



# WEEKLY NOTE Week of May 23, 2016

## Fresh from the Farm!

I've been thinking about the waves of seasonal progress. Last week's weather was fabulous. This update of what's been happening at the farm began as a lovely review of the waves of bird migration that we follow along with the wave of flower and tree emergence. But Monday's rain over lunch time brought to mind a different spin on the concept of waves. The



rain, driven by strong south winds poured over the top of our solar array in...waves! That was quite a sight!

But true, we have been reveling in the season's wave of progress around here. First it's the return of geese in February, seeking purchase on the still frozen lake. While the population on the lake continues to change, the land based birds go through their own transitions. Early robins were followed by weeks of massive waves of blackbirds amassed in trees, across our yard. We've spied a couple of interesting warbler types. A brown thrasher "visited" us while planting broccoli, seeming to be announcing its arrival. The avian arrival list includes sandhill cranes, pelicans, great blue herons, and egrets (including the one that joined Sass in her pasture - a bit to her curiosity). For the past couple of weeks the loud and constant song of the oriole has punctuated the air. We keep an eye open for an indigo bunting on the way to the field. We noted last week that the boblinks had not arrived. Guess what we spied in the field this Monday... our first boblink! Geese are suddenly grouping up as several good sized flocks moved between the lake and our wetland. Blooms and new tree growth come with the waves of change as well. First it's the early blooms poking up, tulips, daffodils. Then it's the light green cast on the trees as first leaves emerge. There are waves of fragrance - plum blossoms with their sweet fragrance, lilacs, honeysuckle that nearly overpowers me as I pass by. Lily of the valley perfumed the whole barn yard last week.



## THIS WEEK

- Asparagus
- Lettuce
- Spinach
- Kale
- Chard
- Mixed greens (Arugula & mustard greens)
- Green Onion
- Rhubarb

Field work and vegetables progress through the season in waves as well. Rhubarb sprouts preceded emergence of our tiny asparagus patch. Garlic sprouts braved all the early cold and wet. First plantings are in the high tunnel - very protected. Tiny lettuces held their own, working on roots and then leaves. Once at the 2 leaf layer stage, they really start to take off. We've gotten all the spring crops pretty well settled and are now focusing on warm season crops. When we move to field plantings, we have to contend with mud, wind, and critters. Broccoli is a great example. After setting out a beautiful couple of beds of broccoli (even though we covered it with a mesh), ground squirrels enjoyed an early feast. We replanted with remaining transplants and



added a row cover to the mesh. That was 3 weeks ago. Last week the crew removed the cover to reveal nice sized plants that the critter will no longer bother. Remember the tiny potato sprout featured in last week's note? After thorough weeding this past week and warm temperatures, the rows are filling out nicely.



A first seeding of summer beets just got a wonderful deep watering Monday as did the herb transplants, set Friday. Getting ahead of this week's anticipated rains, Saturday was field planting of pepper & eggplant . Tim set up the drip tape system and once planted, we set about covering them. No critters are going to eat up these tender transplants.

Next in our wave of field work will be uncovering the peas and filling our second hoophouse with tomatoes. Wednesday's task.



**Vegetables in the Spotlight** Asparagus, Chard, and Green Onion are the new items in this week's box.

**Asparagus** is one of the items we purchase from a farmer colleague. Jeff Short, of Garner - a co-member of North Iowa Fresh, is our asparagus source. We plan for two deliveries - this and next week, hitting our delivery sites with both weekly and every other week deliveries each time.



Asparagus has a long history. There are records of it growing in ancient Greece and Rome. Egyptians over 2,000 years ago cultivated asparagus for medicinal reasons and legend has it that it was so revered they offered it up to gods in their rituals. I know asparagus lifts our spirits as one of the earliest vegetables, but it's also loaded with good nutrition: Asparagus is high in anti-inflammatory nutrients as well as provides a wide variety of antioxidant nutrients, including vitamin C, beta-carotene, vitamin E, and the minerals zinc, manganese and selenium. The vegetable contains the amino acid asparagine, as well as chromium, a trace mineral that helps insulin do its job transporting glucose. It's also especially rich in glutathione, a

detoxifying compound that can help destroy carcinogens. For this reason, asparagus may help fight or protect against certain cancers, including bone, breast, lung and colon cancers.

**Green onion** - these tender immature onions will be a regular feature in our Spring share. Whether you sprinkle them over egg drop soup or mix them into cold salads, green onions have high levels of vitamin A & C and calcium along with compounds that promote heart health and may help prevent cancer.

**Chard** - Guess what!... this is another vegetable with roots in the Mediterranean.

The vitamin and mineral profile of this leafy green vegetable contains enough



"excellents" to ensure its place at the head of the vegetable Dean's List. Concentrations of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber. Swiss chard also emerges as a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid. Chard is a great salad addition, saute with onions for cooked greens, add to egg dishes, etc.



## Cooking...Out of the Box

*This is a pretty tasty way to prepare asparagus that we tried this past weekend from one of my favorite cookbooks*

### **Asparagus Lemon Pasta** (Simply in Season)

8 oz. angel hair pasta - cook in boiling water for 4 min. Add asparagus

2 1/2 C. asparagus - cut into 1 inch pieces and cook 2 min. longer, until tender.

Drain

While pasta cooks, melt

1 T. butter in large fry pan, over medium heat, add

1/2 C. green onion - (chopped ) and

1 1/2 t. lemon peel - (grated) - sauté 1 min. Add

3 T. lemon juice - and cook until liquid is almost evaporated

Beat together

3/4 C. milk, 2 eggs - Add with pasta and asparagus to pan with green onions. Cook over low heat until milk mixture is slightly thick, about 4 min.s Do not boil.

Stir in... 1 T fresh dill (chopped or 1 t. dried), 1/4 t. salt, 1/8 t. ground nutmeg

Serve immediately. Serves 4 - 6



And the dressing recipes keep coming. This one from one of our new crew members, Marie Boyd

### **Lemon Poppy Seed Dressing:**

2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, 1 teaspoon honey, 1/2 teaspoon poppy seeds, 1/8 teaspoon salt, 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

## Mark Your Calendar

Summer is a great time to get out to farms to learn even more about what makes them tick. We will be hosting two field days at the farm this summer and we encourage you to come.

### **Thur., June 30, 2-4p.m. Farm Food Safety**

This field day is part of ISU's Food Safety and Horticulture support. ISU's Linda Naeve and Angela Shaw will be on hand. This field day is geared toward producers, but all are welcome to learn more about what helps

assure good, safe food reaches the dinner table. **TOPICS:** Food Safety Modernization Act and related practices, systems and practices used at One Step at a Time Gardens. Water and snacks provided.

### **Sunday, August 14, 2-4 pm. Partnership for On-farm Research and Pollinator Conservation**

This field day is part of Practical Farmers of Iowa's series of Farm Field Days. **TOPICS:** A focus on PFI Cooperators' Program research projects, exploring the specifics of research & data collection process for two projects: 1) Variety trial of determinate tomatoes in the high tunnel; 2) Developing a cucumber enterprise budget. We will also discuss Conservation Reserve Program: NRCS pollinator program & Pollinator habitat establishment. Sampling of tomato and cucumber salads prepared by Be Wellness and beverages provided. Bring your own chair and tableware.

**Another summer favorite you won't want to miss** is Paul Willis's Summer Solstice Picnic on the Prairie- Saturday June 18, 4 p.m. to sundown. Complete details on [www.northiowafood.org](http://www.northiowafood.org)

## **Soil & Soul - The reality of pesticide drift**

Saturday morning I opened this email from Liz Kolbe, Horticulture staff with Practical Farmers of Iowa:

*Hi everyone,*

*The spray rigs are out on the road and in the fields, and I'm starting to hear about some drift incidents. :(*

*Reminders:*

- 1. Get on the IDALS [Sensitive Crops Directory](#)*
- 2. Send letters to, call, or visit the local coop and your neighboring farmers asking them to be cautious around your farm ([letter examples here](#))*
- 3. If you see pesticide drift, report it to the Pesticide Bureau at IDALS by calling 515-281-8591*

The waves of the season include the practices in the fields of our adjoining farmers. With this week's anticipated rains, we figure we won't see much spraying locally, but after a week of fresh rain and warmer temperatures, the following week will likely see spray activity in our area. This is always an anxious time.

All across Iowa, the issue of pesticide drift is of real concern. A couple of years ago Practical Farmers of Iowa teamed up with Pesticide Action Network to provide training for Drift Catchers. I attended and have the equipment to set up a drift catcher station on the farm. The trainers visited the farm for a final check and I invited two area farmers to join the conversation; Gary Steenblock, who cash rents about 50 a. we own and Brent Thompsen, who farms the land just east of us. Gary works closely with us and is always sensitive to the wind direction and speed when determining when he sprays. Since that conversation, Brent has been particularly good at texting us when he has scheduled sprays for his farm. We've been impressed with this response and can only hope that inviting that conversation played a part in a more open exchange of information about spray.

To date, we have not experienced drift (thank goodness). Our crops are fairly well protected with CRP acres to the north and west and East Twin Lake to our south, but always feel at risk when aerial spraying gets underway in later summer. Secretaries of Agriculture have been fond of saying *all agriculture can co-exist*. My reply to the line is "yes, when we have mutual respect and a commitment to open lines of communication." These last criteria are not the case across Iowa as every year we hear of report after report of unfortunate and damaging incidents of drift.

Practical Farmers of Iowa has played an important role bringing attention to this issue that fosters dialogue and education. The post card enclosed with this week's delivery is part of their awareness campaign.

### **Weekly deliveries Mid May to early July and August to September**

**Tuesdays** – Garner, Clear Lake, and Mason City,

**Wednesday** - Belmond, Clarion, and the Farm

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