

Field Report

From John

I had intended to stay in the vein of the organic farm transition project we are currently undertaking, but I realize that I haven't really taken the time to give you all an update on life at the farm. I will continue the transition story another week.

We have to say that in a year that has given us many things to complain about, we really can't complain about many things right now. Despite having the most difficult start to a season that we have seen in our farming careers, things are looking great. Make no mistake there are still fires to put out, but it wouldn't be farming if there weren't some manner of emergency burgeoning somewhere. We walk around our fields and I can honestly say that our farm has never looked better on the whole. We know that as of yet it hasn't translated into the bountiful shares that we expect to have this time of year, but the shares could have been much much worse to say the least. We are pretty happy with what we have been able to put together so far and we see the best of summer fare coming just ahead. What's more is how much more land we have in production this year to boot. We put off hiring someone back in May because we just didn't have the work as we were so often rained out. Here in July it is still just Lidia and I (but mostly Lidia). We have just less than 6 acres in production right now and we will top out at around 7 for the season. Last year we were only at about 3.5 for the season. Despite the increase in acreage we don't feel much more pinched that we did last year though in the height of the harvest season we will still need a part-time employee to keep up with the harvest and the field work. This past winter and spring, we made some equipment investments that have really made our operation much more efficient, allowing us to continue to expand our operation and still only work about 90-100 hours a week each. The biggest improvement has come from our water wheel planter that allows

ON DECK

We should see cucumbers make their debut along with beets, cabbage and eggplant. We are still waiting on onions and carrots but they will be here soon with tomatoes and sweet corn on their heels.

us to plant crops with much more precision and with much less time and effort. Because this planter allows us to water in our plants at the same time as planting it also means the plants recover and begin to grow very quickly and experience much less 'transplant shock.' We are also able to mix liquefied minerals into the transplant water which ensures those young tender roots heading out into the real world for the first time can easily find the nutrition they need to get off to a good start. In the past we have had to plant everything with a trowel on our hands and knees. This works OK but isn't very precise, is very time consuming and wears on the body pretty hard. Plus we were planting dry which is much is much more stressful for the plant. The precision of the transplanter also allows us to mechanically cultivate which has given us phenomenal weed control in our transplanted crops. This means that Lidia can spend much less time during the day planting and weeding transplanted crops and focus on harvesting and weeding the direct seeded crops such as beans, beets, lettuce mix, carrots and such. Those crops alone are more than enough work alone without having the rest of the farm to worry about. One day we will have the precision tools to make those crops much more efficient as well but that's an investment plan for another year. That being said we are still at a critical point in the season where you win or lose the battle with the weeds and we wouldn't say no to anyone who wanted to come and help out for a few hours.

We just had some aerial shots of the farm taken courtesy of Gardens of Eagan (we are documenting the organic transition from above as well). We haven't seen the photos yet but are eager to share them with you, hoping that they will be a great way to view the whole farm from the comfort of Facebook or wherever else. They should help

illustrate just what we are up to here at the farm and what 6 acres of veggies looks like. Trust me, it's a lot for 2 people but we are nothing if not ambitious.

We have also been blessed with much improved weather. It has been all we could ask for, we are still trying to readapt to the heat as it came on so quickly but we are thankful for it. With lots of moisture in the soil the heat has really help push the crops ahead, the corn has grown about 2 inches a day, the tomatoes are setting fruit, the winter squash has just exploded, the peppers are taking off and the eggplant is fruiting just as a few examples. It has also allowed us to play a lot of catch-up on weed control and other tasks like spreading straw mulch and staking and trellising tomatoes.

It just feels like the farming season just snuck up on us, like one day it was mid-April and then all of the sudden bam, the 4th of July has come and gone and we are in the thick of it. But unlike in April it feels like we are in control again and that feels really good.



Heirloom tomatoes coming along nicely!

News and Notes

- Big thanks to our farm volunteers that have been out to the farm. We know that weeding isn't the most exciting thing but it makes a huge difference in the quality of the shares down the road.
- We are always looking for an extra set of hands to help out so let us know if you would like to visit the farm and try out a few hours in the life of an organic veggie farmer.
- Don't forget the [Eat Local Farm Tour](#) on July 20th put on by our local Co-ops. You can check out our farm as part of the Gardens of Eagan tour!

Featured Item

It's hard not to feature this once a year treat. This week you will find garlic scapes in your share. They are what would become garlic flower and produce actual seeds (as opposed to the bulbs which we normally plant and eat). We break them off so that the plant will send its energy to the root and grow a bigger bulb rather than producing seeds in a flower. A garlic plant will produce only one scape and you only have one chance to trim it, so they are rarely around for more than 1 or 2 weeks. They are delicious and can be used just like you would use garlic in your favorite recipes. One whole scape is equal to 1 or 2 medium sized garlic cloves. They will keep for several weeks in a paper bag in your fridge.

Recipe of the Week

Grilled Pizza with Garlic Scapes and Kale

Ingredients

- 1 large pizza dough, store bought or homemade.
- 1 can of crushed tomatoes (diced and sliced fresh will work well also)
- 8-12 oz. Mozzarella cheese
- A bunch of garlic scapes (5-8) cut into 1 inch pieces
- 5 large leaves of kale, rinsed and dried, de-ribbed, cut into small pieces
- A handful of fresh basil

Preparation

- Preheat your grill on high for 5 minutes. In the meantime roll out the dough so that it will fit onto the grill.
- Cover one side of the pizza with olive oil and place that side down on the grill. If you don't have a pizza peel you can use a pizza sheet under your crust.
- Lower the heat to medium and let grill for about 4 minutes. I recommend checking the pizza after two minutes and poking any air bubbles early.
- Check the underside of the pizza after 4 minutes. It should lift off easily and be perfectly charred. Slide the dough off of the grill onto a cutting board. Top the charred side with the tomato sauce then the fresh basil. Sprinkle some fresh mozzarella over the sauce. Top with the kale and garlic scapes and any other toppings you desire.
- Slide the pizza back onto the grill and grill for about 6 minutes or until the bottom side is cooked.