

Rain Dance

From John

I originally wanted to talk about organic certification and what it means for us and our farm members. But as the heat has dragged on it has become more difficult to ignore the weather as irrigation has taken up more and more time. At this time last year we hadn't even had to irrigate a single time. The exception of course being the crops under plastic mulch which require some watering as they don't see much of the benefit from rainfall. The first time we irrigated was sometime in August after the tap got shut-off. The story of last year was cold and wet which makes it even more shocking to consider that we actually have had more rain this year than last up to this point. The average precipitation at this point is just a little less than 15 inches. Last year we were a bit over 16 and believe it or not, this year we are pushing close to 20 inches of precipitation. It is important through, to keep in mind the timing of the rain. Our last measureable rainfall was on June 14th and 15th when we got nearly 11 inches of rain. On May 12th into the 13th we got a little over 4 inches. That means that we have had close to 15 inches of rain from rain events cover 3 or 4 days. The other 195 days this year have only yielded about 5 inches of total precipitation. Considering that most of the 10 inches we got back in June went straight to the rivers and lakes and is likely down around the Louisiana bayou now, it is easy to understand why we are so dry now. Despite the humidity creating really high dew points we just haven't seen enough low pressure to knock the air temperature low enough to let loose aqua manna for the crops. Coupled with the fact that we are 8 degrees above average for July it is plain stinkin' dry out there. We can count ourselves lucky though. The last rains kept things wet for about two weeks and it has only been over the

ON DECK

We will have greens, cucumbers, onions, herbs and potatoes. Probably some peppers and eggplants and maybe some summer squash and zucchini if the plants hold up. We will have sweet corn again and maybe the first watermelons will be in

past ten days or so that things have started to really dry out. What we have endured the past two weeks has been affecting many farmers for more than six to eight weeks. Many have seen all of their potential profits eaten up by increased irrigation costs (you would be astonished to see how fast the meter spins when you electrically pump a couple hundred gallons a minute). I just heard that this is the most significant drought since 1958 on a national level. I am sure that anyone who watches the 6 O'clock News has seen or will see that graph that shows where the drought is. As of June we were still 'green' on the chart though we may fast be approaching the orange or red (depending on what chart you look like). Some forecasters think we could soon surpass the drought of the 50's and start chasing down the Dust Bowl. That is a slightly terrifying proposition but I think that we are a long ways away from chasing that record. This has kept us incredibly busy keeping things watered. Our main way of irrigating is filling up a 2000 gallon water truck and running it into the drip tape (imagine a really thin soaker hose) that runs under the plastic mulch and solid set with rain-birds (aluminum pipes with sprinklers). We have also been able to hookup Gardens of Eagan's travelling reel a couple of times. This is magnitudes more efficient but is a little oversized for our acreage but generally unavailable as it they have been irrigating virtually around the clock as well. Our system can be frustratingly inefficient and time consuming. But the most important thing to keep in mind is that we have water. I constantly remind myself of this, we have water, we are lucky. I haven't had much time for anything

other than irrigating the past week or so. But we are so fortunate that we have water at all. It has us discussing very seriously how to improve our irrigation system to be more efficient. It may or may not happen this year but by next year we will have a very different system in place that will allow us to soak a lot more ground in a lot less time. We are hoping that we can get the benefit of the next round of thunder showers to pass through the area.

On the bright side we have some of the healthiest tomatoes I have ever seen. Tomatoes hate to be wet. Standing moisture is the number one disease vector on tomatoes and peppers too. We have seen no evidence of any disease and they have grown tremendously over the past several weeks along with the peppers whom relish the heat. Severe heat can cause serious pollination issues resulting in dropped blossoms and poor yields. We have seen some blossom drop but only just a little bit. The plants are putting on lots of fruit and healthy vegetative growth. So in the meantime we will let nature supply the sun and we will supply the water and watch the plants grow, grow, grow.



Sorry, we already ate the first red ones!

News and Notes

- We were a little behind on ordering our meat chickens. We won't get them in until early next month which won't leave a lot of time between butchering and the end of the season. We will have preorder forms available soon so that you can claim your birds early. We suggest doing so since we are only doing 60 chickens this year and we will claim about 15 for ourselves.

Featured Item

We generally like to feature something a unfamiliar or new This week we wanted to go with something we all know or is available for the first time. The good old cucumber. We have tried many varieties but I always come back to the Marketmore. An open pollinated variety dating back to 1968. On a hot summer day almost nothing is as refreshing as a nice cucumber salad. Cukes don't store really well but in your vegetable drawer it should stay fresh for about a week.

Recipe of the Week

Cucumber Feta Salsa

This is a recipe Lidia got from a friend of ours. I admit to being a little skeptical at first but was blown away by how great this was as a snack with some corn chips.

Ingredients

2 cups finely diced cucumber

1/2 cup finely diced onion

1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1/4 cup chopped fresh mint (optional)

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon vegetable or olive oil

1/2 cup crumbled feta

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

If like a little spice you can add a chopped chili or jalapeño

Preparation

Mix first four ingredients in a medium bowl

Stir in lime juice and oil

Mix in feta crumbles

Season to taste with kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper to taste.