



WEEKLY NOTE Week of June 6, 2016

Fresh from the Farm!



Just east of our house sits our two solar arrays. Have you noticed how many cloudy days we've had this spring?. We've been keenly aware. While we are still connected to the grid, our array generally generates all the electricity we need at the farm for the summer. It

powers our cooler, our grow lights (where fall crops have sprouted), we charge our electric golf cart that hauls our

harvest trailer, and this week it will help power the chest freezer that goes into action when the cleaned chickens return on Friday afternoon.

The cloudy weather has been so significant that up until May, each month's generation this year was 20-30% lower than last year. The only difference between the two years being cloud cover. Generation in May topped last year and June gives us another chance for lots of solar rays to capture.

As a friend remarked Monday, *it is that time of year when there's just not enough time in the day to do it all.* So true. This week's weather is opening up all the field work that's been waiting for drier weather... shade cloth on the hoopouses, uncovering recent transplants, seeding winter & summer squash and melons, cultivating and handweeding, and taking chickens to Greene, IA for processing... in addition to harvesting. Thankfully we have **lots** of daylight. The expanding day length for farming is something we pay attention to just as we do our solar array. Right now I like to say, we are *growing into the sun*, each successive day providing us more and more sunlight. or conversely, into shorter and shorter dark periods.

Lengthening days are important for our storage onions, whose bulb formation is directly linked to day length. Most producers in northern regions grow what's called long-day onions. These

THIS WEEK

Lettuce
Spinach
Radish
Green Onion
Green garlic
Rhubarb
Oregano...Mason City, Farm, and Belmond
Kohlrabi...Mason City, Belmond

onions shift growth from leaves to bulb formation as day length extends to 15 hours, which is where we'll be for the next 6 weeks.

By early August, we already will have lost one hour, reaching 14 hours. Early September drops another hour. We have to take this dynamic into account with our planting schedule. Even with our recent extended mild falls and hoophouse protection, when daylight drops below 10 hours, as it does by early November, plant growth slows way down, not resuming until we cross back over the 10 hour threshold mid February. So for the next weeks, where we will ride at 15+ hours of daylight, we revel at "growing into the sun".

Seems crazy, but while I'm talking about peak of summer, we're already turning our attention to fall crops. Flats of Chinese cabbage for our Go Gourmet share and fall broccoli (we think it's the best of the season) for the tail end of our Summer Share as well as our Fall Greens Share have already sprouted. You've got to admit, they are just so darn cute when they're little. We'll be planting them out mid July.



And it's true, this farm rocks! Last week's rain (totaling over 7" here) had cut some deep trenches in our lane so it was time to order some rocks!. A little extra supply



dumped along our approach to the hoophouses has been on our list of to do's - helping address a mud route we've had. So Thursday Tim scooped and spread and the two of us tamp it down. Saturday night's 2" gave a real test. How nice to get right through on newly graveled pathway!!



Vegetable in the Spotlight

Kohlrabi is that interesting relative of broccoli and other brassicas that grows as a swollen stem,



above ground. We are growing the purple kohlrabi in our high tunnel and have just begun to harvest the largest (2" diameter). We have enough this

week for Mason City and Belmond. More will be coming and we will get them around to all sites.

With their waxy outer layer, kohlrabi are well protected and will store easily up to 4 weeks in a plastic bag in your refrigerator. But why wait - dig into the crisp, sweet flesh of this vegetable today. Peel



off the outer layer to reveal, smooth white flesh. Kohlrabi is a

pretty versatile vegetable..slice and eat raw, grate into salads and slaws. Cook - toss with oil, lemon, dill, dip in flour and fry, add to soups and stir fries.. It's also high in fiber, low in calories and packs a good supply of vitamin A & C as well as potassium and calcium.

Cooking...Out of the Box

Radical Radishes -Here's a novel way to prepare radishes - recipe that was featured in last week's Farm News newspaper:

Baked radish chips -

Toss thinly sliced radishes with olive oil, kosher salt and freshly ground pepper along with any herbs you have on hand.

Lind a baking sheet with parchment paper and a single layer of veggies chips.

Bake at 275 degrees for 10 minutes, flip the slices and bake another 15 min. Check the chips every few minutes until they are crispy, but not burnt. Serve warm or cool.

Serve with this Garlic Spinach Dip (from Simply in Season)

2 T garlic (minced) - sauté in 1/2 t. oil until soft

8 c. fresh Spinach - *chop then add to fry pan one handful at a time as it wilts, adding a little water as needed to prevent sticking. Place cooked spinach and garlic in blender or food processor*

8 oz. light cream cheese, *softened*

1/4 c milk, 1/8 salt, dash Tabasco pepper sauce - *add to blender, cover and blend until smooth. May serve as is or heat through. Garnish wih chopped tomato or shredded Monterey Jack cheese (optional). Serve also with tortilla chips.*

Kale, Strawberry & Avocado Salad with Lemon Poppy Seed Dressing

For the salad:

4 cups chopped kale, stems removed

Pinch of sea salt

1 cup sliced strawberries

1 avocado, chopped

1/3 cup sliced almonds

1/4 cup feta cheese

Directions:

1. Put the kale in a large bowl. Sprinkle a pinch of sea salt over the kale and massage the leaves with your hands until the leaves are darker in color and tender.
2. Add the strawberries, avocado, almonds, and feta cheese. Toss gently.
3. In a small jar, combine the olive oil, lemon juice, honey, poppy seeds, salt, and pepper. Shake until mixed well.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to coat. Serve.

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 Three great events we want to bring to your attention in June.

- June 18 - **Summer Solstice Picnic**- celebrate the longest day of the year with a great potluck, community, and lovely evening on the prairie hilltop overlooking a gorgeous marsh!
 - June 21 - **Practical Farmers of Iowa Field day at Stillwater Greenhouse**
 - June 30, 2-4 pm **Food Safety Field Day at One Step at a Time Gardens**
- Details on these and many more great events at www.northiowafood.org**



Soil & Soul - Daily inspiration around the farm



It was 3 p.m. Monday as Tim and I sat down to trim up the green onions. I was lamenting my lack of inspiration for this column. "All I have," I said "is three sightings of turtles and a tiny Chorus Frog."

He suggested maybe to elaborate and include a couple of other inspirations from the farm. Here goes...

The turtle and frog sightings start off my list...

All this rain keeps the frog song alive and well at the farm and we're

glad to be a farm that has a good population of reptiles and amphibians.

One day last week we spied a turtle right by our lane and a fresh hole dug right in the middle of the lane (perhaps a nest? risky territory)..

Saturday we spied another, slightly large turtle making his or her way through the

grasses. Sunday I spied yet another. As for the frog sighting...While weeding in the hoophouse

Wed., we spied a Chorus frog. One of the less common

frogs, these little darlin's are about the size of your thumbnail and very well camouflaged. It's cool to have these companions on the farm.



I'm also inspired to think about the scale of agriculture. Tim and I are members of North Iowa Fresh, LLC (NIF), 9 producers selling product together into grocers and restaurants. Food hubs, such as

NIF, are getting a lot of attention with federal grants encouraging research and development. I'm working on a planning grant so we can better determine just what the path will look like for this young business to reach a sustainable level of sales. From what I've read thus far, we have to be thinking at least 50 times more sales than in 2016. Reaching this will mean stretching into totally new territory on many levels. Most local producers in North Iowa operate on a pretty small scale. But as the local food system continues to evolve and grow, we really do need to imagine beyond what we see right now. You can help by stopping in at Mason City's Hy-Vee West and 1910 Grille, Garner's and Forest City's Bills Family Foods , Be Wellness in Clear Lake, or Belmont Drive Inn in Belmont and asking what's local on the menu! Tell them you want to see more product from North Iowa Fresh. Thanks!



8 of the 9 North Iowa Fresh producers

Weekly deliveries Mid May to early July and August to September

Tuesdays – Mason City, Garner, Clear Lake

Wednesday - Clarion, Belmont, Farm

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