farming with Native Beneficial Insects" that point to ecologically based system solutions.

Information Sources:

1. United States Geologic Service
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2013/aug/05/neonicotinoids-ddt-pesticides-nature>

Weekly deliveries Mid May to early July and August to September

Tuesdays – Mason City, Garner, Clear Lake

Wednesday - Belmond, Clarion, Farm

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