

THE BUSY BEE

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Crop Update

By John

I know I was supposed to be telling you more about our dream farm but decided to change the subject a little bit. It seems to be time for an update on the farm. It is hard to believe but we are already to week 11. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were meeting for the very first time and now we are already past the halfway point this season. July and August have been pretty crazy months here at the farm but we are feeling really good about the fall. We took a few casualties in the storage beets and carrots but thanks to the many hours of hard work our volunteers put in we saved them from the weeds and expect to have plenty available this fall and in your root boxes if you ordered one. Some of our fall bunching beets have been doing so well that we are adding a couple of seedings that will hopefully carry the fresh beets deeper into the season and relieve some of the pressure on the storage beets. Believe it or not we will be harvesting winter squash very soon. Our kabocha squash is actually already all ready and you can expect to be seeing it in your shares very soon. Unlike most varieties of winter squash, the kabochas do not store well, and short of the ability to freeze them we will be distributing them at a time you may not be ready to turn your oven back on. But with overnight lows getting back into the 50's some tasty squash soup might start sounding pretty good real soon. The other squashes are slower to develop and require more curing to store well. We grow nine varieties of winter squash so you can expect to see squash of all shapes sizes and colors in the coming weeks. Our potatoes have suffered many hardships this season but we are still optimistic about a good yield. Our ground just wasn't workable in mid April when we would have preferred to plant. We

ON DECK FOR NEXT WEEK

The summer crops will continue to roll but be looking for potatoes, either Yukon gold or red norlands. You might see the first winter squash as well. The greens should continue to improve as the weather cools and we are still working on the springtime reprise.

waited and waited and waited and it just rained and rained and rained. In some of our fields it took over six weeks to kill the winter rye cover crop, something we usually expect to take about a week or two. Eventually we just had to plant, we changed fields and it was still too wet but had no choice by mid-May. The soil worked up terribly but nevertheless they managed to get off to a good start. Then our custom operator who spread compost and OrganiCal (lime) ignored the map and drove over the potatoes, twice. It was one of those really big spreaders you see in the spring and fall on many big corn and bean fields. It pretty well wiped out 6 rows of potatoes, which considering our small acreage is almost a third of the total crop. Then came the Colorado potato beetles, in numbers like I have never seen. Twice I went through the field, visiting each individual plant squishing, adults, larvae and eggs. I may have reduced their numbers by many thousands but it wasn't even close to enough. Eventually faced with the possibility of losing the whole crop I had to spray organic pesticides to kill the larvae. I hated to do this but it was that or no potatoes after my squishing efforts proved futile. Getting them under control saved the crop but they have been set back significantly. We would normally have harvested them by now. Instead, we have been trying to nurse them along with foliar feeds to allow them to size up a bit more. Looking at the field when they first came up I anticipated a yield of about 3200 pounds. Now I expect the yield to be between

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2250 and 2500 pounds this year. Meaning there will still be plenty for everyone but not much for the farmer's markets and retail sales. By next week you can expect to start seeing potatoes in your shares and they should be in most of your shares for the rest of the season. This coming week we will be harvesting our storage onions and getting them into the greenhouse for a few weeks to cure. Once that happens, good hard onions will be in your shares for the last third of the season. The other fall crops are looking really great and have for the most part been pretty trouble free. Looking back at the massive push for weed control we put forward, we feel confident that the fall will prove to be just as bountiful as the spring and summer. Don't get out the jacket just yet though; we still have a few weeks of summer left.

Featured Item

This week we are featuring Charentais melon. This may be the first true cantaloupe you have ever had. What we call a cantaloupe is actually muskmelon here in the US. The differences between the two are subtle visually but when you try a bite it should become starker. Melons don't usually have a long shelf life but being kept at room temperature is their preference. They can be frozen for long-term storage but we suggest enjoying it in the next couple of days.

News and Notes

- Lidia likes to complain 'Americans don't know barbeque.' To find out if this is true we would like to invite you to a churrasco (pronounced shoo-hasku) at 12 noon on Sunday September 18th. Bring a dish to pass and we will provide the wood fire, meat and drinks. A true Brazilian barbeque is an experience to behold and we hope to do it justice.
- If you are interested in ordering and of our chicken please ask for an order form at pickup or download one from the website.

Recipe of the Week

Cold Gazpacho Soup

- 1 cucumber, halved and seeded, but not peeled
- 2 red bell peppers, cored and seeded
- 4 tomatoes
- 1 red onion
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups tomato juice or water
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup good olive oil
- 1/2 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- A few dashes of Worcestershire sauce
- Basil, parsley and tarragon can be used in any combination at about 1/4 cup if finely chopped fresh.

Roughly chop the cucumbers, bell peppers, tomatoes, and red onions into 1-inch cubes. Put each vegetable separately into a food processor or blender fitted with a steel blade and pulse until it is coarsely chopped. Do not over process!

After each vegetable is processed, combine them in a large bowl and add the garlic, tomato juice, vinegar, olive oil, Worcestershire salt, herbs (if used) and pepper. Mix well and chill before serving. The longer gazpacho sits, the more the flavors develop



Hot date, Lidia at the Bloomington market with me.