

## How to Weather a Dry Spell

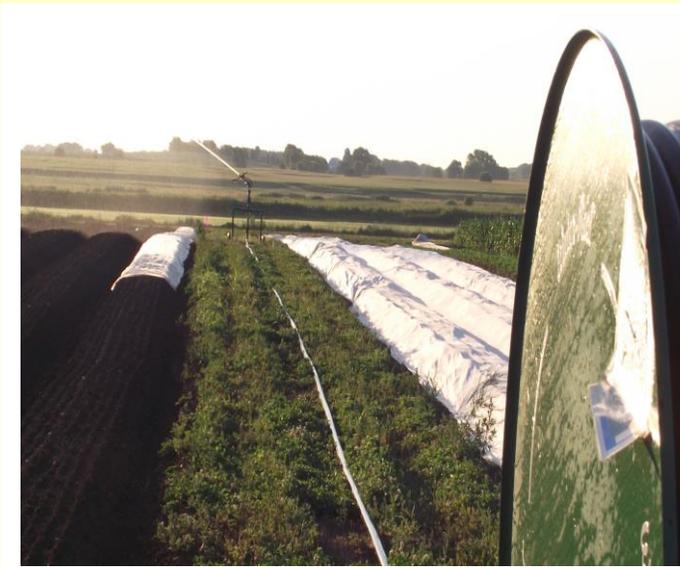
From John

It is definitely an odd stretch of weather we have come in to. After some heavy rain followed by almost a week of brutal heat we are now in what seems like September. If I weren't a farmer I couldn't be happier, September and October are by far my favorite weather months of the year. However in July and August I know that we need the heat. While it feels great to open the camper up in the day and turn off the air conditioning, it is also petty weird to flick on the furnace at 5 in the morning to take the chill out as it seems to usually be about 55° in here. The cool down hasn't had any serious impacts on the plants though some of the heat lovers like water melons, sweet corn and peppers have slowed down a little bit. Sometimes when writing the newsletter I like to go back to previous years and see what the pulse of the farm was at the same time in previous seasons. A couple of years ago I had a week seven newsletter titled Rain Dance which seems quite apt yet today. Since the gully washer about 3 weeks ago we have seen almost no precipitation, maybe about a half an inch or so. I was joking with a co-worker at Gardens of Eagan about how now when the forecast predict a 60% chance of rain that I am sure we won't see a thing though a few months back a 30% chance seemed certain to wallop us. It's amazing how things change so quickly. Though a few years back we were in much more of a panic with real concern about losing crops and seeing signs of severe water stress in the crops. This year not so much, the drought is long since broken and there are very good reserves of moisture in the soil to carry us through a dry spell. Some of the sweet corn would like some water but other than that all of the more established crops are having no trouble finding plenty of moisture deep down. There is always of course a concern for the crops that have been seeded recently which need some moisture to germinate or haven't been alive long enough to have a root system capable of finding that blue gold a few inches down. For the first time this season we are starting to irrigate these crops. We are able to use a traveling reel (imagine a really big garden hose reel with a sprinkler on the end

### ON DECK

We may hit the summer lull where green are in shorter supply, but we will have sweet corn, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, cukes, squash, potatoes, carrots and hopefully melons.

that can pull itself back in) as well as drip irrigation to get water to the crops. We use drip irrigation under the plastic mulch using a complicated mix of a mainline, header pipes, valves, connectors and drip tape (think very thin soaker hose) that runs along next to the crops. There are many things we like about the drip system, first is that it uses only about 10% of the water that overhead irrigation uses. Because the plastic mulch prevents some rain water from getting in while keeping the water under it in, we have much greater control of the soil moisture, even turning on or off individual beds right next to one another depending on each crops needs. This is of particular importance to crops like tomatoes which will split if the soil moisture levels swings back and forth. It also allows us to easily fertilize crops as needed. We use a mix of liquid minerals which are rock crushed so fine that it can be dissolved in water and sea minerals. We can mix up a custom blend of phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, kelp and humates and feed it out in small regular doses in the irrigation water. The benefit of using overhead irrigation (travelling reel/gun) is primarily the ability to cover large areas in little time without having to put together lots of little pieces many of which will be thrown out at the end of the season. We don't currently have the best setup for using this system, but never the less we can cover about 2/3 of an acre in about 2 hours plus an additional 30 minutes of setup (assuming there are no snags, which with irrigation nearly seem to be the norm). This means that in a 14 hour day we are able to get about 4-5 'pulls' from the traveller which will cover between 2.6-3.3 acres a day. It can also be run simultaneously with the drip system which adds about 2 more acres. With about 6 acres in production this year we can irrigate the whole farm in just over a day. In previous seasons it would take 2-3 days to water half as much land. This increased efficiency is just one more way that we can make sure that your shares are of the highest quality and bounty week after week.



Travelling Gun soaking the latest seeding.



Drip Irrigation Setup

## News and Notes

- Chickens have been so popular that we have decided to raise an additional 50 birds. We expect them to sell out fast so reserve yours ASAP as they are first come first serve. [Click to reserve and place a deposit.](#)
- Like Lidia said 'the volunteers saved our (we'll say hineys)!' Thanks to all your hard work the farm is almost weed free and we are confident that we will win the battle against the weeds for 2013! But there is always more work to be done so don't be a stranger!

## Featured Item

*This week we are going with onions if only because they have been such an interesting crop this year. Normally there would be nothing special about onions come August. But there has been little 'normal' this year. They have faced many challenges this season. We usually start them the first week of March in the greenhouse and plant them out in mid-April. This year we got a head start and seeded them in mid-February but struggled to keep them going because of the persistent lack of sunlight and unseasonable cold. We struggled to keep them healthy and green and then we were unable to plant them in the field May 26<sup>th</sup> a full 5 weeks late. In a normal year you would have already had fresh onions for about 4 or 5 weeks. Luckily they should be in regular supply for the rest of the season. Just remember these fresh onions aren't like the hard onions in the fall. They don't store well so you they should be kept in your fridge, loose is fine but a bag will help contain the odor. They will stay fresh for about 10-14 days that way.*

## Recipe of the Week

### FRENCH ONION SOUP

#### Ingredients

- 4 onions, chopped
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 3 (10.5 ounce) cans beef broth
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 French baguette, cut into 1/2 inch slices
- 8 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese

#### Directions

1. In a large pot over medium heat, sauté the onions in the butter or margarine for 10 minutes, or until onions are tender. Stir in the flour, ground black pepper and the sugar to form a pasty mixture.
2. Now add the beef broth, water, and thyme and simmer for 10 minutes, Then add the wine and simmer for 10 more minutes.
3. Preheat oven to broil.
4. Fill individual oven safe bowls 3/4 full with the soup. Place a slice of bread on top of the soup and cover with the cheese. Place bowls in the oven.
5. Broil in the oven until the cheese is melted and bubbly